



**UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA**  
CENTRE FOR HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

# **Centre for Healthy Communities**

## **2017 - 2020:**

### **Building A Centre, Forging Healthy Futures**


BRIEF REPORT TO COMMUNITY  
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A CENTRE OF THE  
SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH

## OVERVIEW

The Centre for Healthy Communities (CHC) works with multi-sectoral partners and communities to address complex health issues that impact health, well-being, vitality, and sustainability.



**Vision:** To forge a future for every community that is healthy, sustainable, and flourishing.

**Mission:** To promote flourishing, healthy communities across Alberta and Canada through multi-sectoral collaboration, cross-disciplinary engaged research and capacity building, and by contributing to evidence-informed policies and practices.

The CHC provides timely, evidence-informed solutions to help communities achieve their healthiest potential by:

- applying scientific research and experiential knowledge to build solutions for real-world problems faced by communities;
- working with communities to prioritize strategies that are culturally appropriate and grounded in community knowledge;
- using innovative and interdisciplinary approaches, drawing on experts and knowledge from multiple sectors and disciplines;
- bringing an equity and determinants of health lens to system-level public health issues; and,
- adopting an applied public health approach to impact population health outcomes within and outside the healthcare sector.

The CHC grew out of the rich and long history of the Centre for Health Promotion Studies, University of Alberta. The CHC was founded on July 1, 2017 by the dean of the School of Public Health, Dr. Kue Young. It was created to be a community-facing unit for engaged scholarship, which is a deeply engrained value of the School of Public Health (SPH).

Recognizing that health begins outside of the healthcare sector, the CHC works within and across five multi-sectoral focal areas: *healthy municipalities*; *healthy school communities*; *health equity*; *healthy environments*; and *supporting healthy Indigenous communities*. These themes emphasize the breadth of expertise across the current CHC Scientists and identify specific strategic areas for interdisciplinary research development.

Now three years old, the CHC comprises a diverse network of engaged academics and practice and policy professionals working in a range of sectors. Our work involves the core public health areas of health promotion and population health, environmental health, epidemiology, health policy and systems, and health economics.

We have developed rich, collaborative relationships with government, municipalities, community organizations, non-governmental organizations and non-profits, Indigenous organizations, and the private sector to address complex health issues facing communities. Collaboration and co-creation occur on projects initiated by partners as well as on projects initiated by the CHC. These collaborations and partnerships are the backbone of how CHC operates. Together, we are committed to building sustainable and flourishing healthy communities.

## LOOKING FORWARD

The CHC's strategic plan (2020-2025) comprises objectives under four goals:

1. **Research Development:** Partner with communities as well as practice and policy professionals across sectors to generate knowledge that supports healthy communities.

"Since its creation, the City of Edmonton has enjoyed a collaborative relationship with the Centre for Healthy Communities, working together on projects of mutual interest and providing a critical link for City Planning to an important area of academic expertise, research and knowledge.

Integrating the public health lens into municipal strategy and decision making is an increasingly important element, and one where the City doesn't have a lot of internal expertise. Healthy Cities is one of the four strategic goals in the City's overall vision for the next 20 years. The plan notes that 'The goals will be achieved through strategic actions, partnerships and collaborations.' which I feel our relationship with the Centre represents and can be expanded upon."

– Ian Hosler,  
Urban Form and Corporate Strategic Development, City Planning  
City of Edmonton

2. **Knowledge-to-Action:** Work with communities and practice and policy professionals to enhance their use of knowledge to generate action.

"The Centre for Healthy Communities has been a key partner in the development of evidence and practice informed tools and resources for the AHS Alberta Healthy Communities Approach and Healthier Together Workplaces program. Their ability to rapidly synthesize evidence in response to practice questions was a tremendous asset. Together we were able to translate scientific evidence into something that is meaningful to communities and workplaces. The resulting healthy environments strategy kits and assessment tools are now being used in communities and workplaces all across the province to support citizens to make local and lasting change."

- AHS Alberta Cancer Prevention Legacy Fund

3. **Engagement:** Foster authentic relationships that build trust and knowledge within communities to enable them to act to achieve their healthiest potential.

"With the collaborative project that saw the creation of 'How To Guides' on developing Play Charters as well as Mobile Adventure Playgrounds the Centre for Healthy Communities was an integral partner that not only provided the research support for the project but also connected the many partners together. This unique partnership that also included the Alberta Recreation and Parks Association (ARPA), the City of Calgary, and the Ministry of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women created practical resources that have been shared and used by communities across Alberta and beyond.

The Centre for Healthy Communities were able to connect research to practice and develop powerful resources that have benefited many organizations within the play environment. This partnership is a great example of how collaboration really strengthens the research, policy and practice approach to meaningful service delivery programs and services."

- Heather Cowie, President  
Alberta Recreation and Parks Association (ARPA)

4. **Sustainability:** Secure resources to support the strategic goals and objectives of CHC.

"Working at the Centre has allowed me to develop skills that I would not have acquired through my regular graduate education. From learning (and applying) one-on-one interview and rapid review methods to engaging with multi-sectoral partners, I have had the opportunity to grow as both a researcher and communicator in a highly-collaborative environment."

- Samuel Lowe, MSc Student (Public Health)  
CHC Graduate Research Assistant

Our collaborative focus will allow CHC to be well positioned to play an important role in delivering the *U of A for Tomorrow* vision for strong interdisciplinary research that has a demonstrable and positive impact on society. In our first three years of operation, the CHC has emerged as a successful unit of the School of Public Health with the vision and potential to tackle complex health and social issues using a transdisciplinary and intersectoral approach. At CHC, we are working on equitable solutions for society's public health challenges facing communities today and into the future.