



# ActionDignity

ANNUAL REPORT  
2020-2021





*Everyone is worthy  
of dignity & respect*

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# WHO WE ARE

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## Why ActionDignity?

We are all worthy of dignity and respect.

We are a country steeped in indigenous histories and fused together in a mosaic of cultures. We pride ourselves of being a nation that respects and values differences. We see equality is a right, but as it is with all of our rights, we must never take it for granted, always remind each other of its importance and fight for it. We exist to ensure all of us experience this right. That we never forget how our differences make us stronger and how our conviction of being a fair and just community is always upheld.

We all have a role to play. Each one of us is responsible for the quality of the community we live in. We all play a role in building our community and our future. We must act for our rights and our beliefs. We can all demonstrate our support and the value and respect we have for each other, with every interaction and at every moment. It's our choice what kind of future we build. Our actions define us.

## WHAT WE DO

We work with ethnocultural communities and collaborators to achieve equitable change in our communities, institutions, and public systems. In this process, we support ethnocultural communities in amplifying their collective voice and achieve full participation in social, economic, and civic life. ActionDignity does not work in isolation, but as part of a movement of community mobilizers and organizers who share the same vision. Together with our Community Brokers, Members, community leaders, volunteers, and partners, we:

- Increase ethnocultural communities' awareness of and collective capacity to address issues of racism, inequity and exclusion
- Increase public awareness of and support for issues important to ethnocultural communities
- Work towards social inclusion of individuals, families and communities, foster natural supports, identify and build on community strengths, bridge between cultures and service providers, and support community-led actions for positive change
- Conduct and share research on the experiences of ethnocultural community members to inform our actions and to influence decision-making and change within public policy, institutions, service systems and communities
- Facilitate collaboration between ethnocultural communities with academia, public institutions and national organizations in ways that empower racialized communities and centre their perspectives on important issues and initiatives
- Strengthen the capacity of ethnocultural community organizations for community building, cross-community collaboration and civic participation
- Support community-led initiatives that address their priorities, challenges and concerns

Our strength is our diversity. When we connect, learn and act together in greater numbers, we have more influence, gain access to more resources and opportunities, and can make more progress towards our goals. For a list of our member organizations, please refer to page 48.

# RELEVANCE IN THE TIME OF CRISIS

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This has been a year unlike any. Leading to last year's Annual General Meeting, ActionDignity's overwhelming concern was how to pivot and transition. The restrictions brought about by Covid-19 made us adopt new ways of engagement so that we can continue to work with our communities and respond effectively to the triple crisis of the pandemic, racial injustice and the economic downturn.

The ensuing year impacted our community's health, economic and social well being to degrees we have not seen. It also laid bare many of the issues that have historically pushed racialized communities into situations of inequity and exclusion. Because of these underlying issues, the triple crisis put racialized communities more inordinately in harm's way: from the infection of the virus; from the loss of livelihoods and status; from being targets of overt hate and racial discrimination.

In the midst of these storms, which to this date have not fully subsided, our community members and ActionDignity achieved remarkable things – from activating rapid, dignified and equitable responses to Covid-19, to taking on actions on long standing social issues, to engaging public institutions and systems in confronting issues of racism, equity, workers rights, social isolation and mental health.

## Drawing from who we are and what we do as a movement-building organization

With our community members, we were able to navigate the turbulence of the past year because of capacities and values-based strategies that have been guiding us as an organization.

These include:

- **Community development** that anchors our work in the lived and examined experiences of racialized communities and in their capacities to participate and lead in social change.
- **Employing community brokers** who play the roles of advocates, organizers, capacity builders and who ensure that our work connects with the realities of our ethnocultural community members and organizations
- **Supporting community platforms** as a more equitable way to facilitate and support community-led actions and collaborations.
- **Linking community organizing and grassroots actions to systems and institutional change** that puts dignity at the forefront, centres the voice and experiences of racialized communities and pursues approaches that are culturally relevant, innovative and effective.
- **Practicing collective internal leadership and organizational flexibility** that allows for timely and impactful responses that understand but are not stymied by risks.
- **Employing story telling and participatory research** that captures the perspectives and lived experiences of racialized communities to drive our programs, initiatives and engagements with public institutions and decision makers.
- **Working with artists and incorporating arts in our strategies and programs** that brings creative curiosity into our actions and activities and provides a more fulsome, holistic and accessible approach to engaging members of ethnocultural communities.
- **Building long term relationships of trust** that sustain and deepen collaboration.

# BOARD CHAIR'S REPORT

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On behalf of ActionDignity's Board of Directors, staff, brokers, volunteers, and partners, I am pleased to offer this Board Chair's Annual Report for 2020-2021.

## Highlights from an Eventful 2020-2021

2020-2021 proved to be a challenging year for many of us, and our organization. Coming off the heels of COVID-19, we have also experienced heightened racism against our Black, Indigenous, and racialized communities. The continued experiences of Anti-Black and Anti-Indigenous racism, Anti-Asian hate, and Islamophobia remains a reality for many of us. As an organization, ActionDignity has navigated these troubling times by continuing our ongoing work on anti-racism, community development, storytelling, and supporting community platforms. During our last Annual General Meeting, we discussed how ActionDignity was at a turning point in consolidating our work to address systematic racism, and implementing critical anti-racism perspectives and training. I am happy to report that ActionDignity's staff and Board have taken this challenge head-on, and have seized opportunities to address racism through an equity lens. Some of our highlights include the strengthening of our ongoing programs such as the Social Inclusion, B.L.A.C.K., Youth Place and Lead for Change Programs, as well as the expansion of new programs such as MERC and RAVE, BRAVE, Calgary Cares, and ARAP. Our staff capacity, funding and donations, media presence and collaborations with other organizations have nearly doubled; an encouraging sign that local stakeholders and community members are increasingly seeing the value of our work.

## Strategic Planning and the Future of ActionDignity

Five years ago, ActionDignity started a rebranding process to center our focus on social justice, human rights and equity for our membership and communities. This year, our Board commissioned a strategic planning taskforce to review our organization's mission and vision. Working alongside ActionDignity staff and advisors from Black, Indigenous and racialized communities, the Board is committed to our future directions while working with an anti-racism, community action, and collaborative lens. As we embark on our taskforce work, we continue to keep our four strategic priorities in mind. They are: (1) Amplifying Voice, Lens and Leadership, (2) Elevating Awareness and Action, (3) Advancing Participation and Collaboration, and (4) Enriching Capacities. As always, our Board expresses gratitude to our research and policy, community engagement, and governance committees who have worked diligently in guiding systems change and advocacy work.

Looking forward to 2021-2022, our Board and committees will be welcoming new volunteers who offer their unique and diverse skill sets and contributions. Moreover, our Board will be under the leadership of Hiroko Nakao (incoming Board Chair) and Arsaima Sultan (incoming Vice-Chair). I am looking forward to Hiroko and Arsaima's stewardship of our organization.

## Thank you, Marichu Antonio; Welcome Jamilah Edwards and Leslie Tamagi

Finally, it is with great sadness and excitement that I report the retirement of our long-time executive director, Marichu Antonio. For the last 12 years, Marichu has been an innovative leader, a visionary community member, and a powerful voice for advocacy and social change. Under her leadership, Marichu has elevated our organization to new heights. Her dedication to ActionDignity and our communities is one of the many reasons she was recently awarded the city of Calgary's Citizen of the Year. Marichu is a dedicated director, partner, mother, grandmother, mentor, and friend. She has inspired us all to build a better future, while maintaining innovation, advocacy, credibility, trust, and relationality within our communities. Thank you, Marichu. We wish you well as you enter retirement and new journeys ahead.

