



Institute for Community Prosperity

2019 · 2020

Annual Report



Institute for
Community Prosperity

Director's Note: Building ~~Back~~ Forward



This past year will undoubtedly be remembered as epochal. In the summer of 2019, Greta Thunberg set sail for the Americas, turning the world's attention to uncomfortable truths about the state of our planet's biosphere. In December, a worldwide collapse of oil prices began, spelling doom for Alberta's most vaunted industry. By February of 2020 COVID-19 was declared a global pandemic, and starting in May, following the murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis police, a reinvigorated #BlackLivesMatter social movement spread through North America and across continents, drawing attention not only to anti-black racism but also reigniting the conversation about the deep, systemic exclusion and diminishment of Indigenous Peoples. The world, our country, and our province is forever changed.

The first half of 2020 may be remembered as a time when our blindspots, failings, and vulnerabilities have been exposed, whether at an individual, community, regional, or global level. The Yukon-based writer, Lori Fox, notes that, "this pandemic has kicked open the factory doors of our culture and allowed us to see how the sausage is made: on the backs of the people whose labour, time and bodies we deem to be worth at or around minimum wage, but without which we absolutely could not – cannot – make it through this crisis." Students, women, and people of colour have been hit particularly hard by the economic fallout of the pandemic. Artists are in a surreal livelihood limbo, and arts

organizations have seen their business models collapse. The financial precarity of the entire nonprofit sector, which employs more people than oil and gas in Alberta, has also been laid bare. Nonprofits are discouraged from building reserves, owning capital assets against which they can borrow, and employ a workforce largely starved of the perks and benefits enjoyed in other sectors. The sector has been decimated, and - as a recent report by the Calgary Chamber of Voluntary Organizations outlines - community prosperity will suffer as a consequence.

The macro-level rot in the global financial order, driven by hyper-financialization of markets, excessive moral hazard and asymmetrical risk, and the dependence on unprecedented levels of debt to keep credit flowing, is compounded in Alberta by chronic rock-bottom petroleum prices, difficulty accessing markets and the drop in global demand for fossil fuels. Our public accounts remain hazardously tied to the market value of the resource. And public goods, investments, and institutions inevitably suffer. Even open pit coal mining in the pristine rockies is on the table. While there may or may not be one last wild ride when the pandemic lifts and global demand for energy spikes again, the exorcism of the resource curse will be long, painful, and inevitable.

Things will not return to 'normal'. 'Normal' is riven with inequity, injustice, unsustainability and a tragic lack of either public imagination or political will, or both. There will only be 'what's next'. And mercifully, we have choices. We have nothing in front of us but choices. Time and again, our species has reinvented and improved upon what it means to be human. Our empathic capacity and knowledge horizons have grown exponentially, and now must make yet another great leap forward. If we aren't taking real steps to be substantially smarter, wiser, and more compassionate on the other side of our pandemic experience, we will have squandered this moment.

Sure, we have our particular challenges in Alberta, but while people on both the 'left' and 'right' have ample to complain about, we cannot afford to wallow in self-pity. Alberta has such an incredible wealth of natural assets, well beyond the fossilized organisms that have fueled the last century's prosperity. Now also lies the opportunity to invest in our diverse human assets, building on the findings from the 2020 LearningCity report. A Marshall-Plan scale effort is required to invest in community-partnered learning, cutting-edge research and development (including social R&D), and institutions capable of interdisciplinary, problem-based

learning, cross-embedding community and academia, and where higher learning - accessible to all - is making a demonstrable positive social impact. A low-carbon, high-innovation Alberta, where prosperity is broadly shared, including with future generations, is not utopian. It is urgent and necessary.

How do we weather this storm well? How do we use this moment as a cathartic opportunity to let go of wasteful practices that degrade both ecosystems and human beings, and build back better than ever?

One place to turn for ideas and inspiration is Indigenous communities: for example, First Nations have put in place the most robust, carefully thought-through back-to-school measures, far exceeding the confusing and contradictory patchwork of plans across the country. Latasha Calf Robe's new podcast series, *Buffalo Runners*, dives into the stories of social entrepreneurs, activists and community leaders in Treaty 7. These are the changemakers who are not just building prosperity in their own communities, but lighting the way for all Canadians to reimagine and reinvent community prosperity for the 21st Century.

Many other civil society organizations, artists and thought leaders are using this time to imagine and plan how we can build back better. In this light it is critical to generate an army of changemakers, to understand and reimagine systems (and the scale of shifts required), to integrate economics with social change (and vice versa), and to search for and build socially-beneficial, deeply inclusive algorithms (or 'altruithms') in the machines that will help us learn and build our way to this new future.

