The collaboration between community and university partners is what underpins our organization. CUP is a partnership that fully engages researchers, citizens, practitioners, and policy makers. Our work begins and ends with relationships among partners who bring together skills and knowledge to work on pressing social issues. Together we gather meaningful evidence and engage in shaping practice and policy from new knowledge.

Practice and policy should be grounded in the best evidence available. By bringing together resources and fostering relationships, CUP can help provide the ethical, rigorous community-based research and evaluation needed to improve practice and to inform sound policy.

This annual report celebrates some of the people, partners, and projects that have shaped CUP in the past year. It shares our excitement about some of our current and future work. It’s a chance to connect faces and stories to the stacks of interview notes, observations, and raw data that provide the foundation for our mission.

We hope you find it engaging!
LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR & STEERING COMMITTEE CO-CHAIRS

When debating themes for this Annual Report, we kept returning to Fully Engaged. Why? After 15 years of hard work, CUP has become an integral voice in discussions throughout the community and on campus. Our Steering Committee [see page 4] continues to grow, its volunteer members eager to explore ways to improve and expand the connection between research and policy. We contribute our expertise to such significant initiatives as the Mayor’s Task Force for the Elimination of Poverty [see page 6]. Our scope of work continues to expand, encompassing provincial and national partnerships including the ECMap project (see page 5) and the new Evaluation Capacity Network (see page 7). Our trainees, students, and staff continue to be sought-after leaders in community-based research, knowledge mobilization, and the scholarship of engagement (see pages 9-11).

I asked our Steering Committee Co-Chairs, Martin Garber-Conrad and Jeffrey Bisanz, the question, “When it comes to CUP, what does the phrase ‘fully engaged’ bring to mind?” Here’s what they said:

Members of the Steering Committee, from all over the community and university, deep in discussion about how to solve an immediate problem, how to frame an important but ill-defined issue, and how to use and grow CUP’s strengths to advance knowledge and have a positive and tangible impact for children and families in our communities.

Students—undergraduate and graduate—participating fully in projects that challenge their thinking and channel their energies and intelligence as they learn how to do community-based research.

Research assistants and community partners who join CUP projects for the challenge of doing community-based work and who wind up contributing in creative and useful ways that no one could have predicted.

CUP’s key faculty members—Laurie Schnirer, Maria Mayan, and Rebecca Gokiert—working overtime to support students, research assistants, and community partners for the purpose of creating outcomes that could only be accomplished through committed and enduring partnerships.

If we sound proud, we are! The CUP model of community-university engagement has proven to be sustainable and effective. So, what will CUP accomplish in the next 15 years? Stay tuned.

Sincerely,
Laurie Schnirer
Interim Director

L to R: Martin Garber-Condard, Laurie Schnirer and Jeffrey Bisanz
COMMUNITY-UNIVERSITY PARTNERSHIP STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP 2014-15

Jeffrey Bisanz [Co-Chair]  
Department of Psychology  
University of Alberta

Martin Garber-Conrad [Co-Chair]  
Edmonton Community Foundation

Vera Caine  
Faculty of Nursing  
University of Alberta

Katy Campbell  
Faculty of Extension  
University of Alberta

Gloria Chalmers  
Community Member

Kourch Chan  
E4C

Michelle Craig  
Addiction and Mental Health Branch  
Alberta Health

Julian Daly  
Boyle Street Community Services

Sandy Davidge  
Women and Children’s Health Research Institute  
University of Alberta

Lionel Dibden  
Pediatrics  
University of Alberta

Jane Drummond  
Faculty of Nursing  
University of Alberta

Richard Enns  
Faculty of Social Work  
University of Calgary

Cecelia Fenrich  
Edmonton Catholic Schools

Donna-Mae Ford  
Multicultural Health Brokers Co-op

Sandy Forster / Jennifer Allen  
Edmonton Public Schools

Cheryl Gagnier / Judy Smith  
Community Services  
City of Edmonton

Sharla King  
Health Sciences Education and Research Commons  
University of Alberta

Susan Lynch  
Early Child Development Mapping Project (ECMap)  
University of Alberta

Christina Nsaliwa  
Edmonton Immigrant Services Association

Liz O’Neill  
Boys and Girls Clubs Big Brothers Big Sisters of Edmonton and Area

Michael Phair  
Community Member

Christina Rinaldi  
Faculty of Education  
University of Alberta

Christopher Smith  
Muttart Foundation

Jane Springett  
School of Public Health  
University of Alberta

Allan Undheim  
Community Building and Investment United Way of the Alberta Capital Region

Deanna Williamson  
Human Ecology  
University of Alberta

Wendy Yewman  
Community Member

Leann Wagner / Lora Pillipow / Lisa Sadownik  
Alberta Human Services

June 2015 CUP Steering Committee Meeting
The Early Child Development Mapping (ECMap) project may have ended in August 2014, but its impact lives on.

