We are pleased to introduce this year’s annual report under the theme of “Sharper Focus”. In our sixteenth year, CUP reflected on the progress and outcomes of our work. At CUP, we believe that practice, program, and policy should be grounded in the best evidence available. Our research is dynamic and participatory, engaging researchers, citizens, practitioners, and policy-makers. We gather evidence and build relationships across sectors to support the well-being of children, youth, families, and communities.

Through discussion across our network, we have been able to sharpen our focus to better connect research and knowledge to practices, programs, and policies. This year, we have considered ways that CUP could improve community and practitioner access to evidence, enhance capacity to use evidence effectively, and foster environments that support the use of evidence in decision-making. This annual report celebrates some of our successes.

The stories are snapshots of our sharper focus, of the strength of collective action when connected to rigorous, community-based participatory research and evaluation. Our 2015-2016 Annual Report outlines activities of the past year, but also shares CUP’s directions for the future, which include projects focused on three key areas:

- Research and evaluation in Early Child Development (ECD), including evaluation through the Evaluation Capacity Network (ECN) and knowledge mobilization through Rebecca Georgis’ postdoctoral work with the Multicultural Health Brokers;
- Research and evaluation related to poverty, especially through the development and implementation of plans for EndPovertyEdmonton (EPE); and
- Public policy analysis and development, including building the capacity of community and research teams to assemble evidence to inform practices, programs, and policies.

Beyond these strategic areas, CUP has done much recent work on integrating our capacity and mentoring efforts among several research teams and grad students. And, while not a new direction, CUP remains committed to enhancing the theory and practice of community-engaged research in all we undertake.

We appreciate your partnership with us, for the sake of the communities we share. CUP’s experiences and relationships with communities continue to generate great inspiration and purpose. We hope that they inspire you too!

[LL to R]: Jeff Bisanz and Martin Garber-Conrad CUP Steering Committee Co-Chairs
CUP Steering Committee 2015-16

CUP’s work is guided by the feedback and input of a Steering Committee, comprised of 28 members from across the community, university, and government. The contributions of our Steering Committee ensure that our work is both relevant to current issues and builds on the efforts of our partners. The collaborative and cross-sectoral nature of the committee allows members to explore diverse perspectives, develop further unique partnerships, consider ways evidence can inform practice and policy, and sharpen the focus of their work.

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

Jennifer Allen
Edmonton Public Schools

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 / Tracy Apoll
Multicultural Health Brokers Co-op

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

Sharla King
Health Sciences Education & 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

Lisa Sadownik
Alberta Human Services

Christopher Smith
Muttart Foundation

Judy Smith
Citizen Services
City of Edmonton

Jane Springett
School of Public Health
University of Alberta

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

Deanna Williamson
Human Ecology
University of Alberta

Wendy Yewman
Community Member
STEERING COMMITTEE SNAPSHOT

Lionel Dibden  
*Department of Pediatrics, University of Alberta – Member since 2003*

I cannot remember what it was like before being a member of the CUP Steering Committee! It is true this might be due to changes inherent in my neural pathways as I get older. But it is also true that my neural pathways have been affected by being part of the CUP Steering Committee: CUP has insinuated itself into the fabric of my being. It has provided a lens through which I see my work as a clinician, teacher, mentor, community partner, and advocate.

The “research methods overview” introduced into the pediatric resident orientation several years ago was, not surprisingly, focused on quantitative methodology within the scientific medical model. The absence of exposure to community-based research (CBR) was to my mind a major omission in a specialty where we recognize and focus on the importance of the social determinants of health. CUP’s expertise in CBR was a natural fit and connection to broaden residents’ orientation to research methodologies.

Recently, my colleagues in the community expressed a need to evaluate their trauma assessment triage process and CUP instantly came to mind. CUP has become more than just an organization with certain skills and expertise. It has become “a way of working”, a way of connecting university research expertise with community organizations, helping both parties sharpen the focus of their work.