The Institute for Community Prosperity, renewed this past February for another 5 years, is excited to be working at this unprecedented inflection point. We are a place to imagine a different future, a place to try out new ideas and approaches, and to foster inspiration for the next generation of social impact leaders, responding to the complex challenges the world, and our communities, face. Looking forward, we are eager to build on the accomplishments of the previous five years:

- Directly invested in over 100 students from all faculties on campus through either summer or casual employment, practica or internships, fellowship or research placements, or mentored through formal Institute programs. Hundreds of other students have been supported through in-class social innovation awards, field school sponsorships or other experiential community-connected learning opportunities.
- Led the creation of a Changemaker Roadmap and achieved recognition for MRU as an AshokaU-recognized Changemaker Campus.
- Created and hosted five Changemakers in Residence positions for esteemed community practitioners.
- Hosted over 30 campus-community dialogue events, and over 40 skills-building workshops with community members or organizations.
- Established provincial and national leadership roles, serving as the administrative host of Alberta Social Innovation Connect and Map the System Canada.
- Launched an ambitious campus-wide undergraduate research and leadership program, the Catamount Fellowship.
- Created new learning products and programs, including a worldwide student guide, Canada-wide practitioner guide, 2 professional certificate programs, co-creation of a for-credit Minor and Concentration, and co-creation and co-delivery of an informal community practitioner workshop learning series.
- As part of building Canada's most robust approach to undergraduate social innovation, sought and achieved recognition as a McConnell Foundation RECODE campus, one of 18 recognized across Canada for supporting social innovation education, and the only such campus between B.C. and Ontario.
- Received one of five Civic Innovation Awards in Canada.
- Co-developed, with the Faculty of Continuing Education and Extension, the first professional certificate program for community investment professionals in North America outside of Boston College.

¹Fox, L. "The life you thought you were going to have is gone", in *The Globe and Mail*. August 14, 2020.

- Institute personnel authored or co-authored over 40 publications and led or participated in over 100 presentations, panels or other speaking events.
- Raised over \$1,500,000 in new funds for Institute programs and activities, as well as helped raise another \$1,400,000 to build and open the Trico Changemakers Studio, Canada's first campus-based community co-working space.
- Numerous partnerships, including joint ventures and jointly organized or sponsored events, with other MRU Institutes, in particular the Institute for Innovation and Entrepreneurship and Institute for Environmental Sustainability.

Despite these successes, we know we are just scratching the surface of the potential for social impact learning. We also know that we cannot do much in isolation. As we look ahead to 2021 and beyond, deeper connections and partnerships with community groups, with faculty, with other institutes and especially with students wanting to change the status quo, will drive our work and help us build not back, but forward.



James Stauch,
Director, Institute for Community Prosperity



Institute for
Community Prosperity

BUILDING FORWARD:

Dispatches from Changemakers in Residence

The Institute is home to two Changemakers in Residence, who provide advice to all of our work, and enhance student learning with their wisdom, insight, and vast connections as practitioners who have had extraordinary careers and made their mark on the community. Our current Changemakers in Residence are Cathy Glover and Walter Hossli.

We have asked them to provide their perspective on the implications of the pandemic for community prosperity, and on the future of our city, region, planet, or post-secondary education in general:



Cathy Glover

This time last year I was on my way to France for a trip that included a three week writing residency in Provence. The residency provided me time to focus on telling a story of Suncor Energy Foundation's journey with social innovation and how it changed our relationships, both with the community and within the company. The story looks backwards to what and how we changed, and it is my attempt to share the lessons we learned in order to help practitioners, both in business and in community organizations.

Today, as kids head back into schools again, I'm thinking differently about the story I wanted to share. I've struggled to finish the manuscript, despite having lots of unstructured time and few deadlines. I'm not sure anymore that the lessons from my past experiences will help anyone navigate the new reality. The slow and sometimes subtle changes that occurred in our system and processes don't compare to the rapid change that we are dealing with now. So the emphasis of my story is shifting and I am asking myself "What have I learned that is

helping to respond to the Covid crisis?" Perhaps one of the most significant ways that I can answer this, is that it is shifting my attitude. I have found that my knowledge of social innovation is helping me to be more optimist and forward looking, instead of feeling hopeless.

One of the tools I have often used is the late Canadian ecologist Buzz Holling's "Adaptive Cycle" (or Panarchy Cycle) – an ecosystem model that can help us to understand how change in systems occurs. Think of the cycle a forest goes through as a fire hits. If I use post secondary education as an example – in January we lived within a mature, relatively stable system- an old growth forest. We had established resources, people, assets and policies to support and maintain it – and hold it in place (for better or worse). Think of COVID-19 as a fire disrupting that stable system. Energy has been released. Everything changed. As we started to figure out how to cope, we prototyped different ways to instruct, to mark, to work with one another. We tried different platforms and dealt with lots of technical issues for instructors and students. Rules were changing almost every week – we were like the forest beginning to reorganize itself after the fire had passed.

