

Annual Report

September, 2022 for the year beginning March 2021.

Last March it was hard to imagine what the year ahead would look like. The COVID 19 pandemic continued, while there were promises of it ending and us having “The Best Summer Ever.” As a community and an Alliance we began to face the challenges and impact of a long pandemic. In the midst of this the leaders and organizations that make up the Calgary Alliance continued to come together and work for the common good. Together we have accomplished incredible things together.

Municipal Election

This past year we set out to have a significant impact on the municipal election and we did. We organized “Coffee with a Candidate” sessions that built relationships with candidates and helped us to see where they stood on the issues that matter to our communities. We hosted a Mayoral forum that had approximately 1,500 people view it. During this process we got commitments from candidates to support truth and reconciliation, to address mental health, support transit, and to set a net-zero target for the city along with a plan to get there. We now have a council that is friendly to many of our concerns and has shown their commitment to work with us on the issues our members have identified as important.

Mental Health

One of the gifts of the pandemic is that it has moved mental health from the shadows into our shared public consciousness. What has especially stood out is the need to address the mental health of our children, the need to address the impacts of trauma and the need to equip everyone to build mental wellness.

This past year our members wrote letters, signed petitions and met with government officials. The result was that over this past summer the government announced **\$197 Million for school based mental health, supports in schools and pediatric rehabilitation**. This amount included piloting new models for addressing mental health in schools, expanding the comprehensive school based mental health program we had been advocating for and hiring more mental health professionals. This funding also included funding for school based nutrition (which we have learned is essential for mental health) along with other supports such as speech therapy. This funding has the potential to not only address current mental health needs but to build the mental wellness of a generation through early intervention, prevention and education.

Our mental health team has also continued to provide top quality mental health training and education. This has included psychological first aid, mental health first aid, a workshop on having a compassionate come back, training around resilience, and grief.

Truth and Reconciliation

Last year leading up to the City Budget we had a commitment from the Calgary Police Service (CPS) that they would move forward with expanding the Indigenous Liaison Officer (ILO)

program, but they needed support in getting the budget they needed. After supporting them in the budget, they then informed us that they were not planning on expanding the ILO program. That is when the importance of building a long lasting organization was made clear. We didn't go away. Instead our team kept up the pressure. They made regular presentations at the police commission. They kept meeting with CPS leadership. Now we are seeing movement: CPS is working on creating an Indigenous Hub; they have brought in a contractor from T'suu T'ina; and we have been told that they are now hiring two more ILO's. We are not done, but due to good work from a strong team we are now moving in the right direction.

During the past year we were invited again to play an active role in the creation of an Indigenous Gathering Place (IGP) in Calgary. Our Lead Organizer is now part of the IGP advisory group. When a notice of motion was put forward to start the formal process of transferring land to create the IGP, our members took action with guidance from the IGP society. We wrote letters, answered questions and had conversations with city officials. The result was that the notice of motion was passed and the formal process of setting aside land has begun.

One of our commitments is for us to wrestle with the truth of colonization and to work together to decolonize our organization. This past year we hosted two Wrestling with the Truth of Colonization processes and had approximately 140 people participated. We hosted a workshop on Implicit Bias. We have also begun the work of adapting our training so that it is appropriate for Indigenous communities. The next step in this process will be for our leaders to sit with Indigenous Elders and Knowledgekeepers to talk about an indigenous framework and strategy for working together in the future.

Environment

This past year has seen some major successes in our environment work. We joined the Climate Hub in a campaign to have ENMAX committed to setting a net-zero target by 2050 and together we succeeded.

Construction of the Greenline, even after our successful municipal campaign, was held up waiting for the provincial government to follow through with its commitment to fund the project. Last summer both the provincial and federal government followed through with their commitment. Now this project—which will create 20,000 jobs and reduce 30,000 tonnes of Green House Gases (GHG's) each year—has begun.

In the municipal election, we asked candidates to make a commitment to having the city set a net-zero target and to create a plan to get there. We then met with councilors as they began their work and presented them with *shortbread*... because time is *short* to take action on climate change. They made a commitment to work on these issues and in July they successfully passed a new climate strategy with a goal of net-zero emission. One element the climate strategy made clear was that there is a tremendous economic opportunity in this transition: *How might this opportunity be shared justly?*

Leadership Development and Training

We have continued to offer our Foundations of Community organization training over this past year. It was a joy in June when we were able to again offer this in person. Then in July four of our organizers and leaders were able to attend national training in Denver. Already the richness of their experience is enriching our shared work.

During the year we have hosted a variety of leadership training opportunities. This has included mental health training, a workshop on implicit bias, fundraising training, *Wrestling with the Truth of Colonization*. This is in addition to our tradition of continuous evaluation and shared learning. This year we also began developing a cohort model for CORE teams. We are in the midst of refining and developing this as a way of building our CORE teams and strengthening our member organizations.

Public Conversations

As the public discourse becomes more and more polarized, one of the things we have recognized as important is the practice of constructive public conversations. Throughout the past year we have worked to create spaces for these conversations. They have taken many forms: mayoral forums, a public talk with former Mayor Nenshi, listening sessions over zoom or over coffee, and lots of one to ones. How we communicate across differences and around common interests is becoming central to the work we do together.

Finances

Over this past year we have been fortunate to continue to be in a solid financial position. Members dues, individual donations, grants and COVID support programs have kept us in a strong financial position and enabled us to build a reserve. Organizations like ours need to remain stable and in the coming year we are investing this money to develop our Truth and Reconciliation work, to expand the diversity of our membership, and develop new organizers who can sustain this work into the future.

Membership

Overall our membership over the past year has seen both long term members leave while other organizations have joined our Alliance. We have been saddened with the loss of: Trinity Place Foundation, St Barnabas Anglican Church, Alpha House and the General Teamsters Local 362.

At the same time we are excited to welcome new members who are expanding our diversity and building our shared power. Together we are excited to welcome: Action Dignity, CUPE 37, and Engineers Without Borders.

We also are pleased to see continued growth of Calgarians for the Common Good.

Listening Campaign and Future Directions

One of the major focuses of this past year was our Listening Campaign. Our member organizations listened to their members through one to one conversations and house meetings. While participation was uneven, those that participated spoke about what a rich experience it was. From this we are developing new directions for our work in Mental Health and the Environment. For this year's city budget we again heard about the need to invest in transit and community spaces and the need to reform policing. We have also heard the need for a new focus around affordable housing and the pressures inflation is having on families.

In closing we want to extend a heartfelt congratulations to everyone who has stepped up and worked together for our common good. Each year when we sit down to write this summary there is genuine amazement at what we have been able to accomplish together. When I look at the approximate value of the impacts we have contributed to it amazes me. It is about \$5.1 billion:

- \$4.9 Billion - Green Line

- \$85 Million - Budget campaigns including preserving the low income transit pass.

- \$25 Million - City's Mental health Strategy

- \$197 Million - Supports for school (approx. 85 million for mental health - the rest is for other supports)

- \$8 Million - Expanded Police and Crisis Team

- \$10 Thousand - Healing Tipis

In addition to these victories, I don't know how to assign a value to ENMAX committing to a net-zero target, the City passing its climate strategy or the relationships that have been built or the leaders that developed.

For this we want to express our gratitude for each of you who have contributed to our shared work, financially, with your time, with your leadership, with your stories and with your passion. Together you have shown what is possible when communities organize together for our common good.

We look forward to the work that we are able to do together.

Respectfully submitted,

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Rev. Phil Holck
CACG Board Chair