2018-19 ANNUAL REPORT

THE COMPLEX JOURNEY TO POLICY
This year CUP’s annual report is focused on sharing progress from a new area of emphasis in our partnerships; which is policy. Since our inception, our mission has been to create environments where partners can generate new knowledge to inform their practice, programs, or policies but this new focus is deeper and more intentional.

This new focus required us to reconsider how we support our partners in their journey to identify research questions, to consider emerging learning, and to decide on how new knowledge can be applied to either their organization or to public policy. It required our faculty, staff, and students to explore their role in the journey and to ask hard questions. If we are partners in the generation, interpretation, and mobilization of new knowledge, how do we hone our skills and expertise to best support the process? How do we best support partners with their organizational policy interests yet also be aware of cross cutting issues of policy concern? How do we develop adaptive knowledge mobilization approaches that draw on the collective knowledge of partners? And in the end, what role should CUP play in public policy conversations?

Over the past five years, we have likely asked more questions than we have answered but we have learned a great deal about this complex journey:

- There isn’t a straight line from the knowledge gained in a community-based research project to informed organizational or public policy change.
- We need to be ready when a window opens.
- We need to be strategic, thoughtful, and patient in the process.
- We need to build and expand our relationships.
- We are but one organization in a very large field of policy related work and expertise.

In considering all we have learned, we reflect on what CUP brings to such policy conversations:

- A desire to learn.
- Our partners and their willingness to explore new ideas and policy opportunities in their own work.
- Our collective desire to bring added value to emerging and ongoing policy dialogue.
- Our passion to support our partners in ensuring the best possible outcomes for children, youth and families.

Our stories illustrate various scales of impact in areas such as early learning and care, parenting in the digital age, evaluation capacity building, food insecurity, and mental health supports for students. I want to thank all of our partners, faculty, staff, and students for being on this journey. There is strong momentum in our conversations and emerging actions, I cannot wait to see what next year brings.

Karen Edwards
Director
"My hope is that CUP’s policy focused work will improve and enhance community organizations’ capacity to engage in policy dialogue and effectively advocate for children and families."

CHRISTINA NSALIWA
EDMONTON IMMIGRANT SERVICES ASSOCIATION

"Policy focused work is a complex and challenging undertaking. The value-laden and ideological nature of policy and policy processes can limit the impact of research evidence in policy decision making. This is particularly the case within the current socio-political context, which is characterized by increasingly polarized views among policy decision makers, practitioners, and the public about policy problems, goals, and solutions. My long-term hope is that within this context, CUP’s policy focused work will demonstrate how much better served children, youth, and families can be when policies are based on high quality rigorous research."

DEANNA WILLIAMSON
HUMAN ECOLOGY, UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

"My hope is that like all of the work of CUP the policy work will support what is in the best interests of children, youth and families through linking communities, agencies and governments with the ever growing number of academics with policy expertise. It is also my hope that all policy decisions will be passed through two questions:

1. What is the impact of this policy on children?
2. Is the proposed policy in the best interests of children?"

LIONEL DIBDEN
PEDIATRICS, UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

By asking questions about public policy and supporting knowledge exchange, CUP helps enhance understanding of the linkages between socio-economic drivers, government processes and public support. This understanding contributes to the relevance, reliability and actualization of long-term feasible solutions for complex social issues and has the ability to strengthen the social ecosystem."

MARNI PEARCE
ALBERTA CHILDREN’S SERVICES
An institute is an organization that supports a cause. For the Women and Children’s Health Research Institute (WCHRI), we support making a positive impact on women’s and children’s health through discovery, innovation and, ultimately, through transformation of how health care is conceptualized and delivered. In our accounts, we often prefer to focus on the end result—the desired point of transformation—overlooking the importance of a long, convoluted and bumpy pathway from the research knowledge to its implementation through policy and practice. Where does it start? What does it take? Can a research institute like WCHRI be a travelling companion on that journey and help move knowledge into practice or policy?