Lisa Federspiel  
*Citizen Services, Community Inclusion & Investment Branch, City of Edmonton – Member since 2015*

I feel very fortunate to be able to represent my Director and our Department on the committee. In my work as a Family and Community Support Services (FCSS) Liaison Social Planner, I work with not-for-profit agencies that support the well-being of children and families. We support agencies and community partners financially, with policy and practice development, and with capacity building.

Being on the Committee brings richness to my understanding of the complexity of people’s lives, and informs how we can apply limited resources in the most impactful ways. Committee discussions are open, represent cross-sectoral perspectives, and provide a space to help us all understand the ways evidence works, and at times fails to work, in communities. I find the Committee to be a devoted group of people thinking creatively to translate what we know into what we do.

In my work at the Community Inclusion & Investment Branch, we focus on citizen-centred approaches to social inclusion. CUP is a critical partner in exploring and understanding the evidence behind this approach. For example, as our branch aligns more thoughtfully with the EndPovertyEdmonton movement, CUP’s attention to poverty-based research has proven instrumental.
ADVANCING EVALUATION IN THE FIELD OF EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

We recognize that children’s early experiences have lifelong consequences, and that providing children and parents with early supports can promote long-term positive development. Our past work on the Early Childhood Development Mapping project (ECMap) has shown us that despite significant investment in early childhood, children in Alberta continue to fall short in key areas of development. Over the past year, we have therefore sharpened the focus of our work in the field of early childhood development (ECD).

Building on years of research and partnerships, we are working to contribute much needed evidence and supports to ECD practitioners, agencies, and other stakeholders. Through our work, we aim to help practitioners improve outcomes for the children they serve, building the developmental foundations necessary for a successful and happy life.

The Evaluation Capacity Network (ECN) is a key initiative in this area. Evaluation is an important process for determining the effectiveness of programs, practices, and policies, and ultimately, for telling us where improvements can be made. Evaluation also guides effective decision-making for funders and policy-makers. However, many ECD practitioners face barriers to undertaking effective evaluation—that’s where CUP comes in!

The ECN brings together individuals and organizations committed to advancing evaluation in ECD. The main focus of this network is to provide opportunities for dialogue, co-learning, and sharing of resources among community organizations, funders, government agencies, academics, and consultants, with the end goal of enhancing understanding and delivery of effective evaluation practices.

Over the past year, the ECN has:

- Conducted an intersectoral needs assessment to fully understand the evaluation needs, capacities, and gaps in the ECD field.
- Developed a stimulus paper, “Advancing Evaluation Practices in the Field of Early Childhood Development.” This document served as the starting point for community dialogues, attended by 122 participants across Edmonton, Calgary, Lethbridge, and Grande Prairie.
- Engaged a total of 340 ECD stakeholders in a survey that gauges current knowledge, abilities, and leadership in evaluating ECD efforts.

Looking forward, the information gathered through the survey and dialogues will be used to develop a comprehensive and collective strategy towards enhancing evaluation practices across the field of ECD in Alberta.
PROMOTING POSITIVE MULTICULTURAL EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

Young children from immigrant and refugee families grow up in two cultures. They learn the languages spoken in these cultures, and have unique needs as well as strengths. The experiences of these children are not well understood or acknowledged in early learning and care settings and are often viewed as deficits in ability rather than cultural differences in early childhood development. The Multicultural Early Childhood Assessment and Learning (MECAL) project was created to bridge this research-practice gap and strengthen the intercultural capacity of educators and service providers working with young immigrant and refugee children.

