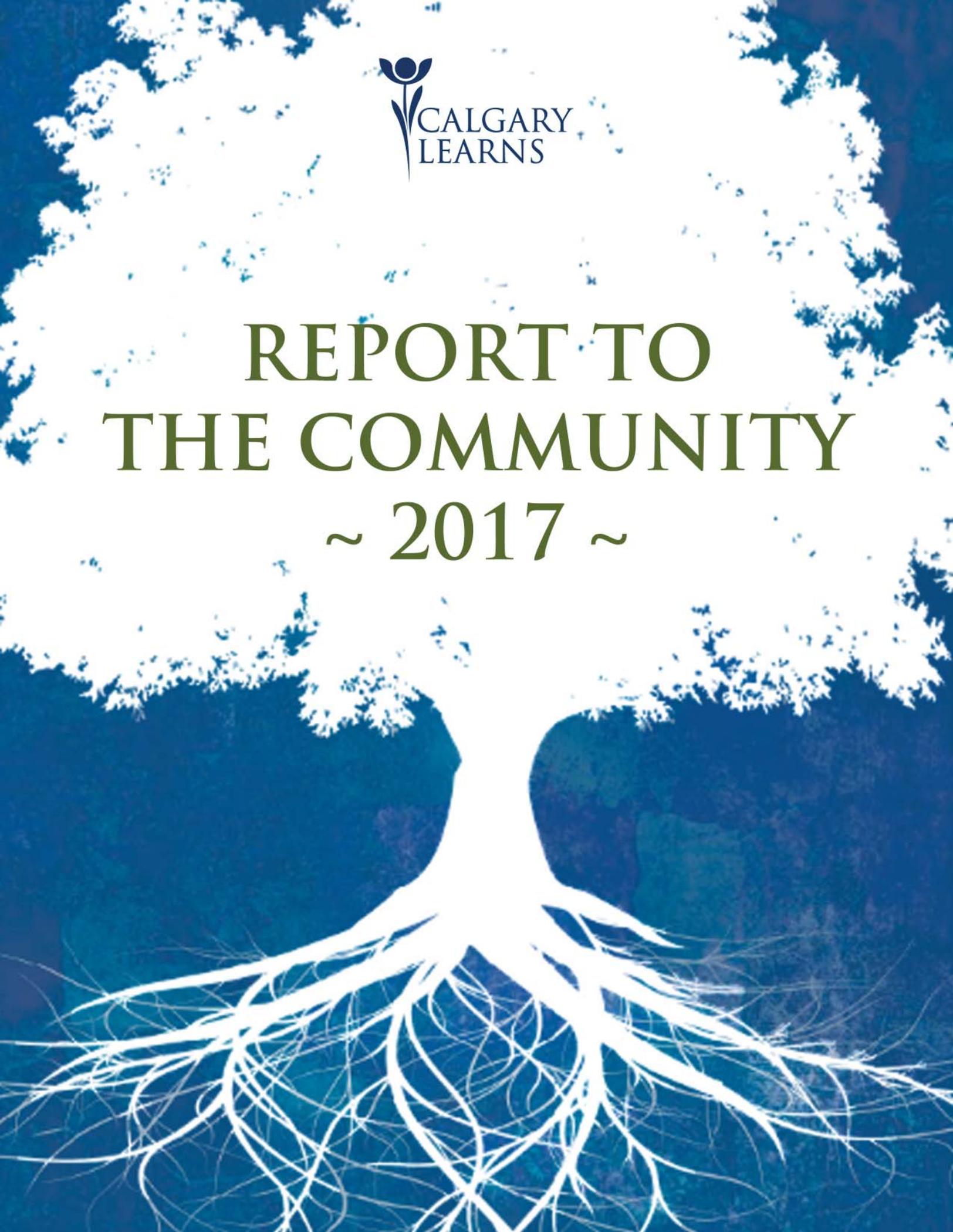




REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY ~ 2017 ~





Bunch Projects graciously sponsors our Life of Learning Awards celebration. The LOLAs recognize exceptional learners, educators and programs in the adult learning field. In 2015 we launched our "Thanks a Bunch" award to honour great funders like Bunch Projects.