As we start this fall, we are beginning to enter a phase of development and growth. We have settled into agreed-upon teaching protocols. Technical issues have mostly been dealt with. Instructors have now had time to think about how to offer courses in new ways- adapting what they had been doing. As we proceed through the academic year, we will continue to improve. Processes that seemed unimaginable last year are going to become commonplace. We will begin to think that we

might no longer want to go back to the way it was – but to begin to embrace and grow into a new normal – a new forest that is even better and stronger than it was before. We might even look back, years from now, and think about how the pandemic was a positive disrupter to entrenched systems and allowed change that was rapid, rather than slow and drawn out. This model can be applied to so many of the complex issues we are dealing with at an individual, organizational and institutional level. It helps us to see the status quo more clearly, the disruption to entrenched systems, and the positive possibilities that lie before us. It gives us a sense of movement. Many of us have been working on systems change, and COVID-19 has opened the door to different conversations about healthcare, racism, reconciliation, poverty, remote working, the gig economy, living wages, housing, climate change and so many more issues. Look at how quickly awareness and attitudes are shifting about systemic racism.

So, we can look at the negative - look back and wish for what was - or we can embrace the opportunity for change and use this unique and unprecedented time to test new ideas, let go of many old ideas and practices, and create new ways of working and supporting community. Some things we were doing, just because we always did them that way. It didn't mean that they were the best way to do things, just the established way. Now we can innovate and test different ways of working.

We have also learned over the past months how to have more empathy, to be kind and to think about others who have stepped up to help all of us. After an early rush to hoard toilet paper, we have begun to think about our neighbours and our community, recognizing we have to look out for one another. Many businesses have supported essential workers and in turn most of us have thought about how to support those small businesses and restaurants that are so important to our communities and our economy. We are more aware of our community systems.

So, the motivation for getting my book finished is changing. I think we will learn more positive lessons from the experiences we are all going through right now, then from my experiences in the past. Maybe I need to focus on how social innovation taught me to be resilient.

For more information about the adaptive cycle see: <http://sigknowledgehub.com/2012/01/02/dip-into-social-innovation/>



Walter Hossli

"The current crisis is without precedent: never have so many of us humans been so fundamentally affected in every corner of the world by the same threat to our health. By trusting our scientists we have turned a corner by lowering the curve.

Now the debate has shifted to how to stimulate an economic recovery. Perhaps the most important learning has been that even though the virus can attack anyone, the groups hardest hit are the vulnerable among us. Any recovery plan needs to invest in those among us who have been affected the most. So much is obvious.

Perhaps even more important are the two underlying global issues: the climate crisis and the continually growing income and wealth gaps.

The only worthwhile economic recovery plan will therefore will therefore invest in a greener economy and greater social equity."

BUILDING COMMUNITY-LED LEADERSHIP:

The Catamount Fellowship

"[The Catamount Fellowship for Emerging Changemakers] challenges students to think about what it means to be an authentic leader. This endeavour has better equipped you for your futures and I wish that I could have done something like that while I was in school."

- Tim Rahilly, President and Vice-chancellor, Mount Royal University, speaking to the inaugural cohort of Fellows



MRU's goal to provide personalized learning challenges us to help students in every program on campus become deeply engaged in their educational experience and invested in their journey to personal, career and civic success. We complement MRU's high-quality in-class curriculum with an extraordinary suite of co-curricular and undergraduate research, scholarship and community-engaged learning opportunities.

The Catamount Fellowship, launched this past academic year, is a cohort-based learning experience for senior-level MRU students committed to building a more just and sustainable future for all. The fellowship, managed by the Institute's Social Impact Lead, Barb Davies, combines community-partnered research with transformational learning. Funded through an anonymous donation, the program challenges students to dive into social innovation frameworks, experiential learning and deep listening with community. Students explore the root causes of complex ecological, social, economic, and cultural issues affecting communities in Calgary, southern Alberta and Treaty 7. Through this program the fellows:

- Dig into real-world 21st-century community-identified challenges with community partners in Southern Alberta.
- Develop a changemaker mindset, combined with an ability to see complex issues through a systems lens.
- Build meaningful connections with a broader community of changemakers including community leaders, public officials, activists, social entrepreneurs and innovators.
- Gain valuable undergraduate community-engaged research experience.

Students in the 8-month long program produce the following deliverables:

1. Community Engagement - Fellows design and host a community conversation during the fellowship with the purpose of engaging broader audiences in their research area including other scholars, students, practitioners and communities.
2. Scholarly Output in the form of a written research paper..
3. Discovery Snapshot in the form of a 2 to 4-page visual research summary.
4. Creative Work that translates research findings into clear messages suitable across audiences and is shared publicly, such as a podcast, blog series, short film, data visualization or literary or dramatic work.

We selected ten students from across campus as Fellows in the first cohort, of whom eight completed the full program:



"As a Fellow, I appreciated knowing that the issue I was working on was happening in real time and that my work was needed. That it meant something. The project, and what I learned about governance, my community, and myself, was life-changing, and it turned into so much more than what I had initially imagined. I was able to apply to both an international and a campus conference, receive ethics approval to run a focus group (though we later changed the research project to take out the focus group), and develop a facilitation guide for an event that would give participants the chance to question their assumptions about the right way of making decisions."