MECAL builds on the work of previous CUP early childhood projects and partnerships. It brings together community agencies, school boards, government, and academic researchers to synthesize and mobilize knowledge about immigrant and refugee children’s early development, assessment, and learning in Canada. With a deeper understanding of multicultural ECD, we can better support immigrant and refugee children in ways that are intercultural, responsive to their needs, and inclusive of their cultural capital. Specifically, MECAL will increase awareness about family, community, and systemic factors that influence the cognitive, social, emotional, and cultural development of newcomer children. MECAL will also mobilize knowledge within the ECD field on the developmental competencies of immigrant and refugee children in Alberta, and the limitations of Western screening and assessment tools for measuring their development. Through this work, the project team aims to develop a comprehensive framework to improve multicultural early childhood service delivery and measurement in Alberta.

COMING INTO FOCUS: Knowledge Translation and Mobilization

Targeted knowledge mobilization can impact practice and how research is applied. In 2016-17, the MECAL project team will develop a video to engage early childhood educators and service providers in conversations about immigrant and refugee children’s multicultural development. The video will disseminate the framework using real-life examples and storytelling. A reflective guidebook will accompany the video to facilitate critical thinking, and reflection of best practices in early childhood learning and assessment for immigrant and refugee children. These tools will support a shared understanding and language among early childhood stakeholders and complement existing efforts towards more inclusive and intercultural practices in the ECD field. An advisory of educators, practitioners, decision-makers, and researchers is guiding the development of these tools. The tools will be evaluated and shared widely through existing networks to increase impact and reach.
BUILDING A ROAD MAP TO ACTION

Since 2014, CUP has been a key partner in EndPovertyEdmonton (EPE). EPE’s mission is to end poverty in Edmonton within a generation, starting by lifting 10,000 Edmontonians out of poverty within five years. Such an ambitious goal calls for collective community vision and action from diverse city stakeholders such as business leaders, service workers, policy-makers, and academics.

Throughout all stages of EPE work, CUP members have brought their expertise in research processes, policy development, community engagement, and collaboration to the development of the EPE Strategy (approved by City Council October 2015) and the EPE Implementation Road Map (approved by City Council May 2016). Here are a few highlights from the past year:

- CUP Assistant Director Maria Mayan and Research Associate Laura Templeton worked as members of the team, along with city staff and other stakeholders, to develop the EPE Road Map, which identifies key milestones for progress and starting points for community change. Designed to be flexible and responsive to dynamic and changing environments that influence poverty, the Road Map also lays the foundations for the EPE stewardship body, the entity that will be responsible for overseeing the initiative over the next five years.

- Christopher Smith, Gloria Chalmers, and Jeff Bisanz from the CUP Steering Committee supported broad community and expert discussions specific to the early childhood EPE strategic priorities.

- CUP also started conversations and began working with city staff to develop a measurement and evaluation framework for the EPE Road Map.

A core component of CUP’s contribution to EPE has been our commitment to community-based participatory research and rigorous evaluation practices. Our work has been informed by and done in true partnership with individuals who have experienced poverty firsthand, honouring their expertise and diverse insights. CUP’s active and welcome involvement in all stages of this initiative is a sign of an important shift in the policy development process, where research and community accountability is considered essential for understanding community matters.

COMING INTO FOCUS: Community Accountability

With financial and in-kind support flooding in from organizations, EndPovertyEdmonton represents a significant investment for our city. As members of the EPE Road Map team, Maria Mayan and Laura Templeton brought important questions of accountability to the table: How will we measure poverty? What do we mean when we promise to “lift people out of poverty”? How will we know we are making an impact? With these contributions, evaluation and accountability are embedded in the Road Map.

Maria Mayan is continuing this work as part of the research and evaluation team, which will develop a comprehensive evaluation framework, including a theory of change and logic model, shared measurement system, and robust measure of poverty. These tools will help the coming EPE stewardship body measure their long-term impact and relevance. As well, Maria and Jeff serve on the transition team working to ensure EPE continues to move forward as the stewardship body is established.
FOCUS ON PUBLIC POLICY

SHARING EVIDENCE TO INFORM PROGRAMS AND POLICIES

It is evident that CUP is committed to supporting evidence-informed practices, programs, and policies. However, we know that sometimes, there is a gap between what we know, and how it is translated into decision-making. This past year, CUP has become more purposeful in considering how evidence can be more effectively linked to actions. In particular, within our existing partnerships, we have been reflecting on the ways in which the evidence generated through CUP’s projects is impacting the development of relevant practices, programs, and policies that benefit children, youth, families, and communities.