Rooted in Purpose, Reaching to Serve

For forty years, Calgary Learns has proudly served this city's foundational learning community. Meanwhile, the world around us continues to change at a rapid pace.

These changes mean that Calgary Learns' work is even more necessary today than it was those many years ago. Yet, while specific needs and responses may be different, what matters most endures.

Adult foundational learners still need the chance to learn in ways that respond effectively to their complex needs. Programs and practitioners still need stable funding and support. And Calgary Learns needs to be nimble, collaborative and constantly learning.

Being deeply rooted in our purpose and values helps us. We remain committed to supporting foundational learning practitioners. We stay in touch with changing needs by consulting and collaborating with the community. We ensure our credibility by being transparent and accountable in our processes. We respect the various cultural and individual ways that adults learn.

Those roots keep us grounded, and their stability allows us to branch out and to grow. We now have a Professional Development Specialist on our team to support practitioners. Our Indigenous Liaison helps us understand more about Indigenous history and ways of learning. We contribute to system-wide conversations about issues of importance to the field. In this report, you'll read about these endeavours and more.

Just like any well-rooted tree, Calgary Learns has been able to stand tall through the winds of change. This is partly because we've stayed committed to our purpose and our values. It is also because of the input and dedication of the foundational learning community, the Calgary Learns board and staff, and Advanced Education. We thank you all.



Honey Watts, Board President



Nancy Purdy, Executive Director

Higher literacy can boost the economic and financial success of individuals and the economy as a whole. It can reduce poverty, improve health, lift community engagement and lead to a higher standard of living. In fact, it is hard to identify any other single issue that can have such a large payoff to individuals, the economy and society. – TD Economics

A Commitment to Success

Calgary Learns is, above all, a granting agency.

We apply every year for funding from the province to provide [grants](#) for foundational learning opportunities in Calgary. We take that responsibility very seriously.

The review process: Supportive and rigorous

Over the years, we have developed and refined a three-stage granting process that usually takes four months from start to finish. It is both supportive and rigorous.

1. Submitting proposals

We are committed to making good programs available, so it makes sense for us to support organizations through the application process. We want them to do well. The process begins with an opportunity for the applicant to have a meeting with our staff to get feedback on their proposal.

At the same time, we are demanding. We assess not only the proposal, but the viability of the program, and the organization's capacity to deliver it. We only consider proposals that address our [funder's requirements](#) and adult foundational learning needs in Calgary.

Proposals for Indigenous learning programs must meet an additional list of conditions developed by community Elders to ensure the programs are culturally appropriate and relevant.

2. Reviewing proposals

Proposals are then reviewed by a team of community volunteers. Typically, we invite another funder and two subject-matter experts who understand the particular challenges faced by any given group of learners.

The four review teams for non-Indigenous programs read and evaluate the proposals, and then participate in a one-day meeting to discuss them. They work toward consensus, and make recommendations to staff about which proposals to fund.

We have a parallel but different review process for programs serving Indigenous populations, which we developed with guidance from community Elders. The members of the review team, who are themselves Indigenous, have the same quality of experience and expertise as those on other review teams.

Calgary Learns is such a great a leader in the field of foundational learning. They really are interested in knowing how their investment is contributing to long term outcomes and they truly are a partner in the whole process.

Eva Szasz-Redmond,
Calgary Immigrant Women's
Association

The difference is that instead of only reviewing written proposals, we also invite Indigenous programs to present their proposals orally. The review team works toward consensus based both on what they've read and what they've heard.

3. Approving proposals

The final stage is for the Executive Director to put forward a slate of programs for approval by the board of directors. Proposals for Indigenous programs are taken to Elders for validation before going to the board.

Once a slate is approved, we send it to Advanced Education for final approval, at which point our staff lets the applicants know the results.

The monitoring process: In person and informative

Once programs have received funding, Calgary Learns stays involved. We need to know if a program is running as proposed, what impact it's having on learners, and how we can help.