One hundred early childhood development (ECD) community coalitions continue to use ECMap resources to help focus their efforts throughout Alberta. ECMap community profiles help coalitions connect with others in their areas, as they consider ways to improve local supports for young children and their families. Additional funding from the Alberta government for each coalition has further enhanced this ongoing community focus on young children. Plans are underway to continue to use the Early Development Instrument (EDI) to collect ECD data, making it possible to track improvements over time in each community, and across the province as a whole.

In addition to their local efforts, ECD coalitions have actively contributed to a number of province-wide initiatives, including the Social Policy Framework and the Alberta Approach to Early Childhood Development.

ECMap has also proven its value at the provincial level, providing information to help determine locations for additional resources such as Parent Link Centres. As well, the EDI data will become part of an overall monitoring system to assess ECD results province-wide, and to identify areas for improvement. The rich data generated by ECMap is also proving valuable for other projects, including one that looks at mental health in children as they enter kindergarten.

The activity launched through the ECMap project will contribute to early childhood development initiatives in Alberta for years to come, at both a local and provincial level.

Susan Lynch
CUP Associate Director
Adjunct Professor, Faculty of Extension
TO END POVERTY, WE MUST FIRST UNDERSTAND IT

In 2001, CUP began exploring poverty in the Edmonton area, and its effect on families and children. Families First Edmonton (FFE) emerged from these discussions. FFE was a study reflecting the experiences of 1,200 families with children, living at or below the poverty line. By FFE’s completion in 2012, we had built a legacy of trusted relationships with families, partners, stakeholders, researchers and funders; generated a wealth of data at the individual, family, community, and system levels; and improved scientific literacy and interest among program and policy decision makers. See familiesfirstedmonton.ualberta.ca for more details.

Given our long-term commitment to understanding poverty, CUP is thrilled to be lending its support to the Mayor’s Task Force for the Elimination of Poverty in Edmonton, and to the United Way of the Alberta Capital Region’s Pathways Out of Poverty.

Our multifaceted support brings together the efforts of researchers, students, and the wider community and its leaders. By providing evidence-based insights into family poverty, CUP is helping to shape future policies and programs. We hope our contributions will help produce stronger families, healthier communities, and more effective systems and services.

Here are a few highlights from the past year:

- CUP hosted three interactive workshops based on FFE outcomes. Topics included pathways out of poverty, accessibility of services, and housing and child care.

- Many of CUP’s members and partners have been involved in developing recommendations to help Edmonton’s children and families living in poverty. Jeff Bisanz and Maria Mayan are members of the Mayor’s Task Force. Jeff and Gloria Chalmers co-chaired a working group on early childhood development. Maria co-chaired a working group on community wellbeing and Laura Templeton was a member on the Information and Research Roundtable.

- Laura is also partnering with the City of Edmonton, the United Way of the Alberta Capital Region, and the Edmonton Community Foundation to explore FFE’s deep, rich datasets for insights that will foster a balanced approach to program and service planning. Their findings continue to challenge perceptions about poverty—especially related to the types of families requiring supports—and the best methods for meeting their needs.

Mayor’s Task Force Meeting, City Hall, Spring 2015
SEEKING A COMMON UNDERSTANDING OF EVALUATION IN EARLY CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Evaluation plays a critical role in the field of early childhood development (ECD). It helps to drive funding decisions, to shape public policy, to improve practice, and to demonstrate accountability. Community organizations are expected to evaluate their efforts, and to incorporate those findings into their daily practices. Given their limited resources, however, this can prove to be a challenge. The Evaluation Capacity Network (ECN) brings together stakeholders from multiple sectors to help improve evaluation practices in ECD.