CUP brings this lens of considering the impact of our research to all areas of our work. Our collaborative and relationship-focused approach fosters unique discussions across multiple disciplines, providing opportunities to better understand the practical applications of community-based research and consultation for developing and implementing policy.

CUP’s work with EndPovertyEdmonton stands out as a strong example of the strength of this approach, and serves as a model for how we can continue to improve how our research is translated to positive outcomes. The implementation and action required to bring EndPovertyEdmonton’s (EPE) Implementation Road Map to life relies on the collaboration and momentum of numerous agencies, organizations, programs, and services across the community, government, and private sector. The complexity of services needed to support families in their journey out of poverty requires strong communication among all service and program providers involved. CUP worked collaboratively with numerous partners to move EPE planning efforts forward through synthesizing existing knowledge and data, supporting collaborative discussions, and distilling the results of these discussions into feasible recommendations for evidence-informed decisions.

COMING INTO FOCUS: Bringing Research to Life

Since 2014, CUP staff have mined long-term poverty-related datasets, including Families First Edmonton, to create typologies or case stories of families living in poverty in Edmonton. These family stories were built into and used to critically evaluate the content, relevance, and development of the EPE Strategy and Implementation Road Map. They served as important checkpoints against which to test the relevance of the identified goals and to consider potential gaps and misalignment between policies and the actual impact on families. The family stories are now also being used as training tools for family service organizations in the city, to offer staff insight into the realities faced by their clients living in poverty.

This past year, CUP Director Laurie Schnirr re-engaged former Families First Edmonton families to explore how families living with poverty (currently or in the past) can have a greater say in government decision-making about community services. Twenty focus group participants and 45 online survey respondents offered perspectives on the proposed EPE strategies and action areas.

COMING INTO FOCUS: Collaborating to Learn and Align

In Winter 2015/16, CUP partnered with the Muttart Foundation to host engagement events with local experts and other stakeholders in the area of early learning and care services. The purpose of these discussions was to inform how EPE will implement strategic priority #23 of the Strategy: To plan and implement a system of early learning and care. In addition, participants were also able to build partnerships, share knowledge, and explore opportunities to find efficiencies and align services across sectors.
STAFF SNAPSHOT

Our partnership with the Women and Children’s Health Research Institute (WCHRI), is eight years strong this year. Over that time, we have offered qualitative research, knowledge translation, and community/patient engagement support to over 34 health research studies. Maria Mayan serves as a WCHRI Academic Lead and a member of the Scientific Advisory Committee and Tatjana Alvadj is the research coordinator that provides expertise to health research teams so patient perspectives are carried into clinical and community practice.

When I started working with CUP and WCHRI I have to admit, I was anxious. I was trained in qualitative inquiry and accustomed to collaborative environments, involving a multitude of research partners, many of them non-academics. I was about to enter the world of clinical health research, which is typically characterized by hierarchical organization of work, authority of academic expertise, and a predominantly positivist research paradigm. I wondered if I would ever get comfortable in this setting.

Fortunately, health research at that time was already in transition. There was a shift in expectations; research evidence should have a more immediate and positive impact on the lives of patients and communities. In turn, there was a need for integrated knowledge translation strategies and patient-oriented research. The CUP/WCHRI team recognized the momentum and used their expertise to create a process to help clinicians meet these new expectations. By incorporating qualitative research methods and the participation of non-academic stakeholders (patients, caregivers, front-line clinical staff, community organizations), clinicians were better able to understand the true needs of those affected most by a medical issue, practice, and/or policy.