It's easy to make assumptions about what works best for learners and practitioners, but our intention is go beyond assumptions. We cannot fathom a program's complexities from inside the four walls of our office.

That's why, in addition to the final reports we receive from the programs, we take the time to visit each program every year. The visits help us to build our understanding of the real work in the real world.

We speak with program coordinators to learn what they need from us, what matters most to them, what ideas they have for their program's future.

We visit classrooms to meet the learners. We get a glimpse of their aspirations and challenges. We share in their excitement, and see first-hand the impact of our funding.

The learners are the reason for our work, and those site visits connect us to our reason for being. Without exception, we leave humbled and inspired.

Thanks to Calgary Learns for being our champion. Calgary Learns is respectful of providing Indigenous programs with the ability to implement culture meaningfully, guided by Indigenous ways of knowing.

Katelyn Lucas, Elizabeth Fry Society of Calgary

It is so difficult to find funding to support adults who are struggling. We wouldn't even have been able to approach this project without Calgary Learns' funding. It's what has allowed the development, the innovation.

Anne Price, CanLearn Society

A Learning Organization

Calgary Learns provides professional development to practitioners, learns from them, speaks up for their programs, and engages with the community adult learning system as a whole.

Our funded programs teach us too. At our annual community consultations, we learn about trends and needs in the system, which helps us prioritize our work.

Practitioners have requested increased professional development to help them better serve their learners, whose needs are so complex. In response, we have branched out and added a Professional Development Specialist to our team. We received input from the community to shape the role, and funding from Advanced Education.

We are excited about building on the successes of the workshops and mentoring we offered this year.

Sharing what we know

Because Calgary Learns is in touch with the foundational learning community, we are able to speak on behalf of programs and learners in a variety of settings.

For example, our staff members are part of community tables, including other funder tables, where we are able to advocate for the needs of adult foundational learners.

On a larger scale, Calgary Learns was invited this year to be part of Advanced Education's very collaborative consultations on the CALP logic model. We were excited to bring feedback from our funded programs. Advanced Education listened carefully to coordinators and practitioners from the field, and the new model focuses clearly on adult learning and program outcomes.

I often attend workshops as I pursue my master's in education. Today's was one of the most beneficial and focused sessions ever.

Participant, Plain Language

I really appreciate that there was the opportunity to chat with other practitioners. We all have different backgrounds and experiences. We learned a lot from each other.

Participant, Advanced Facilitation Techniques for Adult Foundational Learning



Participants engaged with Elder Reg Crowshoe during our Indigenous Professional Development pilot

Walking Our Talk

Calgary Learns is deeply committed to Indigenous programming and adult Indigenous learners. We understand that the programs must be rooted in culture, language and the land.

We ask a lot of the organizations seeking funding for Indigenous programs. Their commitment to Indigenous ways of learning must be intentional, authentic and consistent. They must work closely with Elders in their program design, delivery and evaluation. They must understand the legacy of intergenerational trauma and the role it plays in learning.

At Calgary Learns, we must ask ourselves equally demanding questions. How do we understand our role as an ally in this work? How are we intentional about our own learning? How will we walk our talk?

Learning from Elders

We are very fortunate to have the chance to work with local Elders in several ways.

Our community of Elders have been instrumental in helping us develop a sound funding process for Indigenous programs. With their help, we are learning to understand and integrate Indigenous perspectives. We hope this work will be a model for others to use as well. The work belongs to the community, and is meant to be shared and duplicated.

Piikuni Elder Reg Crowshoe and Calgary Learns' Indigenous Liaison hosted our board of directors and staff at a one-day learning event. We met in circle, ceremony and a shared safe space, and began the work together in a good way.

Our Indigenous Liaison offers coaching and mentoring to practitioners working with Indigenous learners, and we are developing training for them. This year, with a group of Elders who reflect the diversity and knowledge systems of this area, we designed and piloted a two-day workshop on creating a welcoming and accessible space for Indigenous learners.