The Board is actively in search of Marichu's successor. We are ecstatic to welcome Jamilah Edwards (Interim Executive Director) and Leslie Tamagi (Interim Transition Director), who will ensure operational stability as we move forward with our transition plan. I look forward to learning from Jamilah and Leslie's expertise and leadership.

As always, I acknowledge and express gratitude to our dedicated staff, brokers, volunteers, partners and funders for your continued engagement and collaboration.



Dr. Ilyan Ferrer  
Board Chair

# EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

## *HIGHLIGHTS OF 12 YEARS FROM 2009 – 2021: A CONTINUING JOURNEY*

It has been an extraordinary year. Our communities struggled with the devastation of the Covid-19 pandemic. We reeled from the surge of incidents of hate and racism, then encouraged by the resurgence of Black Lives Matter and similar movements for equity. Economic uncertainties, already with us before the pandemic, have resulted in job loss, diminished livelihoods, and for some, loss of status. And in the midst of all these we see increasing issues of social isolation, mental health and domestic conflict.

Our instinct as an organization was to draw resilience by staying close to where our communities were. Our hearts reached out to feel the pulse of their situations. Our hands worked collectively with theirs to shape actions and responses to support individuals and families impacted by Covid-19. Our minds wove from their stories a way to understand and frame these collective experiences, with the lens of racial equity, community empowerment and social change. We acted while we tried to make sense of the moment so we could respond with more purpose.

Given the challenges we faced, what we have achieved together are outstanding. The numbers that are detailed in this report, in terms of the people and communities we engaged, the individuals we supported, the actions we undertook, the resources we mobilized, showed how intensely engaged we were. As important, the impact we achieved through these numbers highlights the difference we have made on individuals and families, on our communities, and on our public institutions. It has been a truly difficult yet remarkable year.

So today, we feel both exhilaration and exhaustion. We are beset by a sense of achievement but also an anxiety about the road ahead. What can give us confidence is that ActionDignity has a history of coming through challenges and transitions.

This is my last Executive Director's report. So allow me to share with you a few insights from my tenure. As we often say, ActionDignity is a movement-building organization. This means that our strengths are cumulative, our journeys are continuing.

### **Rebuilding and New Beginning**

It has been twelve years since I took on the role of Executive Director of what was then the Ethnocultural Council of Calgary (ECCC). June 22, 2009 was when I first officially started. The late Dr. Vettivelu Nallainayagam was the Board Chair, having taken over from Dago Corea, who also took over from Teresa Woo-Paw, our founding Board Chair who was then elected to Alberta's Legislative Assembly. The previous fiscal Year ending March 31, 2009 raised a total revenue of \$7,672. Our boxes of files and supplies were locked in storage for over a year since 2008. Our old office downtown was literally demolished to ground zero. Thank God our spirits did not go with the demolition.

I was part of a Board Transition Team that was trying to resuscitate a dying organization. During the transition, prior to my decision to apply as Executive Director, we held a series of negotiations at various funders' tables. We offered a community development strategy called "From the Margins to the Mainstream". The funders finally agreed to fund us for one pilot year, with the caveat that we will be subject to close monitoring and review. Our first funders who even then believed in us were United Way of Calgary and Area, the City of Calgary's FCSS, plus Alberta Human Rights Education and Multiculturalism Fund and Wild Rose Foundation.

On my first day as Executive Director, we did not have an office of our own, not even a desk nor a chair. We shared a table, one very slow computer and one printer while we squatted at the office of the Coalition for Equal Access to Education. When people asked me for my business card, I said I am homeless. Our fax was not working, and we

could not retrieve messages from the land line. We carried our files in our vehicles and conducted meetings in various offices where we could hang out.

For me, the situation was much more challenging than starting fresh. It was a time of Rebuilding. The biggest asset we had at that time was the enthusiasm and determination of the Board, staff and racialized communities. Our 25 ethnocultural member organizations helped recruit leaders and community brokers for training. Our aim was to grow and develop our critical mass and grassroots base.

Because of this, even with very limited funding, we were able to put the organization in order, boldly enter into a five-year office lease agreement with Prospect, pilot our first leadership programs, get medical insurance for staff, and sustain our engagement with ethnocultural communities. Canadian Heritage, Amal Umar's retirement, donated their beautiful office furniture set to ActionDignity which we still use to this day. After one year as Executive Director in March 2010, we raised a total revenue of \$207,000. Our staff grew "exponentially" from one to 2.3, including myself, Sheeba Vijayan and Cristina Tellez.

## Key Milestones

Over the next few years, ActionDignity will reach the following milestones, in terms of its organizational capacities, programs, membership base and impact in the community.

### **Building a Robust, Sustainable and Resilient Organization**

Fast forward twelve years later, I am proud to say that we have made significant progress in positioning ActionDignity as a unique organization that combines a strong multicultural grassroots base with systems change work. We secured regular offices and facilities for meetings and events that we share with our ethnocultural member organizations. We got our charitable status in October 2012. We pushed boundaries in our funding schemes, securing multi-year funding agreements. We successfully incorporated Community Brokers as paid staff. We shared additional funds, resources and support to ethnocultural organizations doing community action plans. We have a Board approved comprehensive set of policies and procedures including a Diversity Policy, Human Resource Policy, Fund Development Plan, and have started diversifying our funding sources.

Our staff grew from 2.3 FTE to 56 staff. Our revenue grew from \$7,672 to \$2 million. Our membership grew from 25 to 110 member organizations.

Our rebrand and communications plan dramatically increased ActionDignity's profile and linked it to racial equity issues, connecting us beyond our traditional stakeholders through our aggressive social media outreach. We experienced a significant increase in our donor base to over 1,400 new donors, with over \$300,000 donations coming in this past year.

### **Strengthening our Community Members - from Individual Strength to Collaborative Platforms**

We focused our first initiatives on strengthening our members, building our collaboration with them and expanding our membership base. We started our leadership training programs. These focused on community organizing, understanding issues and public institutions, effective communication, action planning and accessing funding. We partnered with Alberta Community Development and various non profits to provide workshops on board governance and organizational structures and processes. We continue to provide similar sessions today to our members through our programs and initiatives. We also researched more equitable ways to support collaboration between grassroots groups and more established organizations like ActionDignity and other charities. This led us to develop a Community Development Platform approach. We co-published "Better Together" to guide the partnerships between charities and non-charity community organizations. Our membership base is now 110 organizations. Many of them are working and leading together on various platforms to act on common issues and concerns.

# EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

## HIGHLIGHTS OF 12 YEARS FROM 2009 – 2021: A CONTINUING JOURNEY

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### **Building the Community Broker Strategy**

ActionDignity worked with community brokers almost since it was established. First piloted in 2004, the Community Broker Strategy became more sustained and deliberate as we developed our organizational strategies and funding became more available. Initially, brokers linked and connected with service provider organizations, which led to a series of recommendations on how ethnocultural organizations can play a role in service design and delivery and be equal partners. Today, we have a more established, well researched and documented Broker Strategy that is publicly recognized. It includes organizing, advocacy, action planning, collaboration and systems change. Our Community Broker Strategy is cited as one of Canada's most promising practices in 2020 by Pathways to Prosperity.