The ECN acts as a central point of contact and support for those working in ECD. We are in the process of creating resources to build evaluation knowledge, skills, and experience. Our work will ultimately inform and strengthen practice, programs, and policies for children and families across Canada.

The ECN is engaging partners from all sectors—government, community agencies, funding organizations, and academia—in a dialogue aimed at aligning perspectives and building capacity in evaluation at the individual, organizational, and system levels. Plans are underway for an intersectoral needs assessment to help drive future efforts in the ECD field. We will distribute a survey and host community forums with key ECD stakeholders throughout Alberta. The feedback we gather will help us to:

1. establish priorities in building evaluation capacity;
2. develop, deliver, and test a resource to build evaluation capacity; and
3. develop a sustainable network to provide resources, deliver training opportunities, and foster open dialogue for ongoing change.

Our governance structure already immerses partners from all sectors in dialogue around evaluation. The ECN Steering Committee guides our overall efforts. Our Core Research Team develops and implements the ECN’s research component, and the Project Management Team puts recommendations from the research team and steering committee into day-to-day project operations. Network members, representing multiple sectors and disciplines, act as the ECN’s “members at large,” providing feedback where needed. Throughout the lifespan of the project, the ECN will train graduate students, mentor new scholars, and engage experts in the field.

Although our conversations are focused regionally and provincially at the moment, the ECN intends to engage new partners from across Canada who share similar challenges, express common needs, and seek to strengthen their evaluation capacity and resources.

The ECN is funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) and additional project partners.

Rebecca Gokiert
CUP Assistant Director
Associate Professor, Faculty of Extension
Since 2008, CUP has worked with the Women and Children’s Health Research Institute (WCHRI) to mutually support their organizational mandates and complement their research expertise. CUP supports WCHRI in achieving its goals by providing expertise and leadership in areas of qualitative research methods, community-based research/patient and community engagement, and knowledge translation.

When clinicians seek a better way to help patients and their families, research can often tell them what needs to change. In the past year, seven clinical teams have turned to the WCHRI/CUP qualitative research support team for the methodological expertise to help them reshape their approach. The knowledge they gain will strengthen their practices and improve the health of their patients.

Dr. Aisha Bruce, from Edmonton’s Stollery Children’s Hospital, is one such clinician. Her research focuses on sickle cell disease (SCD)—which, until recently, was rare in Edmonton and Northern Alberta. SCD is a hereditary, chronic disease that causes debilitating pain and requires continuing medical care. As immigration patterns shift, our community has seen a significant increase in children with SCD, the majority of them from African countries.

“We need to know more about the experiences of the newcomer families in respect to disease, both here and in their countries of origin, to be able provide better care for them,” says Dr. Bruce, who also serves as medical lead for the Comprehensive Pediatric Sickle Cell Program of Northern Alberta. “We have received the funding from the Women and Children’s Health Research Institute (WCHRI) to carry out a qualitative study to understand the socio-cultural aspects of the disease among this group of patients. We have been fully engaged with the WCHRI/CUP qualitative research support team who is guiding us in the research process.”

Dr. Bruce’s study focuses on newcomer parents of children with SCD, through a series of interviews. She expects to complete it by the end of 2015.

Dr. Aisha Bruce and MaryAnne Venner NP with a newcomer family at the Stollery Children’s Hospital
NEW LEADERS IN ENGAGEMENT

A PLACE FOR GROWTH

My journey with CUP began in 2008, when I joined the Early Childhood Measurement and Evaluation portfolio as an intern in community-based research. Seven years later, after tackling a variety of roles and responsibilities across a range of projects, I am now working as a postdoctoral fellow.

CUP—through mentorship, learning opportunities, and collaborative space—helped me build the expertise needed to incorporate community-based participatory research (CBPR) into my own work. Over time, I learned to value CBPR as a way to combine research with community collaboration, respectful knowledge creation, and social action. Throughout my time at CUP, my views of CBPR have matured—from overly idealistic to more realistic. Although I still greatly value CBPR’s potential in inspiring social change, I also recognize the challenges inherent in the collaborative, participatory, and community-based process. This has made me both more critical and better prepared to effectively engage in CBPR.

My postdoctoral research project, Multicultural Early Childhood Assessment and Learning, reflects CBPR values and also represents a natural progression of the work I was involved with at CUP. The project responds to the need for a shared local knowledge base of determinants and indicators of early childhood development among immigrant and refugee families. In the coming year, we will collaborate closely with our community partners to synthesize knowledge and create knowledge translation tools (videos, handbooks, reports, workshops) to help build capacity for those working in this area.