We know this is just the beginning.

Learning ultimately supports the well-being of the self, the family, the community, the land, the spirits, and the ancestors.

First Peoples Principles of Learning

It was important to learn about the parallel between the effects of residential schools and the challenges in adult learning today.

Venkat Somasundaram
Board member

I learned more that day than I had in years of reading about the topic. I experienced my first smudge, and continue to reflect on the learnings.

Sarah Eaton, Board member

Calgary Learns funded 31 projects and programs in 2017. These three stories will give you some sense of the scope and impact of that funding.

Indigenous Funding – Culture is foundational

Calgary Learns understands the need for programs that honour Indigenous cultural approaches and are meant specifically for Indigenous learners. Programs like SAGE.

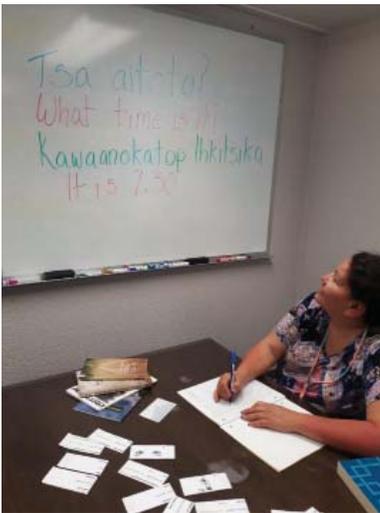
SAGE is an employment readiness program at the [Elizabeth Fry Society of Calgary](#). The learners are primarily Indigenous women who face many complex barriers. The 12-week program helps them find the core issue they can overcome so that they can have a better and stronger life.

From the beginning, our Elders have insisted on the fundamental importance of culture to healing and learning. It cannot be an afterthought. It is the way forward.

Most of the learners at SAGE have been cut off from their culture, and restoring that connection is healing and empowering. It builds the confidence that can lead to other necessary changes. Thus Indigenous culture is integral to the program.



Self-expression through selfie: learner from the SAGE program participate in a photographic exercise to learn strategies to express herself emotionally.



Learner connection to their culture through the Blackfoot language.

Healing is supported through talking and debrief circles, and using the medicine wheel to support concepts throughout the program. Learners begin every day in ceremony. They learn life skills through sharing their own stories and learning from each other. They can turn to Elders for emotional support, and learn about tradition, spirituality and history from them. SAGE participants are encouraged to take Blackfoot language classes to understand the connection between language, history and the environment.

Through this cultural lens, SAGE teaches more conventional skills for employment readiness. As they reconnect to their cultural identity, the women are learning to set goals, solve problems, job search, and practice interview skills.



Program Funding – Standing the test of time

Calgary Learns is where organizations come to find funding for foundational adult literacy programs. We understand that learning foundational skills is an ongoing endeavour, and so programs have the opportunity to apply for program funding year over year.

They need to submit a proposal annually, and ensure that their program remains relevant. They must demonstrate their accountability to serving learners in a meaningful and effective way. But they don't have to reinvent the wheel each time, or prove that they are working toward sustainability.

The [Calgary Immigrant Women's Association's](#) program Pebbles in the Sand is one such program.

Since 1999, Pebbles in the Sand has helped hundreds of immigrant women who have very low literacy skills and face multiple barriers. They often come from remote rural areas of the world or from countries that have been torn apart by war. They may face financial hardships, isolation, and difficult family situations. Many of them never had the chance to become literate in their first language, or even to go to school.

The program was created as a very first learning opportunity. The curriculum has been adapted to meet the needs of our changing world – even women with low literacy now have cell phones – but the program's key outcome remains the same. It helps immigrant women gain the essential skills they need to function successfully in Canada as parents, in the workplace and in the community.

The results are tangible, as evident in the women's increased confidence and their love of coming to class. As they emerge from hesitation, their learning takes off.



Learners in the Pebbles of the Sand program.



Initiative Funding – The opportunity for innovation

Experienced practitioners are in touch with emerging needs in the field of foundational learning, and they often have great ideas for addressing those needs.

