



Impacts 2016

Every year CUP releases the Impacts document to share interim updates on our projects and partnerships. Impacts 2016 reflects the first full year of work under the banner of our new strategic plan. As we reflected on the progress and impacts of our partnerships, we felt it was important to hear the voices of our partners: how has their partnership with CUP grown, what challenges and surprises have they experienced, and how has engaging in this community-university partnership impacted their organization and its work?

What we learned from these discussions has enriched our own internal thinking and has shaped a new way of looking at the outcomes and impacts of our relationships in community. The following stories share partners' perspectives from three of our current partnerships.

Successful Families: Developing a Model of Supportive Housing for Teen Families

Successful Families is a supportive housing program developed through a unique partnership between Terra Centre and Brentwood Community Development Group. CUP was invited to join the partnership to help integrate research as a learning tool within the developing partnership and program. We spoke to executive directors Karen Mottershead (Terra Centre) and Rob Appleyard (Brentwood) to understand how they perceive CUP's role in the project.

The Successful Families program provides safe, secure and affordable housing for teen families in combination with wraparound supports. When asked to describe the role of CUP on the project, Karen Mottershead said, "You're our data collectors, you're our analyzers. You're making sense of what's going on, and telling our story." Karen reflected on the reason for asking CUP to be involved. "We were really aware of the work CUP has done, the community-based research, the credibility... it really aligned with what we were doing around children, families and community.... We liked the participatory approach and the fact that we would be really engaged in it, rather than it done to us."

Rob Appleyard highlighted how flexibility and adaptability in partnerships are crucial to be able to respond to unexpected opportunities and challenges: "The model (of supportive housing) will always be changing, because that's its power.... We're way off our original vision, but I think that's to our benefit." Depth and

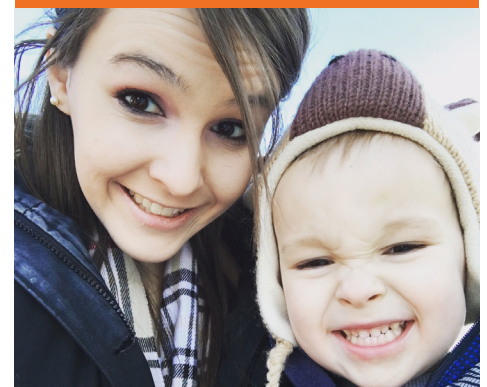
time spent in the setting were also valued aspects of the partnership: "You guys have been way more involved than I would have thought," Karen added. "You have been at team meetings, really collecting a lot of data and information I haven't seen that level of participation, which is great. We don't have time to take all of that and make sense out of it... So for us, it's been deeper than I thought it would be."

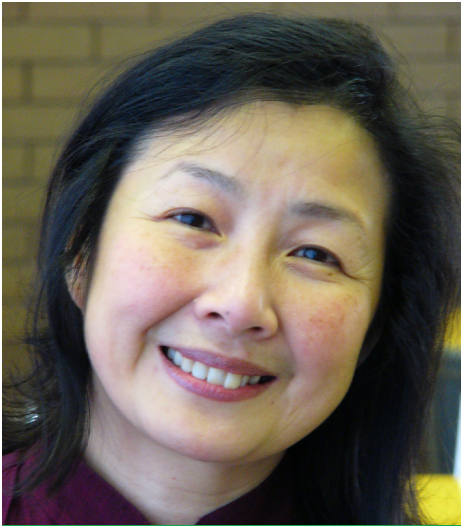
Although there were a number of positive aspects to the partnership, critically reflecting on our collective work also provided an opportunity for identifying key areas of focus as we move forward together. In particular, the need to tell the story in different ways to wider audiences was recognized as an area of need. This will require a blend of qualitative and quantitative data to capture the complexity of the work, and the need to find innovative ways to share this information. A strong partnership and a shared willingness to take risks will continue to make such exploration possible.