- Cordelia Snowdon



Fellow	Degree	Program
Louis Obukohwo	BBA Marketing	Computer Info Systems
Cordelia Snowdon	BA Policy Studies	Social Innovation Non-profit Management
Mackenzie Johnson	BCMM Info Design	n/a
Yemima Yongo	BA Criminal Justice	Spanish Policy Studies
Marc Tran	BBA Marketing	Creative Writing
Sydney Harder	BBA General Mgmt	Innovation & Entrepreneurship Social Innovation
Cindy Calderon	BN Nursing	n/a
Olivia Brodowski	BA English	Policy Studies

In this inaugural year, ten community groups, including six non-profit organizations, participated in the program. We have also benefited from eleven faculty mentors for the 2019/2020 cohort: Dr. Catherine Pearl (Social Innovation), Dr. Yasmin Dean (Child Studies and Social Work), Dr. David Legg (Health and Physical Education), James Stauch (General Education), Dr. Christian Cook (Human Resources), Dr. AnneMarie Dorland (Entrepreneurship, Marketing and Social Innovation), Dr. Judy Gleeson (Nursing), Dr. Katharine McGowan (Social Innovation), Audra Foggín (Child Studies and Education), Dr. Andrea Kennedy (Nursing) and Dr. Karim Dharamsi (General Education).

The final campus showcase, moved online due to the pandemic, was held for a public audience in April, 2020. Our enhanced cross-campus communications this year has yielded 65 applications for the upcoming 2020/21 cohort. Fellows and faculty members for this second cohort will again be drawn from all faculties on campus.

Hunter College's Stephen Mintz, a regular contributor to Times Higher Education, has remarked that undergraduate education can be significantly improved through a focus on educating the "whole student": Ethical and professional identity formation, focusing on a personalized learning journey, rich field-based co-curricular experiences, and richer undergraduate research experiences (beyond term papers and reports). The *Catamount Fellowship* integrates each of these.

BUILDING KNOWLEDGE ABOUT HOW THINGS REALLY WORK:

Map the System

"The tenacity, curiosity, drive and determination to meaningfully progress and always contribute to my community are some of the many skills I attribute to my relationships within the Institute. I can say with absolute clarity and candour that I would not be where I am if the Institute had not supported me."

- Roisin Dillon, Map the System Global Winner 2018



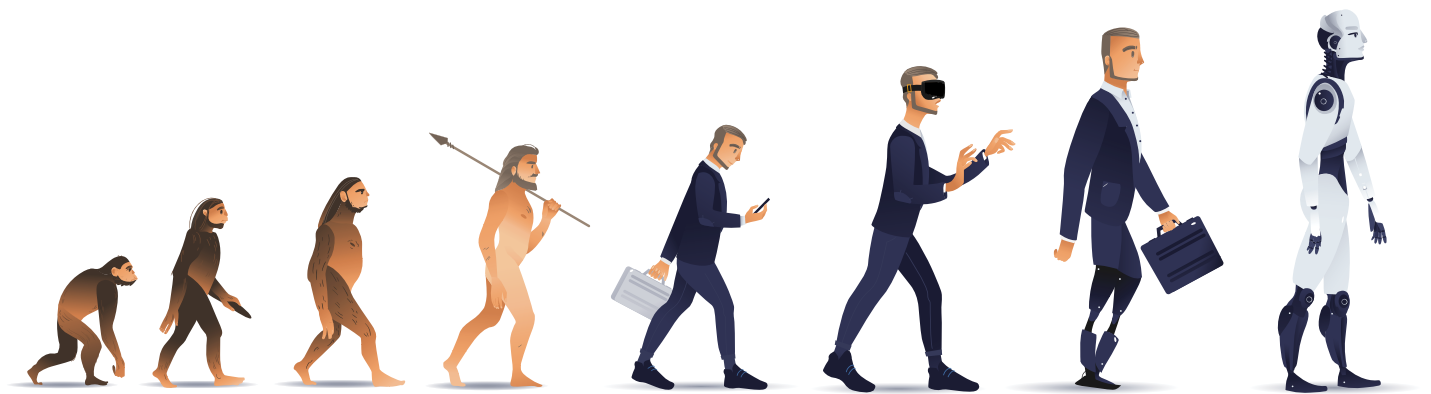
Map the System is an international student challenge, run globally by Oxford University, that provides an opportunity for students in any program on campus to showcase their research and system mapping skills related to complex social and environmental issues. Unlike a pitch competition, design sprint, or hackathon, students in the competition are evaluated based not on a 'solution' to a problem, but rather on the depth of understanding of the problem, as well as the nature, diversity, efficacy and relationships of current interventions (whether by governments, NGOs, social movements or the marketplace). The competition is also open to students of all levels, programs and disciplines.

For the second year in a row (and for the foreseeable future), the Institute manages the entire Canada-wide edition of Map the System, under contract with the McConnell Foundation. Under the

leadership of Latasha Calf Robe, the program made a major COVID-induced pivot this year, shifting the Canadian Final to an online platform, with pre-edited video submissions from all teams. A record seventeen universities and colleges across Canada took part this year. MRU alumnus and former Institute staff member Anna Johnson was recruited in mid-2019 by Oxford to run the global edition of the program, where she oversaw the jump in competing schools to fifty-four worldwide. Both Latasha and Anna have introduced a number of innovations to Map the System to make this journey more fulfilling for students and more professionally challenging for educators. In addition, Dr. Katherine McGowan runs an aligned credit-based curricular support for students in the Challenge, through the course *Social Innovation 3303: Storytelling and Systems*.