Let’s use WCHRI’s Clinical/Community Research Integration Support Program (CRISP) as an example. While CRISP funds research that has the potential to influence health outcomes and/or improve practice, it offers more than just financial support. It provides skilled support to the investigators, tailored to meet their specific research requirements throughout the project’s life cycle. In 2019, however, WCHRI began to question the end point of that life cycle, conventionally marked by exhausted funds and final report submission. We decided to explore the space further down the road, where knowledge waited to be mobilized and a change implemented. We looked back through our database of funded projects and selected those that seemed to have potential policy and/or practice implications. Meetings with researchers were organized to find out “what now?” and discuss ways in which WCHRI might help. Through this process we are starting to develop strategies to move evidence to action. This often involves simple strategies such as encouraging researchers to continue working on promising studies, connecting them with other relevant clinical and community actors, assessing opportunities to develop knowledge translation tools, or seeking creative ways to disseminate evidence through our communications channels. It may also involve more complicated strategies such as mobilizing our partners, articulating a position, advocating for resources, or taking a stand.

By opening this door, we are building closer relationships with WCHRI researchers, showing them that we are invested in their success and willing to support their efforts. Ultimately, we are confident that together we will find pathways to practice and policy change!

TATJANA ALVADJ (CUP) & TANYA VOTH (WCHRI)

Don’t walk behind me; I may not lead. Don’t walk in front of me; I may not follow. Just walk beside me and be my friend.

ALBERT CAMUS
CUP has always focused on early learning and care. In recent years, that focus has expanded to include working with EndPoverty269 Edmonton’s efforts to improve early learning and care in Edmonton as part of its larger goal of ending poverty within a generation. In turn, most of CUP’s work in this area has been through a partnership with the Edmonton Council for Early Learning and Care, a group of experts from a wide variety of backgrounds and organizations with a singular goal: ensure that all Edmontonians have access to affordable, high-quality child care.

The Story of Southside Mother’s Day Out
In her work in early learning and care, part of which involves the newly formed Edmonton Council for Early Learning and Care, Gloria Chalmers speaks with a variety of people in the field. Recently, she spoke with Shea Wicks, director of Southside Mother’s Day Out (SSMDO), a child care program located in Donnan School. Unfortunately, SSMDO soon must leave Donnan. In trying to find a new location, Shea has learned about the web of public policies that affect early learning and care in Edmonton. Gloria initiated a series of conversations with Shea, Rob Buschmann from CUP, and other members of the Council. These culminated in a written account of Shea’s efforts, the obstacles she met, and identification of provincial and municipal policies that constrain options. This account will be presented to ECELC as a case study for Council discussion. It is not clear what impact the still-unfolding story will ultimately have on early learning and care policies. The story, however, will help the Council better understand what can and should be done to help high-quality, affordable child care programs come to, or stay in, Edmonton.

GLORIA CHALMERS

Improving Early Learning and Care over the Long Run
Christopher Smith spends his days thinking about, and actively working to improve, early learning and care in Alberta and in Canada. The journey to all families having access to affordable, high-quality early learning and care is a long and complicated one, though, and will undoubtedly require policies to change at many levels of government over many years. As one of his many efforts at the Muttart Foundation to improve early learning and care, Chris works with the Edmonton Council for Early Learning and Care and CUP in determining what ongoing data gathering and research will be most critical to support positive policy change over the long run in Edmonton. This important relationship will help CUP understand the complex and constantly changing field of early learning and care policy, and how to position its own work to contribute to this critical area.

CHRISTOPHER SMITH
Growing up Digital is a collaborative project between the University of Alberta, the Alberta Teachers' Association, and Harvard University. The primary goal of the collaborative is to understand the short and long term impacts of near constant exposure to digital technology for developing children and for their families.

In just over a decade since the emergence of the first smartphone in 2007, the reach of mobile devices extends into almost every aspect of our daily lives and the lives of younger generations. Currently, technology and media infuse every aspect of children’s lives; they use it in their homes, in their schools, and often, in their free time. We have come a long way from concerns about long term television exposure, which is much easier, as a caregiver, to monitor or to simply shut off.

Mobile devices are always accessible, and coupled with social media, children are not only exposed to content, they are participants in creating it and reacting to it. In addition, the amount of time that children now spend exposed to digital technology is far greater than at any time in our history. Increased screen time often comes at the expense of other activities. The 2014 Active Healthy Kids Canada Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth awarded Canadian children and youth a grade of “F” for excessive sedentary behaviors, in part due to extensive screen time. These observations have led to growing concern about the impacts of device exposure for young children whose brains and bodies are still developing. With advanced technology becoming an integral part of modern life, how can parents and policy makers balance the necessity of children embracing technology while minimizing mental and physical risks associated with too much exposure?