Rebecca Georgis
CUP Postdoctoral Fellow
BEING THE BRIDGE

I remember an exchange I had a decade ago during a Masters class, as we discussed the gap between academics’ expertise in research and educators’ expertise in working day-to-day with children. “Who brings together universities and communities to bridge research and practice?” I asked. “No one,” I was told.

This conversation stayed with me for several years, until I eventually enrolled in a community-based research practicum during my doctoral studies at the University of Alberta. That was my “aha moment”—I realized I wanted to become one of those researchers who brings together universities and communities.

I became a research assistant at CUP in 2009, and four years later began my postdoctoral research with the support of a two-year Early Career Transition Award from the Alberta Centre for Child, Family & Community Research. CUP’s rich, interdisciplinary research environment, paired with exceptional supervision and mentoring, offered the perfect foundation on which to build skills in community-based research, measurement and evaluation, project development/management, ethical conduct, and knowledge mobilization. I learned a lot about the ‘how’ of community-based research—but, more importantly, I learned about the ‘why’. I feel excited and fortunate to take on new research challenges, to partner with others to work toward common goals, and to engage with families, community partners, and researchers to meet community needs.

I am now wrapping up my postdoctoral research, which examines positive practices when engaging people living with complex challenges into community-based research. In the process I have interviewed countless families, community partners, researchers, program planners, funders, and decision makers. I have surveyed fellow community-based researchers and other community partners. And it is clear that we all share the same goals. We want to pursue research that is both relevant and beneficial for families. We want to accommodate families’ needs, and to build trusting, respectful, long-term relationships with them. We want to make families aware of opportunities to maintain communication and to participate—equitably, honestly, and genuinely—with one another.

I hope that my work will lead to improved professional practice and enhanced research methods, and will help to advance collaborations between researchers, practitioners, policy makers, funders, and families.

Holly Stack-Cutler
CUP Postdoctoral Fellow
LOOKING AT IT ANOTHER WAY...

Having been with CUP a little more than five years now, I have witnessed firsthand the way a community-based research project can evolve. I have also experienced the shift that can occur within a researcher when given the opportunity to tackle a study from an entirely new perspective.

Since my arrival at CUP, I have worked on the Families First Edmonton (FFE) project. This longitudinal study collected an immense amount of quantitative and qualitative information on over 1,200 low-income Edmonton families. For my first four years I worked alongside the rest of the analysis team, mining the quantitative data. We were trying to figure out why some families and children live in poverty and, more importantly, what we can do to move them out of poverty. As 2014 drew to a close, however, I became increasingly convinced that statistical models alone wouldn’t provide all of the answers we were seeking.

So, I took a risk, supported by my directors. Despite the province’s push for evidence-based budgeting, I turned my efforts entirely to the qualitative data. FFE had collected over 70,000 case notes on families—approximately 11,000 pages of text. I started on page one and just kept reading. I was hooked! I learned about families’ struggles and triumphs, their harrowing struggles to stay afloat even when everything seemed to work against them. I read about impoverished families who somehow had to care for a very ill or dying member. I read about teenage mothers determined to complete their high-school educations. Highly educated newcomers unable to apply their skills in Edmonton. First Nations families trying to make a new life in the city, largely isolated from their relatives and friends.

As I read, I began to realize I would never find meaningful, actionable answers merely by hammering away at the quantitative data. The reality of an individual family cannot be reduced to a few dozen variables, smashed together with data from hundreds of other families to reveal some sudden, profound revelation.

So, I find myself on a new path of learning—one that combines both quantitative and qualitative study. When we talk about vulnerable families, who are they? What needs and barriers do they commonly face? Similarly, who is quick to rise out of poverty? How do these families differ from those who take longer, or whose grown children end up trapped in a similar cycle of hardship?

Laura Templeton  
CUP Research Associate
CONSIDERING OUR POLICY IMPACT

In reflecting critically on a number of recently completed CUP projects, we have begun to examine more fully CUP’s impact on public policy development. We wondered if there were better ways to develop community-based research (CBR) projects that would produce relevant and timely evidence to inform changes in public policy. The CUP Steering Committee considered the challenges of using evidence to influence policy and how CUP might contribute more fully to the development of evidence-based public policy. The committee decided to explore public policy development as a priority area for CUP.

