

REFLECTING ON THE UPHILL CLIMB ...



... ENVISIONING THE PATH FORWARD

REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY

For everyone in the world, 2020 was an unprecedented year that presented challenges in every facet of society. Here at home, although we lived (and continue to live) through this pandemic together, the journey looked dramatically different for vulnerable Albertans. COVID-19 shone a light on, and further exacerbated, the many challenges facing adults who are learning at the foundational level. It has pointed to persistent challenges and systemic marginalization.

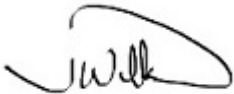
In the best of circumstances, returning to learning calls upon the courage of adult learners. We take our hats off to learners who continued to show up and push forward towards their goals during a year with countless added challenges. We were humbled that some expressed that their connection to learning was the bright spot in their week.

Sadly, the pandemic also resulted in many adults pausing their foundational learning. The already-existing digital divide was highlighted this year, as not everyone had the hardware, internet and/or the digital skills to engage in the online learning environment. In addition, the stresses of the pandemic and/or new family obligations made it difficult for many learners to prioritize learning in a program.

2020 was a year that we all became learners and worked to build our resiliency muscle. Practitioners in our funded programs worked tirelessly to pivot programming into alternative remote delivery. They were responsive to learners' needs, often tailoring delivery to meet learners' comfort levels. Over the year, we heard about many programs who dropped off learning packages to participants' homes, conducted programs by phone or the popular WhatsApp, lent computers and/or patiently taught digital skills to support learners on their journey. Their work further expanded as they not only helped participants navigate learning within the added digital world, but also became a key support to learners, providing them with the necessary information and resources emerging from the pandemic.

It was a year of pivoting for Calgary Learns as well. Our team quickly moved to support the adult foundational learning community through the unparalleled learning curve of 2020. In addition to hosting weekly community conversations, we proactively shared resources and planned professional development that responded to the evolving needs in the field. Collectively, staff in the field leaned towards each other and built on our collective strengths to move forward.

In the midst of a hard year, the foundational learning community went above and beyond to deliver authentic, learner-centered programs in ways we would have never imagined. We discovered the expansive reality of our collective capacity to persevere, adapt, and create. The year could be characterized as an uphill climb; however, the truth is that we also reached vistas that provided us a new lens, a lens that focused our perspective on new ways to serve learners meaningfully.



Joel Wilkinson
Board President



Nancy Purdy
Executive Director

CALGARY LEARNS HIGHLIGHTS



"I have picked up some good teaching strategies for in person and online. But also workshops that deal with working with learners and preparing them to thrive have been very useful."

"Your continued support in all of the transitions and changes that we have all had to make during this time has been so greatly appreciated!"

"These learning opportunities are directly reflected into our work and our learners greatly benefit from it."

"The newsletters are always so relevant and informative for my role."

CALGARY LEARNS IMPACT

In the 2019-2020 funding year (last four months were in lockdown)

- **\$1,963,930** in grants were provided to
- **38** programs and **9** initiatives



Carya – class via zoom

This year's successes are best illustrated by the stories from learners and practitioners rather than simply reporting the numbers.

A Practitioner's Reflection on This Year's Journey

“As I reflect on where we were 14 plus months ago, we had a sense of how urgent things were and most of us, if not all of us were running on adrenaline and wondering whether we would go online, if literacy should ever even go online, and could it actually go online.

And then, we found so many different ways of teaching and adapting. I think of myself and others I've spoken with who sent parcels or did hand deliveries to people's homes, did phone lessons and lessons by zoom, Skype, Teams or Google classrooms and every possible combination.

We just really all dove in there and now here we are. I feel like, yes, we would all love for this pandemic to end, but I feel like we're calmer and maybe more confident about what it looks like when we're teaching remotely. Now, I'm able to think ahead rather than just flying by the seat of my pants. Most importantly, our learners are gaining something from the programs that they're in.”

- Theresa Wall

PRACTITIONER REFLECTIONS

Our learners are incredibly resilient and have the ability to persevere despite frustrations.

I have always felt that learning is about being equal partners - working together to reach a goal. During COVID and going online, I have felt this even more and I have seen how resourceful, strong and patient many of my learners have been.

Our clients wanted to check in on our staff, knowing that they too had lives and fears and concerns. The playing field of compassion was leveled.

The move online revealed that for learners with complex needs, technology can be a real barrier.

Students were scared, we were scared, and we were able to work through it together.