To date, we have had the opportunity to present our research to many parent and community groups. Some tips we encourage include:

- have a plan for technology use in your home, and do not allow technology to fill every space of your home;
- make sure you, as a parent, are practicing what you preach by minimizing screen time;
- make sure children log off before bed time as blue light emissions from devices can inhibit sleep;
- teach children to think critically about online content they come across.

As this study progresses, we will continue to provide information to parents, teachers, children and policy makers as they navigate best practices for device exposure and decision making for future generations.

JASON DANIELS (CUP)
RAISED BETWEEN CULTURES: INTEGRATING LEARNING INTO PRACTICE

For an early childhood practitioner in Canada, a country often referred to as a ‘cultural mosaic’, it is important to recognize that concepts of healthy childhood development differ across diverse cultural contexts. Yet, many who work with culturally diverse children are unaware of the cultural influences that shape early childhood development. In addition, many newcomer families are faced with multiple challenges and barriers that influence the everyday contexts in which children live and develop. In response, the Multicultural Early Childhood Assessment and Learning partnership developed the RAISED Between Cultures Model, a conceptual model of multicultural early childhood development designed to promote intercultural practice and reflection.

Together with our community partners, we created a video and reflective guidebook to facilitate understandings of the RAISED model, and to date, have provided 16 workshops to over 400 early childhood development programs and practitioners across Alberta. These workshops have created a space for practitioners to share their experiences supporting diverse children and families, reflect on current practices, challenge existing assumptions, and acknowledge the need to ask more questions. Following these workshops, several post-secondary institutions across Alberta have integrated the RAISED model into their early childhood training programs and professional development. For example, at Bow Valley College, Early Childhood Education and Development Diploma students are encouraged to use the RAISED model when reflecting on their case stories. With this, instructors at the college have noted “richer discussions, both online and face-to-face, related to how educators and practitioners can better support diverse children and families.”

There continues to be significant interest in the RAISED resources with ongoing requests to deliver workshops to early childhood agencies and practitioners across Alberta. With continued efforts to promote understandings of the complex intercultural realities in the early years, we anticipate ripple effects into research, practice, and policy.

ANNA KIROVA (EDUCATION) & TERESA MEJIA (CUP)
For over a decade, CUP has been contacted by community-based organizations for evaluation support. Whether the need was a means of recruiting students with evaluation skills, or consultation with staff for large initiatives, the sheer number of requests was outweighing our ability to respond. With this, the Evaluation Capacity Network was formed, a community-university collaboration created to better understand and address these evaluative needs. More recently, the idea of a centralized evaluation hub as a vehicle to build the community’s capacity to gather, interpret and apply evidence has finally begun to take form as the EvalHub. The EvalHub will be a physical space to seek in-person support, as well as a virtual one to access evaluation resources, expertise, learning opportunities, and networks.

In Spring 2019, as one of EvalHub’s first capacity building initiatives, we piloted a one-week evaluation institute (UEval) with 52 mixed learners (i.e., undergraduates, graduates, and community professionals). Among them, several community participants had the unique experience of engaging in UEval as both a learner and key informant to a case study submitted by their organization. At the end of the week, each organization left UEval with an evaluation framework co-created with students and colleagues.

As Heather Boonstra, Executive Director of Fort Saskatchewan Families First Society, shared, the “case group experience will influence the way I approach my community group work moving forward...There was much about the content that was reaffirming for me, showing me that my organization is on the right track. This is significant because if we are already doing so many things right, then that makes “good” evaluation much more tangible for our agency. It means that making evaluation an integrated, naturally occurring part of the work we do, is an achievable goal.”

SHELLY JUN, JASON DANIELS, & REBECCA GOKIERT (CUP)
A NATIONAL CAPACITY BUILDING STRATEGY IN THE REFUGEE-SERVING SECTOR

At the close of 2018, Canada joined the international community in signing the United Nations Global Compact on Refugees, a renewed commitment and political will to improve refugee situations. With the influx of displaced refugees entering the country, more than ever before, it has become a priority to ensure that refugee-serving programs are truly meeting the needs of refugee newcomers.