Calgary Learns' initiative funding exists to support that kind of innovation, whether it be to enhance a long-standing program or pilot a completely new one. A great example of how this funding is used is the new practitioner toolkit, *Rising to the Reading Challenges of Adult Learners*, developed by [CanLearn Society](http://www.canlearnsociety.ca).

CanLearn has programs for people with learning disabilities and ADHD, as well as literacy programs. Over the years, the clinical and literacy teams have discussed where their work intersects and how they can support each other. They realized that research in the field of learning disabilities has implications for how to approach adults struggling at the beginning stages of reading.

And so they began to develop a toolkit for foundational literacy practitioners. The developers and literacy staff consulted each other frequently, and that back-and-forth resulted in several revisions.

At the beginning, the idea was to provide literacy practitioners with a screening tool for learning disabilities. That evolved into realizing that practitioners need actual reading strategies, so they included specific techniques they use to teach reading skills to adults. Finally, they realized that they needed to explain to literacy practitioners when and how to make a referral for a learning disability assessment, and what its benefits would be.

The result is an innovative, practical message of hope: with targeted intervention over time, nearly every struggling reader can make significant progress.

I am now for the first time ever able to read words I couldn't read or understand before. I feel good about myself.

Participant, Reading Connections Program, CanLearn Society



**Rising to the
Reading Challenges
of Adult Learners**
Practitioner's Toolkit



Calgary Learns is honoured to partner with all of our funded organizations and programs to serve the foundational needs in our community.

* based on the CALP 2016-17 funding cycle

930

learning opportunities funded in more than **60** locations



8,220

adults enrolled in funded foundational learning programs



17,060

hours of training funded

- group learning: 11,890
- tutoring by volunteers: 3,260
- tutoring by program staff: 1,910



1,077,000

provided to foundational learning programs* in Calgary with **24** programs funded, including **3** Indigenous programs



81,000

provided to initiative projects* with **7** projects funded, including **3** Indigenous initiatives



151,500

provided to refugee and language support projects* with **4** projects funded



59

Total number of visits to program sites by staff

- **29** by PD Specialist
- **30** by Grant Staff



17

days spent representing Calgary's foundational learning community at strategic provincial meetings



123

practitioners attended **10** PD workshops offered or funded by Calgary Learns



19

practitioners attended the pilot of Indigenous Learning training



5

PD workshops customized for specific organizations

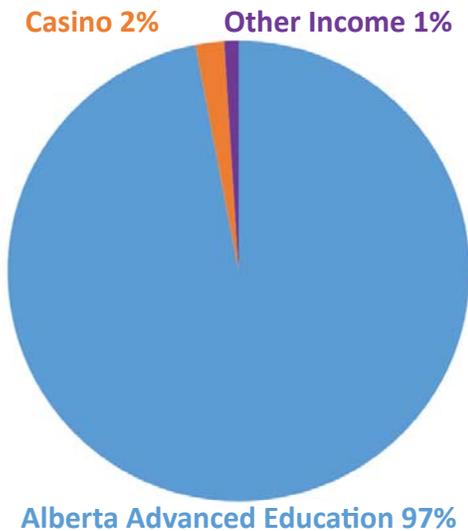


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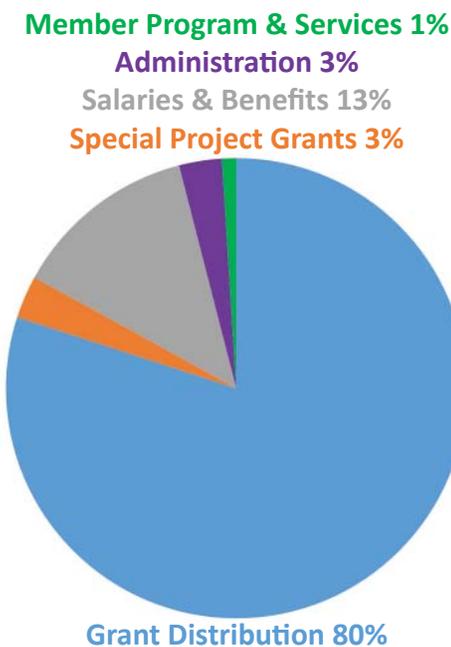
Calgary Learns staff