MRU's campus-wide Map the System program is run by Information Design graduate Ashleigh Metcs. This year's winning campus team - Jillian Mah (BComm), Ashley Dion (BBA) and Matthew Taburada (Behavioural Sciences at Ambrose University) - finished among the top six in Canada, which earned them a birth in the virtual global final run by the University of Oxford, the fourth year in a row in which MRU teams have advanced to the global final. Their topic focused on the antiquatedness of Canada's charity system, and the nature of how that system is ill-adapted, in its current form, to social challenges of the 21st century.

The Student Guide to Mapping a System, co-produced with the Skoll Centre for Social Entrepreneurship at Oxford and Systems-Led Leadership, based in Boulder, Colorado, continues to be used by thousands of students and educators worldwide. This year, we are also launching a new Canada-specific website to help Canadian teams excel in systems mapping.



BUILDING MACHINES FOR SOCIAL GOOD:

In Search of the Altruithm

IN SEARCH OF THE.
ALTRUITHM: AI and the Future
of Social Good
James Stauch, Alina Turner and Camilo Camacho Escamilla



Having produced a number of ‘environmental scans’ peering into the current cultural, ecological, social, economic, political and tech trends, we fixed upon the rise of artificial intelligence (AI), a trend that is profound, yet bafflingly under-profiled within the realm of social purpose work. Institute Director James Stauch worked with Dr. Alina Turner, founder of HelpSeeker, a B-Corp certified social business that specializes in systems mapping and data-driven machine learning to jointly author the report *In Search of the Altruithm: AI and the Future of Social Good*, launched in August of 2019. This project continues to snowball into other publications and dialogue opportunities including contributing two articles for in *The Philanthropist*, the trade journal of Canada’s non-profit sector, blogging in *Future of Good*, an Ottawa based knowledge mobilizer, hosted webinars through *Community Foundations Canada*, *ABSI Connect* and *Inventures*, and co-hosted a breakfast roundtable in Calgary in February in 2020 (a subsequent Toronto event, co-hosted by the Lawson Foundation, Imagine Canada and the Ontario Nonprofit Network, was postponed due to COVID-19).

This evolving partnership with HelpSeeker to enhance social service systems, has led to a co-design of an ambitious paid work experience program that we are hoping to jointly launch in late 2020. This program will bring together knowledge of social issues, systems mapping, data literacy, design thinking and other competencies for students across a range of disciplines at MRU.

BUILDING AN ECONOMY FOR PEOPLE & PLANET:

Economics of Social Change



Communities around the world are looking to the local economy as a means of addressing growing social and environmental issues, a quest that has intensified with the onset of COVID-19. **Economics of Social Change** is a five-part workshop series, designed and delivered in partnership with Momentum, a respected non-profit agency that activates community economic development, financial literacy and employment preparedness. Introduced in 2018, the series has run twice, and is scheduled to be delivered through the Fall of 2020 and Winter of 2021 (online due to COVID-19 restrictions). The workshops are for individuals passionate about community and curious about how to apply an economic lens to social issues. The sessions help participants grow their understanding of the connections between the local economy, community development and social change in areas such as food security, affordable housing and local job creation. Workshops can be taken independently or completed in full to earn a certificate of completion. This workshop series has also been packaged into a 15-hour course in the *Social Innovation Certificate*, described in the previous section. Facilitated by Social Impact Lead Barb Davies, the workshops are led by instructors from Momentum and the Institute, and involve 'living case studies' - storytellers from the broader community.



Economics of Social Change was partly inspired by the work of serial social entrepreneur and Ashoka Fellow Shaun Loney, with whom we produced ***The Problem Solver's Companion: A Practitioner's Guide to Starting a Social Enterprise***. The Guide was officially launched in September of 2019 at the Trico Changemakers Studio and is now being used by practitioners from coast to coast to coast. It also serves as one of the texts for Economics of Social Change, as well as for the Social Enterprising credit course within the Social Innovation program at MRU.

"I travel across the country and I can say without a doubt, the best partnership we have - the people that understand us the most and value our practical business experience - are the folks at the Institute for Community Prosperity... What's unique about this project [The Problem Solver's Companion: Ten Steps to Starting a Social Enterprise] isn't just that the students at MRU participated in the writing, design and layout but that the Institute actually cared to ask successful practitioners of social enterprise, such as myself, how they would go about starting an enterprise."