The Evaluating Refugee Programs project, funded by Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) and in partnership with the Centre for Community Based Research (CCBR), aims to build the capacity of local refugee-serving organizations to conduct community-based evaluations of their programs. Why community-based evaluation? No one knows more about the priorities, goals, and needs of refugee newcomers than program stakeholders themselves! Prior evaluations in this sector have relied on expert, but arms-length, consultations, thus missing the community’s voice. Moreover, without any existing standardized tools to measure outcomes in the refugee-serving sector, these evaluations have been inconsistent in their assessments of “improved” situations. Through community-based evaluations, stakeholders will be recognized as experts on their own experiences, and meaningful program improvements will be possible.

By training and supporting refugee-serving organizations to conduct community-based evaluations as part of their day-to-day work, and fostering practice and program changes, integration and wellbeing of refugees may improve at a national level. One key initiative of this capacity building strategy is to offer workshops on community-based evaluation across Canada. Our CUP team will be leading workshops in Western Canada—Vancouver, Surrey, Edmonton, Calgary, Saskatoon—while our partners at CCBR will take on Winnipeg, Toronto, Ottawa, Moncton, and Halifax. Together, in May 2019, we piloted the first workshop in Waterloo, ON. These are free, full-day training sessions, dedicated to those working in the refugee-serving sector.

To find a workshop closest to you, visit: https://www.eval4refugee.ca/workshops-

SHELLY JUN, JASON DANIELS & REBECCA GOKIERT (CUP)

CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE (EVAL4REFUGEE.CA) TO SEE OUR VIDEO TOOLKIT GIVING AN OVERVIEW OF COMMUNITY-BASED EVALUATION IN THE REFUGEE-SERVING SECTOR!
ALL IN FOR YOUTH: DISCOVERING OPPORTUNITIES FOR POLICY WORK THROUGH EVALUATION

For the last three years, CUP has worked closely with the All In for Youth (AIFY) initiative and its partners on a multi-year evaluation. We have co-developed an evaluation approach, coordinated evaluation activities, and shared learnings. The AIFY partners are active participants in the evaluation and, at CUP, are constantly learning more about this collaborative partnership and its diverse evaluation needs. In addition, the CUP knowledge mobilization coordinator has been supporting AIFY in its knowledge sharing needs (e.g., identifying and sharing key messages about AIFY to different audiences; co-developing resources to share with government stakeholders).

While we have focused on conducting the evaluation to date, more recently, we have started to identify ways findings from the AIFY evaluation can influence policy. As an example, we learned through the AIFY evaluation that existing policies around information sharing (e.g., how schools can share information with agency partners and vice versa) can become a barrier to more effective and efficient service delivery. While this example is specific to AIFY, it is relevant to other collaborative partnerships that also share information to work together more efficiently and effectively. The successes of AIFY can be used to bring light to this issue and how existing policies may need to change to allow collaborative partnerships to work well together and produce the best outcomes. We will continue to support AIFY with their evaluation, but with our AIFY partners, we also have opportunities to start exploring ways AIFY can use key learnings from their work to influence existing policy and systems (e.g., influence school board policies, community agency policies).

TERESA MEJIA & JASON DANIELS (CUP)
One of the policy issues we are currently working on is the issue of data sharing. You have probably received a multitude of invitations over the past 12 months to learn about, discuss, share, or innovate around data sharing. So perhaps we should not have been surprised that when we explored our projects for policy related issues, one of our major evaluation projects identified the challenges of data sharing as a barrier to service delivery for youth in need.

This issue sparked a dialogue across our organization about how data sharing problems might be impacting the social sector in general across Edmonton. In the social sector, client data is foundational in allowing people to receive the right services at the right time. When multiple agencies are working with the same clients, sharing client data can ensure that services are offered in a coordinated way. We wondered whether other CUP projects were impacted by data sharing issues and what added value CUP could bring to better understand and articulate this issue.

Through multiple conversations we mapped existing data issues and initiatives. It was clear we needed to have a collaborative conversation amongst partners to truly understand the issues they were experiencing, the goals for existing data sharing initiatives, and the ongoing gaps. We established a working group to help us develop a project that would complement existing initiatives, enable CUP to add a unique voice to the ongoing conversation, and produce new learning that would be a catalyst for other data related policy initiatives.