REVENUES



EXPENDITURES



Financials

Statement of Financial Position December 31, 2017

	2017 (\$)	2016 (\$)
Assets		
Current Assets	1,652,881	1,518,794
Capital Assets	2,646	6,956
Total Assets	1,655,527	1,525,750
Liabilities and Net Assets		
Current Liabilities	23,095	20,550
Deferred Contributions	850,480	1,027,263
Program Commitment	566,762	291,006
Lease Inducement	2,646	8,276
Net Assets	212,544	178,655
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	1,655,527	1,525,750

Statement of Operations for the year ended December 31, 2017

	2017 (\$)	2016 (\$)
Revenue		
Alberta Advanced Education	2,451,018	1,756,295
Other Income	54,185	105,736
Total revenue	2,505,203	1,862,031
Expenses		
Program funding	2,072,046	1,436,938
General & Administrative	394,958	430,646
Amortization	4,310	6,218
Total Expenditures	2,471,314	1,873,802
Excess of revenue over expenditures	33,889	-11,771

A copy of the complete 2017 audited financial statements is available through the Calgary Learns office.

Our work was made possible due to the generosity of our funders, donors and volunteers. Thank you!

Organizational Members

Aboriginal Futures Career & Training Centre
Bow Valley College
Calgary Catholic Immigrant Society
Calgary Chinese Community Services Association
Calgary Immigrant Educational Society
Calgary Immigrant Women's Association
Calgary John Howard Society
Calgary Public Library
Calgary Scope Society
Canadian Mental Health Association – Calgary Region
CanLearn Society
Carya Society of Calgary
Centre for Newcomers
Connect Society
Deaf & Hear Alberta
Elizabeth Fry Society of Calgary
Families Matter Society
Further Education Society of Alberta
Immigrant Services Calgary
Inside Out Theatre
Momentum
North East Family Connections
Pathways Community Services Association
Sunrise Community Link Resource Centre
The Alex Community Food Centre

Individual Members

M. Andriescu*	M. Schaetti*
S. Eaton*	V. Somasundaram*
L. Jarman*	H. Watts*
P. Jubien	J. Wilkinson*
V. Salt*	R. Wong*

* Board member

Donation of Workshop Space

Calgary Public Library
CanLearn Society
Further Education Society of Alberta

Funders

Alberta Advanced Education
Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission
Calgary Foundation

Sponsors

Bunch Projects

Donors

Anonymous donor
E. Cairns
C. Pludek
Further Education Society of Alberta
PricewaterhouseCoopers
United Way of Calgary, Donor Choice Program

Volunteers who donated time & expertise

Board & Committee Members
Casino Volunteers
Funding Proposal Review Teams
LOLA Selection Committee
Ray Stockford - RDS IT Consulting Inc.

Staff

Nancy Purdy, Executive Director
Jeannie Finch, Grants Coordinator
Monique Fry, Indigenous Liaison
Nicky Peeters, Operations & Community Relations
Terri Peters, Professional Development Specialist
Hilary Taylor, Bookkeeper





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www.calgarylearns.com

I think the Elder participation in the program was essential. They made me feel comfortable and open, and it just felt nice to see an Elder.

– Participant, Aboriginal Workplace Learning Circles, Aboriginal Futures

This is the most productive, educational and awesome training I have attended in years. Thank you very much. I enjoyed it a lot!

– Participant, Citizenship Learning Program, Immigrant Services Calgary

This course revisits a lot of stuff I learned in school, and that's a good thing.

– Participant, Lifeline to Literacy, Bow Valley College

I felt comfortable and respected. Keep it up! Me and you: We make a better community.

– Participant, Learning Enhanced Employment Program, Calgary John Howard

Let's stay connected!



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www.calgarylearns.com/connector