### **Our Strategy for Social Change**

As ActionDignity entered into a period of Rebuilding and Renewal in 2009, we adopted a new Strategy for Change. We decided to move ethnocultural communities from the Margins to the Mainstream and develop ActionDignity as a high impact organization, using the Pathways to Change Model as a starting theoretical framework. In succeeding years, we further sharpened our Theories of Change for each program and integrated these into one agency-level Framework based on an anti-racism and anti-oppression lens. We reaffirmed racial equity as our unique lens in systems and public policy change work, specifically in addressing immigration issues, access to resources and programs and participation in decision making.

We increased our capacity for research, policy change and public awareness, leading to successful campaigns in pursuing public policies that advance the rights and welfare of racialized communities towards increased equity. This paved the way for ActionDignity to develop its Strategic Plan every five years.

### **Our Approach to Our Work: Combining Long Term Programs and Timely Initiatives**

We started out with short term funding to implement several pilot projects. In time, we built more long term programs from the successes of these projects, and secured multi year commitments from funders. Twelve years ago, most funders only supported traditional individual-based client services. ActionDignity did not waver from our focus on community development, capacity building and institutional change. And our early funders took the risk to support us in this work. Sustained support for long term programs enabled us to respond to emergent situations and opportunities in timely and innovative ways. Coupled with the Community Broker Strategy and the Community Development Platform approach, these programs position our community members and ActionDignity to be flexible and impactful. Many of these emergent initiatives would receive funding, often short term, as funders see them as sources of new and promising practices to respond to important social issues. Some of these initiatives eventually became sustained programs. Examples are our local domestic violence prevention initiative and our work in neighbourhoods. This last year, we designed and implemented several emergent initiatives in response to the pandemic, resurgence of racism and workers' rights. Some of these may evolve into more long term programs on racial equity, resiliency and recovery.

### **Racism and Intersectionality**

Building from previous conversations and initiatives, the founding members first met to formally discuss the establishment of the Ethnocultural Council on September 10, 2001. The next day, two planes crashed into the Twin Towers in New York. The eruption of hate and violence against racialized communities that ensued afterwards made it more urgent for ECCC to be organized.

We first articulated ECCC's vision as aspiring for full economic, social, political and civic participation of ethnocultural communities in a welcoming and equitable society. Our mission was to make this happen by having a collective voice and working for social change. Underlying these is a recognition that racism is rooted in hundreds of years of colonialism and oppression of Indigenous communities in Canada. It is likewise rooted in the oppression of Black and People of Colour communities. Racism is a history of stolen land, stolen labour, and excluded communities. This is the core message of ActionDignity's Our Canada Our Story artistic productions.

ActionDignity's approach to discussing racism is to start with the lived experiences of racialized individuals, families and communities in their workplaces, schools, neighbourhoods and in places where they seek services and support. Exclusion and racial profiling made it apparent how people are treated inequitably because of their racial background. ActionDignity's advocacy was the adoption of ethnocultural and racial equity lens in understanding social issues and in developing service, community and policy solutions. Today one important task is to examine how racialized individuals and communities face a complexity of inequities because of race, gender identities, economic status and other intersecting identities. And to address these in more inclusive, equitable and comprehensive ways

## The Paths Forward

Today we are again facing a transition. Impressive as they are, our achievements need to become more durable. This will require us to undertake a few of the following: further strengthen connections with our ethnocultural communities; make our Community Broker and Platform strategies more robust; learn and practice more diverse ways of community organizing and mass communication; make room for more youth leadership. Unique as we are as an organization, the new period will bring new complexities and we need to seek more long term collaborators, especially among kindred organizations and advocates in the Indigenous, Black and People of Colour communities. After crisis, institutions and systems tend to go back to what is familiar and comfortable. We need to expand the opening created by the clamor from social movements and advocates to embed changes to institutional policies and practices. All these will require new and strengthened capacities. In all these, I believe that ActionDignity is in a good place to take on these opportunities and challenges.

Finally, I want to express gratitude and solidarity to ActionDignity's co-conspirators. To our amazingly fearless and creative staff and Community Brokers, to our deeply committed and passionate Board under the wise and caring leadership of Dr. Ilyan Ferrer, to our tireless and ever reliable volunteers, to our powerful and resilient community members. Thank you as well to our reliable and continuously curious funders and donors, and to our always willing and generous partners.

I am humbled and forever grateful for all the mentorship, support, and friendship that you have generously provided me.

As I end my 12 years as Executive Director, I wish to welcome the incoming leaders, Hiroko Nakao as the incoming Board Chair and Arsaima Sultan as the Vice-Chair, Jamilah Edwards as the Interim Executive Director and Leslie Tamagi as the Transition Leadership Director.

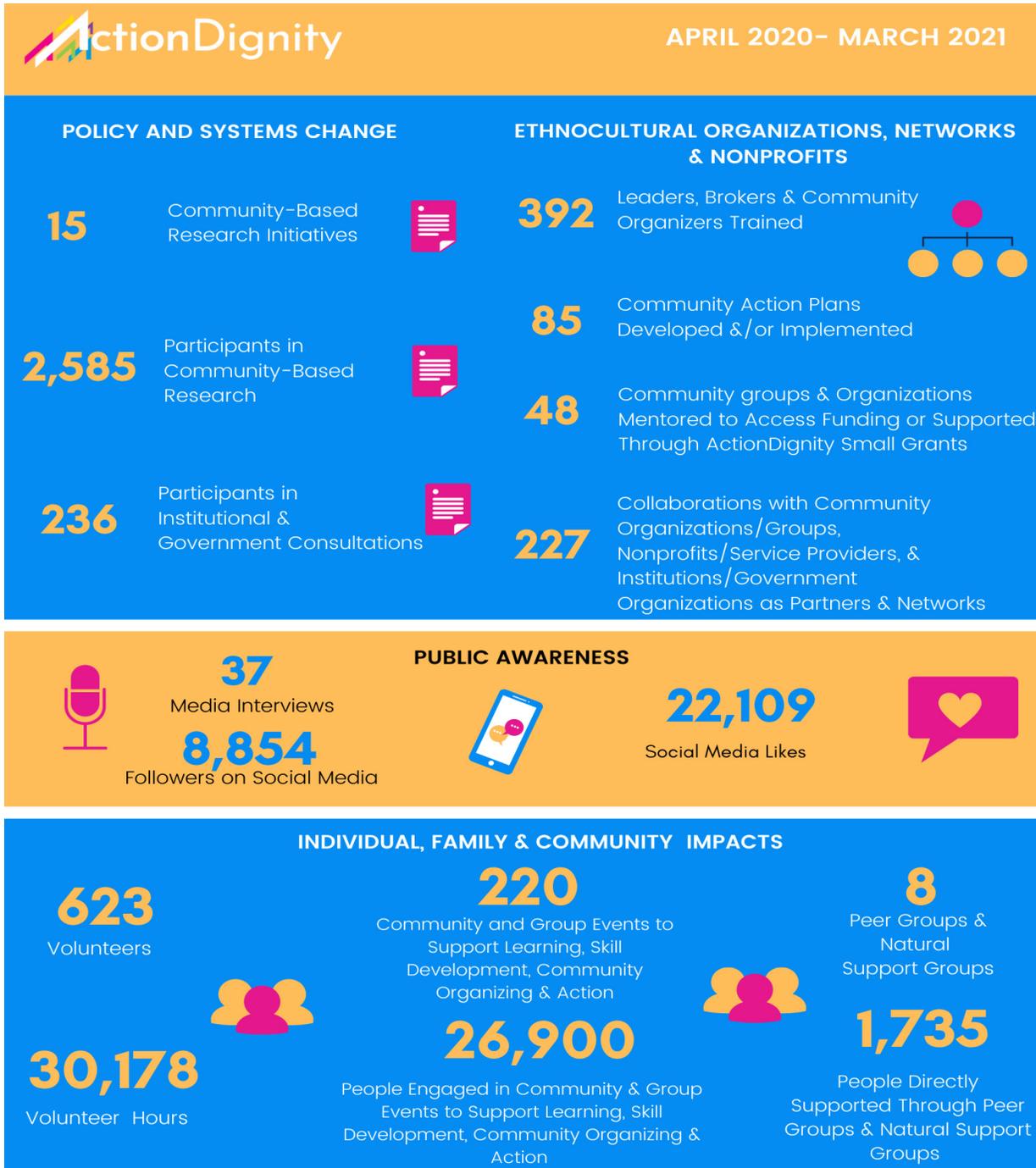
I will miss you all and I hope we will stay as very dear friends.