In our first two meetings, the working group quickly identified many types of concerns around data sharing including: data protection, infrastructure, legislation, and data ownership. Deepening the complexity of these conversations was that each organization’s perspective on data sharing varied in scope and scale and was shaped by the kind of work they are engaged in.

Based on our conversations internally and with the working group, CUP will begin to explore agencies’ experiences with sharing (or not sharing) data, the impact of data sharing on client services, and plausible solutions to support data sharing among social serving agencies. As this policy journey continues to evolve, our hope is to identify avenues for enhanced data supports for agencies, contribute to collaborative program and policy changes, and ultimately foster an environment where agencies can access the resources they need to best serve their clients.

ROB BUSCHMANN, SENNAIT YOHANNES, & KAREN EDWARDS (CUP)
GROWING AN EMERGENCY FOOD PROGRAM INTO A CITY-WIDE FOOD SECURITY SYSTEM

Since 2016, CUP has collaborated with the Multicultural Health Brokers Co-operative (MCHB) to support migrant families facing food insecurity. Food insecurity is the inadequate or insecure access to food due to financial barriers and migrant families are far more likely to experience food insecurity than other Canadians. In response to this issue, the Grocery Run was established to provide same-day food for families in crisis. The Grocery Run operates using a food rescue model, where volunteers collect surplus food from vendors and distribute it to families.

Despite the success of the Grocery Run, it was created with an understanding that multifaceted systemic approaches are ultimately necessary to address a current gap in the food system between charity-based strategies and market-priced food and increase access to high-quality, affordable food for families with a range of needs. To address this gap, we are currently developing strategies that will allow newcomers to access food at below-market prices, including a mobile grocery store and bulk-purchasing co-op.

The mobile grocery store will be a year-round, community-driven “grocery store on wheels” that provides healthy and affordable foods at discounted prices, specifically targeting communities with high numbers of low-income families, including newcomers. The bulk-purchasing co-op will provide food to families based on a sliding scale of cost, so that all families can access healthy, culturally appropriate food, regardless of income. Individuals with greater access to financial resources will pay higher rates for this food, generating funds that will subsidize costs for members who cannot afford to pay as much (or anything).

Although the mobile market and the bulk-purchasing initiatives will be more sustainable and reliable than a charity model, ongoing policy efforts are required to sustainably address the persistent problem of food insecurity for all Canadians.

BETHAN KINGSLEY & MARIA MAYAN (CUP)
ASQ Child Development Screening Project
(Alberta Resource Centre for Quality Enhancement)

Project Purpose: to enhance the capacity of family child care providers, home visitors and parent link centre practitioners to use specific early child development screening tools [Ages and Stages Questionnaires (ASQ-3) and ASQ: Social and Emotional (ASQ-SE-2)] and use the results to create more developmentally stimulating and responsive environments for children aged 0-5 years.

“We have used the learnings from the evaluation process to tailor our project to our sector’s needs. For example, we have created different streams of support, planned professional development activities, and developed processes to assist programs with follow up support for children and families. We would like to see all children and families supported in the programs that care for them through universal developmental screening.”

NIKKI GRUNWALD
PROJECT COORDINATOR

Kid Kits Evaluation Project
(United Way of the Alberta Capital Region)

Project Purpose: The Kid Kit® is a resource that aims to increase parents’ capacity to engage in play and responsive interactions that support child development. With the involvement of a trusted family practitioner, the Kid Kit intends to strengthen parents’ understanding of child development and learn new ways to play with and support their child.

“We are hoping to learn what is working and what changes we need to make in order to have the best impact for families with young children. We are working to increase capacity of families to support early childhood development and the process of learning how to collect the right information in the most appropriate ways from families, is critical to understanding the impact we are having.”

ILENE FLEMING
PROJECT MANAGER

Communities United
(City of Edmonton, Edmonton Community Foundation, & United Way of the Alberta Capital Region)

Project Purpose: to build on community strengths and interests in building a neighbourhood-based strategy to reduce poverty in five northeast Edmonton neighbourhoods. It brokers collaborative opportunities with diverse involvement of stakeholders across the community (individuals, organizations, businesses, local changemakers, and the sector) that leverage existing strengths and resources and support local economic development.