- Shaun Loney, Ashoka Fellow and Senior Partner, Encompass Coop

BUILDING THE ECOSYSTEM FOR SOCIAL INNOVATION:

ABSI Connect and the Trico Changemakers Studio



Alberta Social Innovation (ABSI) Connect is a collective of organizations and individuals working to get better at solving complex social and environmental problems in our province. ABSI Connect works to connect, align, celebrate, strengthen, and learn from Albertan changemakers who are finding innovative ways to address the complex problems their communities face. This happens through sharing stories and evidence, connecting and aligning changemakers, and helping people grow in their ability to innovate and create impact. The Institute for Community Prosperity is proud to provide the administrative backbone for ABSI Connect. Naomi Mahaffy (Facilitator) and Barbara Weber (Interim Facilitator, while Naomi is on leave) run ABSI Connect, with assistance from recent MRU Information Design graduate Elise Martinoski.

ABSI Connect hosts events and conversations among Alberta's social impact sector (which includes nonprofit, public and private sector practitioners and changemakers). Webinars this past year covered social innovation in professionalized settings, design thinking for changemakers, online facilitation techniques to support changemakers during COVID times, and a blueprint for action with artificial intelligence and the future of social good. ABSI Connect also experimented with several event types: a virtual social innovation dinner party, talkback events with podcast guests, and a new catalyst program designed to fill gaps for rural and BIPOC innovators and changemakers who were not currently being served by existing offerings. This catalyst program combines a mini grant component with peer mentorship, workshops and peer based engagement to help build connections and competencies for emerging innovators.

ABSI Connect continues to be one of seven regional partners in Social Innovation Canada, which aims to provide the collaborative infrastructure to strengthen Canada's social innovation ecosystem. We also work closely with (and are on the steering committee of) the new Alberta Social Economy Ecosystem Development (AB SEED) project, which formed out of a gathering of 60 capacity builders and social finance intermediaries in the province. ABSI is currently supporting research into language used by ethnocultural communities within Alberta, in partnership with Volunteer Alberta and the University of Alberta, supported by MITACS.



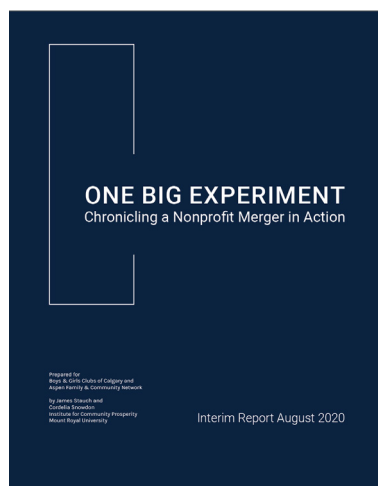
Created in partnership with the Institute for Innovation and Entrepreneurship, the **Trico Changemakers Studio** is a vibrant on-campus co-working and learning space. We are thrilled to collaborate on many fronts with the Studio, including shared personnel, and partnering on community engagement, student work experience and co-curricular learning opportunities. Please review the Studio's Annual Report for more information about its many accomplishments and the pivots it is making to meet the challenges of co-working amid a pandemic.

BUILDING NEW AND BETTER ORGANIZATIONS:

Chronicling a Nonprofit Merger in Action

"I cannot overstate the impact that the Institute for Community Prosperity has had on my career.... The Institute gave me the confidence, tools and knowledge I needed to start my own non-profit organization."

- Andrea van Vugt, Founder and Director, Disability Pride Alberta Foundation



Many people, and many governments, anticipate that mergers of nonprofits and charities will be one inevitable outcome of the pandemic. To date, however, non-profit human service collaborations and mergers are relatively uncommon, and nonprofit mergers are particularly rare in Alberta.

The Institute for Community Prosperity was asked to document a rare - and large scale - merger process between two well-known local nonprofit human services organizations - Aspen Family & Community Network (Aspen) and Boys & Girls Clubs of Calgary (BGCC). The new organization is intended to serve as "One Big Door"; a holistic continuum of services for children, youth and families in Calgary and area. It presents an opportunity to create operational and administrative efficiencies, to provide a more seamless suite of services for children, youth and families, and to enable a greater collective focus on research and evaluation.

Through the spring/summer/fall of 2020, the Institute is undertaking the following tasks:

1. Chronicling this merger journey process, looking at questions of strategic fit and process, as well as the governance, financial, HR, communications and cultural aspects of the merger; and
2. Offering up a framework, based on these insights, surfacing key questions for other non-profit and human service organizations considering deeper forms of collaboration.

The first report - **One Big Experiment: Chronicling a Nonprofit Merger in Action** - will be available to the general public for download starting September 15, 2020.

BUILDING A THRIVING CITY:

Supporting other MRU and community initiatives

The Institute strongly believes that the city is a classroom, and the classroom should help give expression to students' desire to shape the place they live, work, play and engage in democratic life. Civic innovation and transformative learning go hand in hand, and are key to building a thriving city. Following are some of the initiatives we are involved in:

LearningCITY Lab

At the root of adaptation is learning. To become a city that adapts, Calgary must become a city that can learn faster and better. Dr. David Finch of the Institute of Innovation and Entrepreneurship brought together a broad range of community partners, facilitated by Calgary Economic Development, to create **LearningCITY**. LearningCITY explores how a city-wide learning system could redefine the future of our city. As a first step, undertaken this past year, a team of researchers conducted a two-part study re-envisioning Calgary's learning system.

bounceback

The Institute sponsored the **BounceBackYYC Hackathon**, an intense multi-day virtual hackathon, run by Dr. Simon Raby and Khalid Abdul Razak of the Institute of Innovation and Entrepreneurship. The event brought together the brightest minds and future leaders of Calgary to explore solutions to help the restart, recovery, and return of the Calgary experience economy (i.e. businesses that generate more than 50% of their profits from live in-person experiences or events).