I hope that you will all stay as dedicated as you have been to our cause. ActionDignity is one of a kind in Canada that deserves to be nurtured by all.



Marichu Antonio  
Executive Director

# YEAR AT A GLANCE





# CALGARY EAST ZONE NEWCOMERS COLLABORATIVE

Multi-Lingual Emergency Response COVID-19 (MERC)  
December 17, 2020 – June 22, 2021

## Vaccination Initiatives

9

Forums organized

2,445

Participants/  
viewers  
to forums

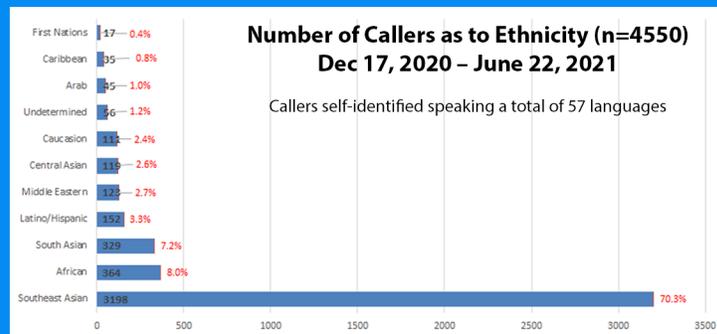
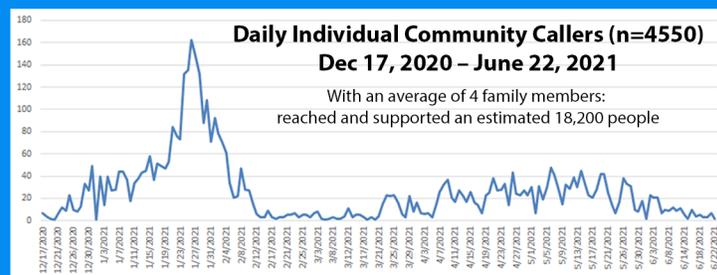
1,994

Calls to  
promote vaccination

2,274

Walk-in individuals  
who received  
first dose vaccination

## COVID-19 Outreach



31

Community  
forums  
organized

631

Organizations  
reached  
out

301

Social media/  
ethnic based  
media engaged

20,640

Participants/  
viewers



# COLLECTIVE IMPACT

ActionDignity's mission is to support the collective leadership and voice of racialized communities to achieve full participation in our society. This translates to employing approaches and strategies that energize our community's pursuit of a more equitable society. In this journey, we look at milestones that mark our progress, learning and adapting along the way, incorporating both our achievements and our challenges to guide our steps. The following outlines this year's key milestones.



## Addressing racism, bringing it to the forefront of public discussion and response

The unequal impact of this year's crises on different communities reveals the racism that underlies many of the social and economic inequities we face as a society. ActionDignity's important contribution this year was to help bring the issue of racism to the forefront in discussing the impact of the crises, in developing equitable and effective responses, and in understanding how to address long term social issues. ActionDignity's anti-racism work took on greater urgency and intensity this year, as the pandemic continued unabated and overt manifestations of racism increased against members of Indigenous, Black and People of Colour communities. This work includes the following:

- Capturing through online forums and sharing sessions how members of ethnocultural communities experience racism - as youth, essential workers, neighbourhood residents, students, artists, users of social services, as immigrants. These stories show that racism is experiential and systemic and anti-racism work needs to be done at the individual, community and institutional levels.
- Working with members of the community to raise awareness and spur action through various programs and initiatives. With youth through the B.L.A.C.K. Project; with ethnocultural organizations through Calgary CARES and Lead for Change; with non profit organizations through the INDIE program; with essential workers

through BRAVE Workers; with municipal and city coalitions through PEOPLE's CAFÉ; with neighbourhood-based groups through Greater Forest Lawn Initiative and SHARE.

- Building connections, sharing resources and engaging in joint actions for anti-racism work – Through the Shared Anti-Racism Portal (SHARP) for sharing anti-racism resources and actions; through anti-racism and equity coalitions in cities and towns in Alberta; and by building connections and acting together with other groups involved in anti-racism work in the Indigenous, Black and People of Colour communities.
- Helping build anti-racism and anti-oppression awareness and capacity of social agency staff.
- Building an equity and anti-racism lens in designing Covid-19 responses (MERC and RAVE), and in supporting essential workers (BRAVE).
- Advocating for the adoption of anti-racism policies and practices in public consultations.

ActionDignity's work around racial equity and commitment to community empowerment positioned us to develop two new initiatives, the Multilingual Emergency Response to Covid-19 (MERC) and the partnership with the City of Calgary, the Anti-Racism Action Committee and Habitus to co-create a Community-Based Anti-Racism Action Plan.



## Supporting Ethnocultural Communities to Lead Change

An important role ActionDignity fulfills is supporting community organizations to strengthen their capacity

to engage, lead, carry out actions and influence change. We do this through leadership training and mentorship. Community brokers provide support with action planning, fund sourcing, connecting to relevant resources and analyzing issues. Community groups are supported to work together through platforms of collaboration that ActionDignity and community brokers facilitate.

Despite the limitations for face-to-face engagement posed by public health restrictions, many community organizations stepped up to take action on a variety of issues, concerns and opportunities. These actions resulted in generating tremendous support to individuals and communities and in creating critical impact to service systems and public policies. The community-based response to the pandemic through MERC, RAVE and Greater Forest Lawn has supported to date about 35,000 individuals.

Ethnocultural community groups developed and implemented 76 action plans on neighbourhood development, mental health awareness, pandemic response, provision of basic needs, cross-cultural engagement, workers rights advocacy, youth engagement, domestic violence prevention and other concerns. This is twice the number of action plans from last year. More than 30 organizations were able to acquire new funds for their initiatives. Cross-community collaboration emerged to focus on issue and policy advocacy, including the Essential Workers Rights Advocacy Group that materialized from the outbreaks in Alberta's meat plants. The domestic violence prevention collaborative presented insights from their work at the IMPACT Summit 2021 and Calgary Domestic Violence Collective Annual Bridging Conference 2020. Community leaders were involved in consultations with public institutions, including the ongoing review of Calgary's Policing policies. At the neighbourhood level, 45 members from ethnocultural communities were recognized for their leadership and volunteer work in the Greater Forest Lawn area. In all these results, the community broker strategy played a critical role in activating the capacity of ethnocultural organizations to lead and create change.