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*Karen Mottershead,
Executive Director, Terra Centre*





"...we became very familiar with how to look at an assessment tool, understand the intent and offer sound suggestions... We learned how to do research."

*Dr. Yvonne Chiu,
Co-executive Director,
Multicultural Health Brokers Co-op*



A decade of partnering for multicultural early childhood development

The partnership between Multicultural Health Brokers Cooperative (MCHB) and CUP goes back a long way. Executive Director, Yvonne Chui (MCHB) shared her views on this long term partnership with CUP and the challenges and opportunities it affords all partners.

The first formal research partnership between the two organizations began in 2007 to examine the cultural appropriateness of a Western-based screening tool for use with immigrant and refugee young children. Describing the motivation behind the partnership, Yvonne Chui said: "We noticed the struggles families are experiencing that impacts early parenting and also the distance between the families and the systems... We wanted to partner with CUP to show that the tool, the way it's used, normed in another population, is not necessarily going to show who our children truly are." Reflecting back on this first research partnership between CUP and MCHB, Yvonne noted how the project contributed to organizational learning and capacity in early childhood assessment. "We became very familiar with how to take a look at an assessment tool, understand the intent and then offer sound suggestions on how to culturally adapt an item."

Over the past 10 years, MCHB has partnered with CUP on several other community-based research initiatives on a range of issues impacting immigrant and refugee families including multicultural early childhood development, food security, and poverty. Currently, MCHB and CUP are lead partners on two projects: the Multicultural Early Childhood Assessment and Learning (MECAL) project, mobilizing knowledge about bicultural and bilingual development in the early years and the ENRICH project, looking at perinatal nutrition and solutions to food insecurity faced by many immigrant and refugee families. Over time, the relationship between the organizations has grown and matured. "We have shared vision and deep commitment to each other because we invested so many years into the relationship." As with many community-university partnerships, however, there have been challenges along the way. Many are naturally rooted in the broader contexts in which university institutions and community-based organizations function which, at times, lead to different priorities

and stressors. In moving forward, Yvonne notes the need for a deeper, shared understanding amongst partners of the realities of immigrant and refugee families "so that we can share the same lived experience, same grounding."

Despite the challenges, Yvonne acknowledges the potential of community-based research partnerships for systemic level social change. "We see research as a way of affecting policy change". This has been the driver behind the continued partnership with CUP: "wanting CUP and us to do something that informs the systems, informs those who care about early childhood development but might not understand the differences that our families and communities are experiencing." Her words carry an urgency: "We cannot afford another 20 years of working on supporting families and the structure not changing, the system not changing. There is only so much that can be done in the community. There has to be some shift in practice in the big systems that impact the wellbeing of our children and families. We need some kind of transformation. It's all grounded in the principles of equity and justice."



Ending Poverty Means Wrestling with Big Ideas

Since 2014, CUP staff, students, Steering Committee members, and faculty have provided many forms of support to the EndPovertyEdmonton (EPE) movement. We spoke with Bishop Jane Alexander (Co-Chair, Mayor's Task Force and Stewardship Roundtable), Anne Smith (President & CEO, United Way of the Alberta Capital Region), and Kate Gunn (Director, Citizen Services, City of Edmonton) of the EPE initiative to explore CUP's evolving roles in the EPE process and the impact of this collaboration.

In 2014, Mayor Don Iveson established the Mayor's Task Force to Eliminate Poverty and the evolution of EndPovertyEdmonton (EPE) began. Seven working groups engaged more than 3,000 Edmontonians in conversations around issues such as early childhood development, health and wellness, housing and transportation, community well-being, economic security, and justice and democratic participation. The Mayor's Task Force used an evidence informed process to interpret and integrate over 400 recommendations into a comprehensive Road Map with 35 Priority Areas for action. This was a complex, messy, risky, and necessary process. Partners from the business sector, academia, faith communities, social services, health care, and government grappled to create common goals and new ways of working together to significantly impact poverty.