I have learned to be humble and thankful to some of my more technologically capable learners who have taught me "a thing or two" about ZOOM, Google Docs, etc.

Realize that online delivery takes so much more time and consideration of digital difficulties for learners.

Finding ways to cultivate connection is one of the most important parts of my work.

Despite having a big challenge going online, I believe my students advanced even more working with technology.

LEARNER REFLECTIONS



In our 2019-20 Programs:

88% of learners reported using skills learned during their program outside of class

92% of learners reported that their confidence in their skills or abilities increased upon participating in their program

94% of learners met or made progress toward their learner goals

I feel like a weight has been lifted off my shoulders and instead of a stamp that says rejected across my forehead, it now says approved. I feel my biggest regret in life is gone and I now feel like I can accomplish any goal I set for myself.
– Participant, CFS, *Never Too Late*

I learned that once I overcame the fear I actually wanted to know more. It's like a lightbulb goes on now... that I am practicing more and referring more to the printouts that we were handed in class.
– Participant, CJHS

After trying for several times to join the class' zoom meeting with the instructor's support, the learner shared the story of joining a zoom meeting with her family doctor with no support.
– Participant, CIWA, *Pebbles in the Sand*



Thank you for your patience and working thoroughly with each of our learning styles.
– Participant, CanLearn, *Adult Foundational Math*

In today's society technology is a necessity not a luxury. I knew that I needed to learn how to use the computer or miss out.
– Participant, CJHS

PRACTITIONER IDEAS



We can teach digital literacy skills and engage learners in new ways.

Online learning reduces the need for travel. A mixture of in-person and online learning presents opportunities.

With a little creativity and openness to change, we can come together and make something amazing happen. Nothing is impossible.

Participants can still feel seen, valued, heard and part of a community even when we aren't together in person.

2020 highlighted a lack of digital literacy skills that many of our learners have and how these skills need to be built up bit by bit to avoid overwhelming them with too many things at once.

What do we carry forward into the "New Normal"?

The number of learners who are the most vulnerable learners have dwindled in the pandemic and I am concerned about this trend continuing. Some kind of collective action in the field to address this specific issue is needed.

We can still be learner-centered in remote learning. I hope that the flexibility we currently bring to our programming sticks.

Continue with new levels of the openness, camaraderie and willingness to collaborate.

I will bring more technology into the classroom.

I hope the interest and commitment to creating a more equitable world lasts forever. There were so many great injustices brought to light that I hope people do not lose their momentum towards these issues.

GOODBYE TO JEANNIE



Jeannie Finch was a pillar in the adult foundational learning field, and the strength of her commitment was felt when she left her 25-year career at Calgary Learns in 2018 to deal with brain cancer. In August 2020 we sadly said our final goodbye to Jeannie.

In the spirit of Jeannie's passion for adult learning, she and her husband, David, set up and seeded "Jeannie's Fund" to support practitioners in the field.

On behalf of the adult foundational learning community, we thank Jeannie's friends, colleagues and family members who donated to support the professional development of practitioners in Jeannie's honour.

FINANCIALS

Statement of Financial Position Dec 31, 2020

	2020 (\$)	2019 (\$)
ASSETS		
Current Assets	1,881,026	1,588,311
Capital Assets		
Total Assets	1,881,026	1,588,311
LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS		
Current Liabilities	118,457	12,601
Deferred Contributions	1,506,055	1,331,734
Lease Inducement	5,210	6,540
Net Assets	251,304	237,436
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	1,881,026	1,588,311

Statement of Operations for the year ended Dec 31, 2020

	2020 (\$)	2019 (\$)
REVENUE		
Alberta Government	2,170,705	2,418,937
Other Income	15,268	56,744
Total Revenue	2,185,973	2,475,681
EXPENSES		
Grants to Programs	1,635,817	1,969,481
General & Administrative	536,288	502,097
Total Expenditures	2,172,105	2,471,578
Excess of revenue over expenditures	13,868	4,103

THANK YOU

We appreciate the steadfast support of our Funders throughout this challenging year!



Calgary Learns Staff

(clockwise from top left)

Nancy Purdy

Gabe Brown

Nicky Peeters

Hayley Richards

Berniece Gowan

Heidi Grogan

Volunteers who donated time & expertise

Funding Proposal Review Teams

Board Members: Joel Wilkinson, President
Barbara Burggraf, Vice President
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John Couto
Sidney Craig Courtice
Krista Medhurst
Connie Sauter
Evelyn Tait