## Establishing Collaborations and Platforms that recognize the key role of communities

ActionDignity has been developing the practice of platforms as mechanisms to foster and elevate the level of collaboration among ethnocultural groups and supportive organizations. This year we saw how platforms were able to bring together the actions of community groups on a number of issues, attract funds and other resources, connect on-the-ground efforts with the work of systems and institutions, and most importantly, bring recognition to the essential role of ethnocultural communities in designing and implementing effective responses to issues. In many cross-sectoral collaborations, ethnocultural groups are often relegated to minor roles, and are seen mainly as service recipients and sources of volunteers and unpaid labour. The platform approach elevates their role as equal partners, strengthens their capacity to support more community members and enhances their influence on service design and allocation of resources.

The Multilingual Emergency Response to Covid-19 (MERC) that ethnocultural groups and ActionDignity developed is a platform designed around the knowledge, cultural assets, leadership and networks of racialized communities. Anchored on the values of dignity, equity and cultural humility, MERC has partnered with service agencies and government bodies under the Calgary Eastzone Newcomers Collaborative (CENC) to provide support to individuals and families of racialized backgrounds impacted by Covid-19. To date, about 17,000 individuals have been supported by the collaborative. MERC is now recognized as an effective model for crisis response and has been adopted in Edmonton. With community brokers and ethnocultural organizations, ActionDignity has employed other platforms for different areas of work including: Calgary CARES for building anti-racism awareness and action among ethnocultural communities; RAVE for planning and implementing community-led pandemic responses; SHARE for supporting community-based domestic violence prevention; Resident Plex for facilitating

# COLLECTIVE IMPACT

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resident-led neighbourhood initiatives; and Essential Workers Rights Advocacy Group for advocating for essential workers' rights.



## Pursuing long term change in systems, institutions and policies

Long term social change involves instilling change in the way public systems are set up and run, in the policies that govern our public institutions, and in the way public resources are allocated. Ethnocultural communities and organizations are often left out of decision making, especially on issues that affect them most. They have to build their visibility and claim their place at the table through their collective actions and advocacies. ActionDignity has been working with community organizations and leaders to build this capacity over the years, helping them draw from their lived experiences and ideas to influence changes in public policy, service delivery and systems strategy. Community brokers play an important role in facilitating connections and relationships with public servants and decision makers. As a result, ActionDignity is often called upon to mobilize community participation in public consultations. This year, more than 200 community members participated in public consultations on policing practices, anti-racism, workplace safety, public health and emergency response. In addition, community members provided detailed recommendations to changes in policing practice. Participatory research is important in drawing from lived experiences and perspectives of racialized communities to fully understand critical social issues and to generate effective policy and community recommendations. This year, ethnocultural communities were involved in research activities on public health, emergency response and experiences of racism.

Systems of service delivery can also be influenced

by demonstrating the effectiveness of alternative approaches and strategies. MERC emerged because of the limitation of the current systems to stem the pandemic among racialized communities in Calgary and to provide support to those that need to isolate. MERC has demonstrated the importance of supporting ethnocultural communities as active players in emergency response in both prevention and active intervention.

Public outcry and advocacy can lead to institutional change if there is readiness from public institutions and capacity from communities to engage in the co-creation of actions leading to systems change. The public hearings organized by the City of Calgary as a response to anti-racism actions last year led to the creation of the Anti-Racism Action Committee (ARAC) composed of advocates from racialized communities. The City has contracted ActionDignity and Habitus early this year to work with ARAC and the communities to develop a Community-Based Anti-Racism Action Plan. If successful, this Plan can lead to groundbreaking changes within the City to embed anti-racism within its policies and operations. For ActionDignity, this opens a new level of engagement with government bodies.



## Building a broader support base for community-led equity work

ActionDignity's ability to capture the compelling narratives of our work on the ground and to share this with the broader public has strengthened the commitment of our current supporters. It has also broadened the base of support for our equity-seeking initiatives. What makes our narratives unique, according to feedback from a few new supporters, is that they highlight the strength of racialized individuals and communities who despite being confronted by overwhelming issues of exclusion,

isolation and discrimination have the audacity to care for others and to take action to change the situations of their communities.

This year, 1483 new donors provided a total of \$329,416.09 to ActionDignity's various community initiatives. This new donor base represents individuals, families, small business entrepreneurs, foundations, influencers, professional firms, advocates – all concerned about the issues we work on and supportive of our approaches and strategies. Our communication during the height of the pandemic and the anti-racism mass movements resonated with them.

We have also been more engaged with our current funders and supporters in sharing our successes and challenges and in connecting them deliberately to community members and brokers. We have been invited to discussions with funder staff and leadership as they themselves are reflecting on their work and commitment to racial equity and social change.

Our collaborators from the service agencies and government institutions have been more visibly advocating for recognition of the critical role of ethnocultural communities in service design and delivery and in public policy discussions. Our media contacts are now connecting with us to get our perspectives on various equity issues and have consulted with us to get a better understanding of ethnocultural communities.

## What are these outcomes telling us?

There is a qualitative difference now from where we were last year. Our community members have taken on more leadership and visible roles in many of our platforms and initiatives. We have been able to recruit more community brokers into our pandemic response and emergent racial equity work. We hope to continue working with them as we engage with community members to transition into recovery and resilience. Many of our programs have become increasingly informed by anti-racism and equity practices. We have moved on from just being visible

and occasionally being consulted on critical issues. To a great extent, we matter, and we are exerting and sharing leadership with other equity-seeking organizations. These outcomes are the work of many hands, and ActionDignity is an organization of many hands. It is important to acknowledge the impressive work of our community members, community brokers, staff, Board members and volunteers. We will continue to rely on their knowledge, energy and passion as we navigate the next period. We want to explicitly acknowledge the tremendous work that our Executive Director, Marichu Antonio, has done in her twelve year tenure. She will be retiring at the end of June this year. She has helped put into reality many of the aspirations that ActionDignity started with. She has matched the commitment and energies of our staff and community members with her wisdom, tenacity and innovative thinking, and together helped evolve ActionDignity to where it is today.

Our outcomes, impressive as they are, remain precarious. We are faced with a number of organizational challenges as well as growing threats in the environment in which we work that we need to address. Our internal capacities need to catch up to our heightened roles. We need to transform the lessons we learned these last two years into organizational policies and practices.

Growing incidents of racism is an ongoing concern. Historically, systems, institutions and even communities tend to “snap back” to the old normal when crises have ebbed. This is not what racialized communities want. We need to work towards a more “equitable” normal. This will be the critical challenge for the next period. And again, we will lean into the values-based strategies that have served us well and add new ones as appropriate, to guide us in the next phase of our journey as a movement-building organization.

# PROGRAM REPORT

## LEAD for Change

Leadership Engagement, Action & Development (LEAD) Program

**Staff:** Sheeba Vijayan, Strategy Lead – Policy & Leadership  
Meriam Bravante, Researcher & Policy Educator  
Hala El-Madani, Community Engagement Coordinator (Feb 2020 – August 2020)  
Nazia Amin, Community Engagement Coordinator (Sept 2020 – May 2021)

**Policy Advocates:** Edwin Chavez, Widad Eltahir, Fauzia Khedri, Falak Shakir, Sukhwant Parmar, Sandeep Malhi, Promila Sharma, Jasmine Alsarraj, Badria Abubaker

**Funding Partner:** Family and Community Support Services (FCSS)

### PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The LEAD for Change program promotes racial equity, inclusion and cultural awareness in public systems and policies. It works to address systemic inequities in public institutions, government, and service systems so that members of ethnocultural communities can fully take part in the economic, social, and civic life.