VIVACITY

The **Vivacity** Civic Innovation course continues to run annually, led by Dr. Catherine Pearl, in partnership this past year with Calgary Arts Development, and remains a hugely popular choice among students, with a significant profile among downtown planners, artists, developers, politicians, and civic activists. The Institute sponsors the material costs of the student projects as well as the final spring showcase.

Watch for the release of **Vision 20/20** in the coming weeks. In the spirit of 2020 as a watershed moment, we reached out to twenty MRU students or recent students, all still in their 20s, to discover their vision for community prosperity in Calgary. The project is completely managed by Institute staff in their 20s and unpacks how might the city adapt and evolve to become a place that 20-somethings can see themselves living and thriving in, well into the future.



Calgary on Purpose is a grassroots-driven platform for Calgarians to share with each other what it means to be a Calgarian and what they want their city to be in the future. Institute Director James Stauch participates on the Advisory Council for Calgary on Purpose.



BUILDING ON WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE OF PLACE, PEOPLE AND SELF:

Buffalo Runners



The **Buffalo Runners** podcast series, produced and hosted by Latasha Calf Robe, was launched in August of 2020, based on recorded interviews earlier in the year with Indigenous changemakers from Treaty 7. In the Buffalo Runners metaphor, "Buffalo" refers both to learning and prosperity, whereas "Runners" refers to changemaking and action. The podcast dives into the stories of social entrepreneurs, activists and informal community leaders. Drawing insights, inspiration and ideas, Latasha unpacks why and how these leaders pursued the path they did so that MRU students and others may be able to learn from their

BUILDING AWARENESS OF COMMUNITY PROSPERITY:

Institute Communications Revamp

The Institute welcomed an intern - Julia Kaiser - from the (BComm) Public Relations program - over the spring and summer. Julia helped us upgrade our communications platforms and processes, and also mentored student teams across Canada in their Map the System video submissions.

Our first big communications success this year was a website revamp we published in June. This massive project included collaboration with every person on the team to ensure that the website could meet the communications needs of all of our stakeholders in an accessible way. While the website continues to be updated and changed, you can visit mru.ca/ICP to see the refresh.

The Team

The Institute's work and accomplishments were made possible in 2018/19 by an outstanding team of individuals, including 4 MRU students, 3 MRU alumna, staff shared with either the Trico Changemakers Studio and Institute for Innovation and Entrepreneurship and volunteers who bridge their advising and mentorship role at ICP with their work in the community as respected practitioners and agents of change.



Latasha Calf Robe
Community Engagement Strategist
(cross-appointed with the Trico
Changemakers Studio)



Barb Davies
Social Impact Lead (cross-
appointed with the Trico
Changemakers Studio)



Julia Kaiser
Public Relations and Community
Coordinator



Anna Johnson
Community Engagement
Strategist (until September,
2019)



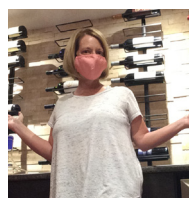
Naomi Mahaffy
ABSI Connect Facilitator (currently
on maternity leave)



Elise Martinoski
ABSI Connect Information
Designer



Ashley Metcs
Campus Coordinator - Map
the System (2020 Bachelor of
Communications Graduate)



Tracy Pfeifer
Administrative Assistant



Coleson Proudfoot
Projects Assistant (2020 Diploma
of Social Work Graduate)



Cordelia Snowdon
(2020 Bachelor of Arts Graduate)



James Stauch
Director



Barbara Weber
Interim ABSI Connect Facilitator



Cathy Glover
Changemaker in Residence:
Corporate Social Innovation



Walter Hossli
Changemaker in Residence:
Leadership and Community
Economic Development



Work-Integrated Learning

The Institute hires casual and summer students, as well as occasional research assistants. This past year, we have hosted two Social Work practicum students and employed students majoring in Information Design, Public Policy Studies, Public Relations, and Social Work.

Team Learning and Community Involvement

Institute team members have been involved in either delivering or participating in a wide variety of community or scholarly events, locally and beyond, in order to communicate our learning to a wider audience of practitioners, citizens and academics as well as to ground our thinking in feedback, experience and application.