CUP began with a review of the literature on public policy research related to children, youth, and families. We discovered a vast and varied body of literature which draws on traditions from sociology, economics, medicine, public health, political science, business and education. The academic literature contains papers exploring the ways evidence is used to inform policy. In addition, numerous non-profit and philanthropic organizations have created tools to help agencies influence public policy. Overall, the body of literature is fragmented and it is unclear whether policymakers see evidence as fundamental to building good public policy.

If effective public policy is the goal, what could or should be the nature of CUP’s involvement? Convening public policy discussion tables? Producing policy papers from evidence in the research literature? Being a repository for research related to children, youth and families? The Steering Committee will consider these and other questions in the coming year as we explore ways for CUP to help connect evidence and public policy.
CUP’s core operations are supported by contributions from community, government and university sources. We would like to thank all of our contributors for their generous and ongoing support.

CUP’s core operations are supported by the University of Alberta through three tenure-track academic staff positions within the Faculty of Extension, as well as extensive administrative and infrastructure related support.

In addition to core operating funds, each year CUP secures various forms of research project funding from outside the University, which facilitates additional capacity and allows us to hire project staff and students.

This chart highlights CUP’s cumulative project funding beginning in 2009 when CUP first joined the Faculty of Extension.
GET ENGAGED!

Every week, our CUP circle expands to include more partners, colleagues, and friends. The people we work with, and the communities we partner with, provide a treasured wealth of energy and inspiration.

Spread the word; there are many ways to connect with CUP:

- Share our stories and our goals with your colleagues.
- Access our resources, and tell us about your own needs.
- Talk to us about capacity building—and U of A’s academic opportunities in community-based research.

Visit us in person at our office in Enterprise Square, or at our website: cup.ualberta.ca. You can also follow us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/CUPCOM.

With your help and involvement, we look forward to celebrating even more successes in the coming years.
Committed to improving the development of children, youth, families and communities.
PUBLICATIONS

(Publications, Abstracts, Refereed Publications, Book Chapters)


Mayan MJ and Daum C (2014). Politics and public policy, social justice and qualitative research. In N. Denzin and M. Giardina (Eds), *Qualitative Research Outside the Academy* (pp. 73-91). Walnut Creek, CA: Leftcoast Press.


**PRESENTATIONS**

(Local, national/international: workshops, panels, conferences, keynote/presentations)


Mayan MJ (2014, July). *Qualitative Health Research*. Workshop for students and practitioners internationally but primarily from the US. The Odum Institute, Chapel Hill, North Carolina.


Mayan MJ (2014, June). *Introduction to Qualitative Inquiry*, Thinking Qualitatively Workshops, Edmonton, AB.

Mayan MJ (2014, June). *Rigour in Qualitative Inquiry*, Thinking Qualitatively Workshops, Edmonton, AB.


Mayan MJ (2015, March). Groups and community in intercultural health. Panel with David Morgan (US), Massimiliano Tarozzi (Italy) and Edith Cisneros-Coehnour (Mexico), at the 4th Global Congress for Qualitative Health Research, Merida, Mexico.


Ndlovu S, Boffa J, and Mayan, MJ (2014, June). Re-writing the principles of Community-Based Research for global research partnerships. Oral presentation at the annual Advances in Qualitative Methods Conference of the International Institute for Qualitative Methodology, Edmonton, AB.


Pullishy L, Mayan MJ, Lo S, and Drummond J [2014, September]. What are community, government, and academic partners’ experiences of using scientific and tacit knowledge to inform practice, programming, and policy for low-income families? Campus Alberta Student Conference On Health, Edmonton, AB.


Templeton L and Murphy L (2014, December). Examination of housing and childcare using Families First Edmonton data. Workshop, Edmonton, AB.

Templeton L (2014, September). Accessibility of services for low-income families living in the City of Edmonton. Workshop, Edmonton, AB.

Templeton L (2014, September). Families First Edmonton: A community-university partnership project. Presentation to the Mayor’s Task Force for the Elimination of Poverty in Edmonton, AB.

Templeton L (2014, April). Pathways out of poverty: Key findings using Families First Edmonton data. Workshop, Edmonton, AB.