As an example, I worked with a team of clinicians on a qualitative study that showed that immigrant parents with children living with Sickle Cell Disease (SCD) did not know they were carriers of the trait before their children were diagnosed. This information forced clinicians to change their initial knowledge translation plan. Instead of only modifying clinical practice based on research findings, results were shared with community-based organizations, such as the Multicultural Health Brokers, who are able to raise awareness in the community about SCD, its hereditary nature, and prevention.

During the research process, the clinicians and I worked as a true team, easily establishing mutual appreciation for our respective expertise. I must say, this kind of experience in my work is not an anomaly anymore. And I am definitely no longer anxious about my work. On the contrary, I find inspiration and purpose every time I participate in studies in which clinicians, patients, caregivers, community organizations, and researchers recognize how much they need each other.

Tatjana Alvadj
(Research Coordinator)
FOCUS ON SUPPORT

FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS AND PROJECT FUNDING

CUP manages over $1 million per year in research and operational funding. Research funding is targeted to specific projects, whereas operational funding provides support for project development, administrative, and coordinating functions fundamental to the development of new initiatives. We are fortunate that the University of Alberta, through the Faculty of Extension, provides funding for 4 faculty members who lead CUP’s research initiatives.

CUP FUNDING 2015-16 (RESEARCH & OPERATIONAL)

- **46% University of Alberta**
  Funding that supports research initiatives as well as faculty positions.

- **6% Community**
  Funding from community organization partners for operational support.

- **11% Tri-Council**
  Funding received from SSHRC in support of research initiatives.

- **23% Other Granting Agencies**
  Funding from a variety of community and granting agencies to support specific research initiatives.

- **14% Municipal & Provincial Government**
  Funding from City of Edmonton and the Government of Alberta to support both operational and research initiatives.

CORE FUNDERS

We would like to acknowledge the following funders for their generous and ongoing support of our core operations.
Looking forward, CUP continues to explore how our research can have a meaningful impact on pressing social issues. With each new project, we ask: How can we structure the research process to ensure results are relevant and actionable? What partners can we engage to support knowledge sharing? How can we translate what we learn to different contexts? Who needs to be at the table to ensure our communities take a lead in developing the programs and policies that impact their lives?

As we embark on another exciting year, we are deepening our understanding of the communities we serve. The people we engage in research provide a treasured wealth of energy and inspiration. With their help and involvement, we look forward to another 16 years of successes!

To learn more about CUP, or how you can get involved with our work, visit us in person at our office in Enterprise Square, or at our website: www.uab.ca/cup. You can also join us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/CUPCOM.
PUBLICATIONS

(Publications, Abstracts, Refereed Publications, Book Chapters)


Mayan M, and Daum C. (2016). Beyond dissemination: Community-based research for generating and applying qualitative research evidence. In K. Olson, R. Young & I. Schultz (Eds.), Handbook of Qualitative Health Research for Evidence-Based Practice (pp 441-452). New York: Springer.


PRESENTATIONS

(Local, national/international, workshops, panels, conferences, keynote, invited)


Daum C, Liu L, and **Mayan M**. (2015, June). Thinking outside the home: Examining the function of activities in the lives of older women residing in inner city neighbourhoods. Poster presented at Faculty of Rehabilitation Medicine Research Day, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta. Won Best Poster Presentation.

**Mayan M**. (2015, June). *Foundations of Qualitative Inquiry*. Thinking Qualitatively Workshop Series, International Institute for Qualitative Methodology, University of Alberta

**Mayan M**. (2015, June). *Community-Based Participatory Research*. Thinking Qualitatively Workshop Series, International Institute for Qualitative Methodology, University of Alberta

Pullishy L, **Mayan M**, Lo S, Richter S, and Drummond J. (2015, June). *How Do Integrated Knowledge Translation Partners Poise themselves to use research findings to Improve Practice, Programming, and Policy for Families Living in Poverty?* Oral Presentation at 6th International In Sickness and In Health Conference, Palma de Mallorca, Spain