### OBJECTIVES

- To involve grassroots in research to facilitate mindset shift and build capacity of communities for policy and systems change action.
- To implement recommendations/action plans so practices and behaviours in various systems such as municipal government, workplaces, schools, healthcare services, and others are more inclusive, responsive to and aware of the needs of ethnocultural communities.
- To strengthen community capacity for leadership and sustained action in policy and systems change through meaningful participation

in decision-making for equitable services, institutions, and policies.

- To engage decision makers to listen to, understand and act towards incorporating a racial equity lens in frameworks and practices of policies and systems.

### HIGHLIGHTS OF ACHIEVEMENTS

- Increased willingness of communities to take part in policy change. Community brokers/policy advocates spearhead their learning to build their capacity to directly engage racialized communities with lived experiences to act collectively on issues that directly impact them. Through community conversations and forums, some degree of trust was reinstated in the participants, increasing their confidence and skills to dialogue with decision makers on policies that impact them.
- Increased knowledge and skills among leaders/brokers/members in systems and policy work. LEAD program participants reported being more aware of their rights, having more confidence

in sharing their lived experience and protecting their rights, and they developed strategy ideas to address racism and discrimination to ensure the city is more inclusive.

- Increased number of communities involved in systems and policy change work. The creation of the Essential Workers' Rights Advocacy Group broadened the communities working towards systems change; two new policy research projects engaged new communities and stakeholders; participants in Community Based Participatory Action Research activities reported willingness to work in follow-up phase to implement research recommendations.
- Increased policy-related activities that apply an ethnocultural lens and address issues impacting immigrants and refugees: i.e., new research projects (workers' health and safety under COVID- 19), collaborative partnerships (City of Calgary; Alberta Health Services) are applying lived experiences to understand policy applications and develop recommendations for policy/ systems change.
- With the pandemic highlighting how pre-existing inequities exacerbate the impact of public emergencies, LEAD program pivoted its work to support ethnocultural communities in response to the pandemic and continues to adapt its communications and engagement plans with ActionDignity programs, brokers, community leaders and program partners.

**“**

**We Heard You!:  
Community Report Back**

Action Dignity Policy Advocates will share communities' voices on:

- Workers' Rights
- Reviewing Policing System

Documented through focus group discussions with more than 80 community members. We look forward to your participation in verifying our We Heard You! report and prioritizing our next steps towards creating changes for greater equity.

**December 21, 2020  
5pm-7pm**

Register [Here](#)  
For any inquires, email  
[Falak.Shakir@actiondignity.org](mailto:Falak.Shakir@actiondignity.org)

**Lunch and Learn with Action Dignity**

**STRIDE**  
**Centering Ethnocultural Voices and Experiences**

ActionDignity and youth leaders from Calgary Canadian Sudanese Community Association will be coming together to share the importance of building capacity of community members to conduct Community Based Participatory Action Research (CBPAR) and culturally relevant workshops to gain feedback and recommendations from racialized communities and individuals, on the traumatic impacts of structural racism.

The aim of the discussion is to highlight some of the ways in which marginalized voices can be centered and prioritized to create greater equity within Canadian systems. This interactive workshop will explore ways to collaborate with partners to take collective actions to challenge the goals and mindsets of current systems and enable the transformation of public policies towards full and equitable participation of all Canadians in social, economic, health and political life.

**Friday, February 19 2021 12-1 pm via ZOOM**

Canada

JOHN O'NEILL  
PEACE  
RIGHTS

**Video: Supporting the Development of Ethnocultural Associations (20:01)**

How can we support and develop ethnocultural communities in the Bow Valley? Action Dignity (formerly Ethno-cultural Council Calgary) presented to all BVIP Members on January 27, 2021.

- 00:00 Introduction to Action Dignity
- 05:32 Leadership Development Strategy
- 08:48 Broker Strategy
- 14:08 Rawya Gumaa: CCSCA Community Leader, Policy Advocate



# PROGRAM REPORT

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## We All Belong

**Staff:** Sheeba Vijayan, Strategy Lead – Policy & Leadership

**Community Brokers:** Patricia Bernal, Rawya Gumaa

**Funding Partner:** United Way of Calgary and Area

### PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

We All Belong aims to increase the capacity of ethnocultural community members to collectively address systemic barriers to wellbeing, and improve social, economic and political participation, as well as overall community and individual resiliency. The program focuses on systems and policy change using a three-part strategy that includes community engagement/organizing, capacity building, and engaging public systems. It results in strengthening the collective voice of ethnocultural communities to act collaboratively, addressing systemic inequities and promoting racial equity, inclusion and cultural awareness.

### OBJECTIVES

- To engage, organize and mobilize citizens to address systemic challenges impacting communities towards systems and policy change.
- To enhance skills to address systems change, barriers to services and deepen/broaden community development/engagement.
- To strengthen the capacity and collective voice of ethnocultural communities to act collaboratively in promoting racial equity, inclusion and cultural awareness in public systems and policies

and addressing systemic inequities in public institutions, government and service systems.

### HIGHLIGHTS OF ACHIEVEMENTS

- Effectively facilitated the engagement of decision-makers and community members to work in collaboration to identify and collectively create sustainable and enduring change in policies and systems to address increased incidences of Racism, Systemic Barriers, Stigma, and Discrimination.
- Active involvement of community members, leaders, policy advocates, and brokers in consultations and dialogues related to Human Rights Violations in Workplaces; Citizen's Participation in Municipal Urban Planning Decision-Making; Racism and Discrimination in the Policing System, and increased community capacity to work cross-culturally to advocate for anti-racism policies.
- Increased engagement of grassroots groups in activities that help develop an ethnocultural lens on specific issues, helped raise awareness of that lens/perspective so it can be recognized by the systems that impact them e.g. City of Calgary project partnership on North East Public Art.

- Increased policy related activities that prepare community members to communicate their views and action ideas during dialogues and meetings with decision makers helped broaden perspectives towards an informed view of problems and long-term solutions from a racial equity lens.
- Effectively responded to the COVID19 challenges by implementing innovative changes to protect human rights and uphold the dignity of racialized communities who are disproportionately and negatively affected by the pandemic: from increasing access to services; anti-discrimination; advocating for improved immigration policies to address increased incidences of racism and violations of human rights.



**ActionDignity**  
UNITED NATIONS INTERNATIONAL DAY OF HUMAN RIGHTS

# RESET, REFLECT, RENEW!

Join us for a Zoom celebration for  
International Day of Human Rights!  
December 10, 2020 | 5:30PM – 7:00PM MST







# PROGRAM REPORT

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## Greater Forest Lawn Community Connector Initiative (GFLCCI)

**Staff:** Linh Bui, Strategy Lead - Neighborhoods

**Community Brokers:** Sukhwant Parmar, Widad Eltahir

**Partner Organization:** Sunrise Community Link Resource Centre

**Funding Partner:** United Way of Calgary and Area

### PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Greater Forest Lawn Community Connector Initiative (GFLCCI) uses a community development approach to build resident and community capacity for meaningful change. This is done by connecting residents, groups, and organizations together to identify community-based assets, opportunities and issues and collectively address these through resident-led action. The initiative supports residents and local organizations to take the lead in creating a resident-driven network of formal and informal supports from individuals, children, families, and the community. It uses a Community Broker strategy that trains residents to become connectors between neighbours, groups, community organizations and service providers.

### OBJECTIVES

- Local residents and organizations are coming together, identifying important community issues and acting on solutions (community-based or through public systems).
- Local residents are involved in creating a network of services that combines natural and professional supports.