“For the initiative as a whole, I would like to see this work create a shift towards committing to long-term, robust, and relevant approaches to community development. This would factor in the changing realities of the job market [technology, gig economy, innovation, clean energy, urban food, etc.], the impacts of a changing climate, sustainability, as well as complex evaluation and measures of success.”

MATTHEW TAYLOR
COORDINATOR
WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED ABOUT THE COMPLEXITY OF POLICY IN YOUR CUP PROJECT EXPERIENCE?

“I’ve learned that the structures accommodating policy do not always match the dynamic nature of community-based initiatives. Policy frameworks often require change to be measured according to specific standards that are difficult to capture, making it hard to accurately evaluate a program’s value. Although policy establishes standards for evaluation and reporting, it can also overlook valuable evidence of change and growth that fall outside of those standards.”

MISCHA TAYLOR, MA STUDENT
FACULTY OF EXTENSION

“Working at CUP has taught me a lot about the complexity of policy. I heard often from community partners how evaluation requirements for funders were not in alignment with their needs. At the same time, I heard from funding agencies that they want to work with community partners to ensure evaluation requirements were in alignment with organizational and client needs. Hence, one issue to address is the lack of communication between those developing policy and those adhering to policy.”

EMMA WALLACE, MA STUDENT
FACULTY OF EXTENSION

“The ongoing evolution of policy, and in particular as it relates to family, remains at times a complex, uncoordinated, and controversial undertaking. The work I have been involved with through CUP represents a growing eradication of the rigid boundaries once held between academic policy knowledge and collective expertise within community. Growth in acknowledgement of the role of evaluative community capacity building has added additional forward momentum.”

CHELSEA FREEBORN, PHD STUDENT
DEPT OF HUMAN ECOLOGY

“As a graduate student researcher at CUP, I found that when collaborating with multiple stakeholders on a research project, existing legislation can sometimes prevent knowledge sharing between partners. Partners may face added difficulties when trying to change policy if their obligations span several levels of governance. Thus, there are significant complexities and nuances to consider when translating collaborative efforts on a policy level.”

CHELSEA DURBER, PHD STUDENT
DEPT OF EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

“Through my project experiences at CUP I have certainly learned the complexity of policy and how prominent it should be throughout the research process. The mobilization of research findings into policy is not a simple task and is more impactful if considered during the initial stages of research. That way, policy change can be woven, developed, and evaluated throughout the project rather than being an afterthought.”

ERICA PARTRIDGE, PHD STUDENT
DEPT OF EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY
CUP receives its core funding from a variety of university, community, government, and funding agency sources. Core funding enables CUP to support project development, management, brokering, administration, and coordination roles that are critical for the development of new initiatives. CUP also receives funding specifically to conduct collaborative research and evaluation projects with our partners. This funding enables us to develop strong research teams inclusive of coordinators, assistants, and graduate students who work collaboratively with community partners on these projects. We are privileged that the University of Alberta (Faculty of Extension) provides CUP with the physical space that we call home as well as the funding for the faculty members who provide leadership for CUP’s research and evaluation projects. This year CUP managed approximately $1.5 million in operational and project funding from agencies, levels of government, community partners, and the University of Alberta.

WE WOULD LIKE TO THANK ALL OF OUR FUNDING PARTNERS THIS PAST YEAR FOR THEIR SUPPORT OF OUR WORK.
CONFERENCES, PRESENTATIONS, GUEST LECTURES
(Local, national/international, workshops, panels, conferences, keynote, invited)


PUBLICATIONS

Publications, Abstracts, Refereed Publications, Book Chapters


COMMUNITY-UNIVERSITY PARTNERSHIP STEERING COMMITTEE

Tracy Apoll
Multicultural Health Brokers Co-op

Jeffrey Bisanz (Co-Chair)
Department of Psychology
University of Alberta

Vera Caine
Faculty of Nursing
University of Alberta

Katy Campbell
Faculty of Extension
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Gloria Chalmers
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Lionel Dibden
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Cecilia Fenrich
Edmonton Catholic Schools

Ilene Fleming
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