Speeches, Workshops, Webinars and other Institute Partnered Learning



The Institute designed, delivered or co-delivered the following workshops and learning sessions over the past year:

- Alberta Cooperative and Community Association (ACCA): Local Investing YYC (Barb Davies)
- AshokaU Exchange (James Stauch):
- Mapping a System: Helping students deepen their understanding of a social challenge (virtual panel)
- Engaging Indigenous Communities (virtual best practice session)
- Universities and Social Infrastructure (virtual best practice session)
- Calgary Chamber of Voluntary Organizations - panelist - The State of the Alberta Nonprofit Sector (November, 2019)
- Coalition for the Equal Access to Education: Unpacking and Addressing Racism in the Education System (Coleson Proudfoot and Julia Kaiser)
- Economics of Social Change 5-course Certificate Program (in partnership with Thrive/Momentum) (Barb Davies, James Stauch, Latasha Calf Robe, Walter Hossli, Anna Johnson, Coleson Proudfoot)
- Econous 2019: Charting the New Economy: An Introduction to Systems Thinking (Anna Johnson and James Stauch)
- First Nations Colleges (Old Sun, Red Crow, Blue Quills) (Latasha Calf Robe)
- Inventures 2020: In Search of the Altruithm: AI and the Future of Social Good (webinar) (James Stauch)
- Open Doors: Social Innovation and Affordable Housing (James Stauch)
- The Philanthropist Magazine: Rise of the (Good) Machines: AI and the Future of Social Good (James Stauch)
- Philanthropic Foundations Canada: The Future of Philanthropy: Working Across Boundaries (James Stauch)
- Universities Canada: Connecting with community organizations for social impact (webinar) (James Stauch)
- Teaching Map the System: Workshop for Bow Valley College Faculty (Latasha Calf Robe)
- MMIW Presentation - Calgary Foundation. (Team Kistoonon and Latasha Calf Robe)
- The Emerging Leaders Conference (Guest Presenter) Latasha Calf Robe

Service

Institute personnel also volunteer or serve on many other boards and committees, and are encouraged to find synergies between these involvements and their work at the Institute:

- A Novel Bunch - MRU's Book Club (Coleson Proudfoot)
- Alberta College of Social Workers (ACSW) Nominations and Recruitment Committee (Cordelia Snowden)
- Alberta Ecotrust Foundation, Board Member (James Stauch)
- Alberta Social Enterprise Ecosystem Development Project, Steering Committee (Naomi Mahaffy/Barbara Weber)
- Calgary Arts Development (CADA) Aisinna'kiiks Steering Committee, Committee Member (Latasha Calf Robe)
- Calgary On Purpose, Advisory Board (James Stauch)
- Canadian Community Economic Development Network (CCEDNet), Board Member (Barb Davies)
- City of Calgary, Social Procurement Advisory Task Force (Barb Davies)
- Coalition for Equal Access to Education, virtual event hosts (Coleson Proudfoot and Julia Kaiser)
- Conference Board of Canada, Corporate Responsibility & Sustainability Faculty (James Stauch)
- Common Good Retirement Plan, Champions Council (James Stauch)
- COVID-19 Intervention Challenge Participant, Hunter Hub for Entrepreneurial Thinking (Coleson Proudfoot)
- Imagine Canada, Panel Reviewer - Standards Program (Naomi Mahaffy/Barbara Weber)
- ImpactResponse.ca - Co-developer of Call to Action (Barbara Weber)
- Indigenous Gathering Place, Volunteer Facilitator (Latasha Calf Robe)
- Local Investing YYC, Board Chair (Barb Davies)
- Metcalf Foundation, Advisor (James Stauch)
- MRU Human Resources Classification Committee, MRSA (Tracy Pfeifer)
- MRU Student Changemaker Network (Coleson Proudfoot)
- The Philanthropist, Editorial Committee (James Stauch)
- Social Innovation Canada, Regional Partner/Advisor (Naomi Mahaffy/Barbara Weber)
- Soul of the Next Economy Forum, Advisory Committee (James Stauch)
- The Leftovers Foundation, Strategy and Growth team (Coleson Proudfoot)
- Volunteer Alberta, Board Member (Naomi Mahaffy)
- Author in Residence - Crowfoot School, Siksika Nation (Latasha Calf Robe)
- Author Readings (Niitsitapi Learning Centre, Calgary Public Library Youth camps, Women's Day 2020, Boy Chief Trading Post) (Latasha Calf Robe)
- Calgary Arts Development (CADA) Aisinna'kiiks Steering Committee, Committee Member (Latasha Calf Robe)
- MRU Recruitment and Volunteer Fair, Volunteer (Latasha Calf Robe)
- Canada Bridges, Board Member (Latasha Calf Robe)
- Canadian Roots Exchange, CREation Advisory Circle Members (Latasha Calf Robe)

Funders and Partners

The Institute operates entirely on funds gifted or earned from philanthropic foundations, individuals or companies outside MRU. Some of these gifts have been toward the Institute's two endowments, which collectively are valued at just over \$4.9 million. The Institute spends at a level necessary to preserve the capital of these endowments. We are grateful for the additional grants and in-kind contributions received this year from the following organizations:

Funders



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Driven by MRU's mandate to provide extraordinary opportunities for undergraduates, the Institute for Community Prosperity works to provide students and other citizens access to high-impact, immersive, and uncompromisingly current learning to improve and transform communities; unlocking student potential, and helping them flourish as learners, changemakers, and human beings.