### HIGHLIGHTS OF ACHIEVEMENTS

- In response to the COVID 19 pandemic, the project quickly moved from in-person to online programming to connect with and provide basic needs to over 1000 community members. In partnership with the Mayor's office and Ward 9 office and GFL partners, built leadership capacity through training of 15 and recognition of 45 resident leaders and volunteers, respectively. As a result, 10 community groups with 15 action plans were supported by the project and engaged over 2,000 residents. The move helped strengthen community members' ability to connect online to access information and deepened relationships among ActionDignity with city institutions, not-for-profit organizations and local groups.
- Recruited and trained 60 volunteers to support ActionDignity's response to the COVID-19 outbreak at Cargill meat packing plant, including calling, giving support to over 500 workers and their families. We held a media memorial service for the first Cargill worker that died of COVID and helped raise issues of essential workers' rights. The action paved the way for further development of essential workers' rights into programs and policy issues.

- Empowered existing peer groups with access to resources to organize community activities addressing basic and mental health needs through food delivery, family activities, educational workshops, interactive community events to encourage family cohesion. Launched two new Resident PLEX free food pantries in Forest Lawn and Dover benefiting over 500 people. Resident leader volunteers' skills were well utilized. They gained tremendous experience with event planning, project management and had opportunities to connect with new friends and expand their social networks.
- Continued collaboration with not-for-profit organizations and institutions including 26 new partners to improve residents' access to services and to reach out to more residents. This includes working with: City Planning Department to engage residents for feedback on East Central redevelopment projects; Arts Commons with pop-up performances for 35 families with over 50 children; and the 12 CSI for Diversity project. The collaboration help not-for-profits and community partners increase awareness on ActionDignity's member organizations' cultures in the GFL areas, such as Vietnamese, Sudanese, East Indian and others.
- Eight conversation circles and two Pay-it-forward initiatives provided space to over 260 contacts for safe information sharing, learning and accessing resources to overcome pandemic challenges i.e., food, mental health, financial barriers; uplifting essential workers with thank you cards and providing community members in need with winter gears. The events helped increase residents' sense of belonging, thus reducing risks of social isolation due to COVID-19 challenges.



Neighbour Day & Resident PLEX Atco Village Pantry Launch



Main Street engagement, October 2020



Pop up performance, July 2020



Left: Distribution of face masks



Right: Resident PLEX launch Dover Patch Pantry, August 2020

# PROGRAM INFORMATION

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## Sustaining Healthy and Awesome Relationships (SHARE)

**Staff:** Humaira Falak, Program Coordinator

**Community Brokers:** Shiraz Bhoja, Fauzia Khedri, Rodel Paguirigan

**Funding Partner:** United Way of Calgary and Area

### PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

SHARE is a community-based primary prevention initiative that seeks to promote alternative strategies to address the root causes of domestic violence through collaboration with ethno-cultural communities and the Calgary community. SHARE engages the community through research, planning and action in addressing the systemic, structural, and cultural roots of domestic violence. SHARE collaborates with various stakeholders to promote healthy communities through healthy relationships. SHARE co-designs non-programmatic domestic violence prevention strategies with community leaders and members. It plans and works with the community in the spirit of genuine partnership.

### OBJECTIVES

- Ethno-cultural community members feel safe and supported by natural supports that help address domestic violence prevention.
- Enhance the roles of natural supports as mentors, role models, informal caregivers, brokers, advocates, and leaders to address interlocking problems of violence, racism, and sexism.

### HIGHLIGHTS OF ACHIEVEMENTS

- The shift from in-person to virtual-based activities and meetings created technological barriers, but many communities came forward and participated in our activities. About 1408 ethnocultural community members participated in project-related activities, which improved their understanding on key issues i.e., COVID 19, Domestic Violence, Mental Health, the northeast hailstorm, among others; linked to government emergency benefits and services, including counselling. These activities helped address the unmet needs of immigrants during the pandemic.
- Language barriers hindered access to currently available resources given that most of the information is in the English language. Putting together resources in the first language made it possible for ethnocultural community members to learn crucial information for decision-making and paved access to resources and services.
- Despite the training received by the natural supporters over the years to assist women in the cycle of violence, what they learned was challenged, and seemed limited given the COVID 19 pandemic and its restrictions. Modifying and tailor-fitting the training to the unique challenges

imposed by the pandemic equipped the natural supporters to assist and link community members.

- Intersections of stress, mental health and financial barriers were highlighted in tandem with the hailstorm and the ongoing COVID 19. The community survey on the impact of the June 13 hailstorm showed 40% of the participants identified stress as one of the biggest barriers while making insurance claims, and 24% stated they do not have adequate knowledge while dealing with insurance companies and accessing resources. The survey also underscored that 88.5% reported an increase in their stress levels and mental health issues. The results of the survey informed the design of program activities to build healthy relationships and prevent domestic violence.

**COVID-19 Conversation - Series 3**  
**“ Busting the Myths – Understanding Domestic Violence Sector “**

Join ActionDignity’s community conversation series to discuss different ways we can help our communities during this pandemic

Date: June 12, 2020 2:00 – 3:30 pm  
 Location: On-line Zoom meeting

Please register through: [Register Here](#)

Feel free to email: [info@actiondignity.org](mailto:info@actiondignity.org) for more info, or if you are having trouble registering

Logos: United Way Calgary and Area, ActionDignity, Alberta Government

**ActionDignity**

**Supporting Domestic violence victims during Covid**

Logos: United Way Calgary and Area, Alberta Government, Calgary Women’s Emergency Shelter

ActionDignity in collaboration with the Calgary Women’s Emergency Shelter is organizing Take a Stand workshop especially for the South Asian community. Please join and learn how to recognize, respond and refer domestic abuse survivors.

November 23, 2020 | 4:30 PM  
 Facilitated by Sukhwant Parmar and Fawzia Khedri  
 Register via Zoom!  
 For questions or inquiries, email [Humaira.Falak@actiondignity.org](mailto:Humaira.Falak@actiondignity.org)

**ActionDignity** United Way Calgary and Area Alberta Government

May 21, 2020 | 6:30 p.m

**PARENTING YOUTH**

Webinar facilitated by Georgina Nwoko, registered Psychologist in Alberta and author of “110 Nuggets for Excellent Parenting.”

Register via Eventbrite, or email [Humaira.Falak@actiondignity.org](mailto:Humaira.Falak@actiondignity.org)

**ActionDignity**

IN COLLABORATION WITH IMMIGRANT EDUCATION SOCIETY PRESENTS:

**DEALING WITH STIGMA & DISCRIMINATION**

Examine stigmatizing attitudes and behaviours through various instructional activities. This workshop consists of raising awareness on the issue of stigma, the impacts of stigma, and how to challenge stigma and discrimination, especially with regards to Mental Health.

December 11 | 4:30 p.m  
 Register Here  
 For questions or concerns, email [Humaira.Falak@actiondignity.org](mailto:Humaira.Falak@actiondignity.org)

Logos: United Way Calgary and Area, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, Alberta Government

# PROGRAM REPORT

## Social Inclusion Initiative

**Staff:** Linh Bui, Strategy Lead – Neighborhood  
Sheeba Vijayan, Strategy Lead – Policy & Leadership  
Humaira Falak, Program Coordinator

**Community Brokers:** Mario Ayudo, Tina Belay, Jing Han

**Funding Partner:** United Way of Calgary and Area

### PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Social Inclusion initiative focuses on issues facing racialized communities using an intersectionality approach to understand the interplay of different forms of inequities which exacerbate social exclusion of racialized communities, especially in accessing services and opportunities in social, cultural, political and cultural spheres.