The members of the EPE initiative that we spoke to had some interesting thoughts about the impact of CUP's involvement. There have been surprises for some partners. For Bishop Jane Alexander "CUP is one of Edmonton's best kept secrets". For years, "CUP has been bringing people together to wrestle with big ideas and work out what (those ideas) might look like in partnership." In the EPE initiative, CUP used existing data from the Families First Edmonton (FFE) dataset to offer new insights into real families' experiences living in poverty. Mobilizing the FFE data in new ways was fundamental to advancing the conversation. "The data was a gold mine in truly understanding the experience of poverty one family at a time" (Anne Smith) and highlighted "the depth of poverty and the struggles that families have" (Bishop Alexander). Kate Gunn also reflected on the benefits of having partners involved in the conversation who foster critical thinking at the table: "CUP helped us at transition points when we got stuck in our conversations. CUP has an expertise of looking at things strategically through

a community and university partnership lens." The synergies encouraged partners to "drill down on the questions and challenge the suppositions that would arise. How will we measure the change, how will we know we have picked the right (indicators), and what's the evidence?" (Bishop Alexander).

It can take a significant amount of time to establish trusting relationships that enable partners to grapple with complex issues like ending poverty. Poverty is so multifaceted and the EPE initiative engaged partners across sectors and disciplines. "Many people knew their own area (of work) but did not know what was possible in other areas." (Bishop Jane). According to Anne Smith, university partner contributions can feel more "ethereal and academic" to community partners. Anne commented on how she felt in her first meeting with CUP over a decade ago, well before EPE. "The first experience was going right over the top of my head. I could not wrap my head around what the outcome might be. I was a practitioner and needed practical tools to help me do my work." Now she describes the 'partnership' with CUP feels more like 'relationship' within the EPE initiative. "It is reciprocal. It is real relationship being built between individuals that are playing out as really important relationships in the community. I have a better understanding and I feel heard. I would have been hesitant in the past but now we are having real conversations and CUP folks are helping me understand and I am adding value with the questions I am asking. We are learning to speak each other's language."

As numerous EndPovertyEdmonton projects and initiatives are being implemented across the city, it is more important than ever to clearly define, measure, and tell the collective lessons learned. The messiness and complexity is not abated with implementation yet it fuels those involved in EPE to "create a body of evidence that says we are or



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*Anne Smith,
President and CEO,
United Way of the
Alberta Capital Region*



we aren't succeeding and to feed that learning into the process as it unfolds." (Anne Smith) Collectively, the work of EPE is impacting the way the City of Edmonton works (Kate Gunn) and hopefully shifting individual perceptions of how we all play a role in ending poverty within a generation. "(EPE has) built something important in relationship and has leveraged the capacity of community." (Anne Smith). CUP has committed to this important journey in providing insight and understanding of families' experiences of poverty, by encouraging strategic and critical thinking and by helping to build the trusting relationships required to wrestle with big ideas.

For more information on the EndPovertyEdmonton initiative please visit www.endpovertyedmonton.ca.

How full is our CUP?

In 2016, CUP faculty, staff, and students collaborated on 15 different community projects.



EVALUATION
CAPACITY
NETWORK

365 Evaluation Capacity Network members engaged in enhancing evaluation practices across the early childhood development sector.



CUP projects have provided learning opportunities for **2 post docs** and **7 graduate students** over the past year.



110 participants (students, family members, community partners, school staff, agency staff, and operational partners) across **5 schools** participated in the All In for Youth Evaluation.



500 immigrant and refugee families received emergency food supplies through the Grocery Run program



80 early learning and care educators received new tools and resources to enhance their ability to support development of immigrant and refugee children.



50 teen families and **64** children received new housing support from Terra Centre and Brentwood Family Housing.



For more information on any of these projects or partnerships please contact us at:

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