Using an asset-based approach, community development, cultural broker strategy, and platform/collaborative model, we engage ethnocultural community members, families, and communities to use their strengths and collective power to improve inclusivity at the individual, organizational and policy levels

Specifically, we:

- empower and develop individual, family and community capacity to foster a sense of community by participating in forums, workshops, events. We connect them with resources for basic needs, provide them with leadership training, facilitate community action plans to address their social, economic, recreational, cultural, or civic issues that are important to them.

- build organizational and leadership capacity of our ethnocultural member organizations, enabling them to actively advocate for changes in the service delivery system and practices using a racial equity lens in various areas, e.g. domestic violence, mental health, poverty, racism, etc.
- advocate for equitable policies and systems grounded on lived experiences of racialized communities and all Calgarians.

### OBJECTIVES

- Ethnocultural communities are meaningfully involved and empowered as active citizens through participation and leadership in the civic, social and cultural life of Calgary (at individual, family level).
- Ethnocultural community members benefit from quality access to a continuum of integrated services in a dignified way (organizational & service delivery system).
- Ethnocultural community members experience better quality of life because of responsive and equitable public policies and systemic changes that are informed by lived experiences of

impacted communities (policy and system level).

## HIGHLIGHTS OF ACHIEVEMENTS

- Successfully shifted from issue-based programmatic model to an integrated initiative model that collaboratively utilize expertise of staff and brokers to address emerging and urgent needs of ethnocultural communities at every level of civic and social life. Developed initiatives using a holistic lens to address barriers at all 3 levels – individual, family & community; local organizations and service providers; and policy & system level.
- Strengthened the team by mobilizing trusted and embedded members of communities as Community Brokers to facilitate the work to enhance the capacity of community, increase dialogues and improve service provider policies and procedures towards equitable inclusion by engaging the most isolated individuals and those who would not typically access critical services.
- Increased community involvement to work towards social change by engaging them in discussions to develop community based participatory action research that will examine the ways in which certain groups are disadvantaged due to their ethnicity or race and draw on racialized communities' valuable insight through lived experiences in systems that impact them.
- Continued to support the voice of ethnocultural communities through monthly community conversations, recognition of informal community leadership and promoting resident-led community actions by local groups such as Resident PLEX and Parent Support Networks, etc. These activities timely and effectively responded to community needs and addressed concerns around COVID-19 Vaccines, which encouraged more receptive attitudes to vaccination and instilled hope for a bright future post-pandemic.

**ActionDignity**

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**Making Money, Building Community**

Are you trying to figure out how to make money with your talents, hobbies, and/or passion? Join Calgary Dollars, the ActionDignity Social Inclusion team, neighbours and community members for a lively discussion of small business opportunities and entrepreneurial priorities in Calgary and how Calgary Dollars helps promote local businesses.

**March 30 | 6:00pm**  
**Register here**  
**For any inquiries, please email** [linh.bui@actiondignity.org](mailto:linh.bui@actiondignity.org), **or call** 587-323-9112

United Way  
Calgary and Area

**CALGARY DOLLARS**

**COVID-19 Vaccines: What You Need To Know**

Join ActionDignity, in partnership with CTSS, for a webinar on the COVID-19 vaccines.

The presentation will cover:

- Process and development of vaccines
- What mRNA vaccines are and how they work
- Potential side effects
- How researchers and scientists were able to create a vaccine in less than a year
- The distinction between the two COVID-19 vaccines in Canada
- Q & A period

**Feb 23, 2021 6:00 PM**

Presented by Dr. Lam, MD in Alberta & Cody Cheng  
Register via Zoom  
For inquiries, email [linh.bui@actiondignity.org](mailto:linh.bui@actiondignity.org)

Financed by the Government of Canada  
New Horizons for Seniors Program

Canada

United Way  
Calgary and Area

ActionDignity

**ActionDignity**

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

**Women in Leadership: Achieving an equal future in the Covid-19 world**

March 8th, 2021  
5:00-7:00 pm  
Register via Eventbrite  
For inquiries, please email  
[Humaira.Faiak@ActionDignity.org](mailto:Humaira.Faiak@ActionDignity.org)

United Way  
Calgary and Area

# PROGRAM REPORT

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## North Star Initiative

Northeast Constellation for Healthy Families and Communities

**Staff:** Humaira Falak, Program Coordinator

**Brokers:** Shiraz Bhoja, Fauzia Khedri, Rodel Paguirigan

**Funding Partner:** Alberta Government - Community and Social Services

### PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The North Star is an initiative for community leaders, members, and service providers to co-design non-programmatic domestic violence prevention strategies. At the core of North Star's strategies is to build capacity of and train grassroots leaders in Northeast Calgary to address domestic violence. It is instrumental in supporting the implementation of community-led actions through mentorship, training, providing small grants and linking them with resources.

A unique feature of North Star is its engagement activities and community consultations to identify the gaps in service delivery within the Domestic Violence sector to feed into the collaborative and coordinated community response to domestic violence in Calgary and area. This process improves the service delivery to be inclusive and culturally appropriate to ethnocultural communities.

### OBJECTIVES

- Build the capacity of community organizations working within Domestic Violence sector
- Support and empower community organizations to develop and implement action plans

- Bridge the gaps between the mainstream service providers and racialized communities.
- Create awareness regarding the different strategies to community-based Domestic Violence Prevention.

### HIGHLIGHTS OF ACHIEVEMENTS

- This year saw an increased representation of Black women and communities in meetings and public forums. It demonstrated the project's reach to this community, ability to provide information and link them to resources and services. Holding of additional community consultations to discuss domestic violence using intersectionality lens furthers the understanding of domestic violence issues affecting the Black communities in Calgary and how the issue is exacerbated by the pandemic.
- Supported through this project are 18 ethnocultural community groups and organizations, including hard to reach communities many of whom are new to ActionDignity. These communities spearheaded community conversations on domestic violence in first languages, improved understanding on domestic violence, connected communities to available resources and established informal networks among vulnerable

mothers. Participants were motivated to seek support and guidance on building healthy relationships in their households. A total of 1500 individuals were engaged and supported directly and indirectly by the project.

- The project strengthened the knowledge and skills of staff, brokers, as well as leaders of ethnocultural community organizations on program management and partnership. Concrete examples include development of terms of reference with the Steering Committee, project proposal application, use of reporting forms, ability to consult communities for project ideas, and navigate and work around the complexities of collaborative work.
- In-person meeting restrictions and reliance on virtual platforms for meetings posed new challenges to ActionDignity and its partners. Despite the technological barriers, many new communities came forward and participated in our online forums. Also, the project relied heavily on social media and other forms of media for promoting events. As ActionDignity shifted from program-focus to team-approach, most of our programs worked collaboratively. As a result, our project garnered renewed interest among the racialized communities.
- Over the past few years, our continued community consultations and cross-cultural collaborations saw an increased interest among diverse faith leaders and faith organizations in domestic violence related issues. This is crucial as many immigrants lean on faith leaders for spiritual guidance, and on issues concerning family relations. Also, the project's success drew invitations to present insights in several conferences i.e., IMPACT Summit 2021, Calgary Domestic Violence Collective Annual Bridging Conference 2020, University of Calgary and Bow Valley College.

**ActionDignity**  
**Understanding Our Anger Webinar**  
 MAY 12TH | 3.00 P.M.  
 Zoom webinar on anger management, Why we get angry, and how COVID impacts our mood  
 Facilitated by Winn Rietema, MA in Counselling Psychology  
 Register via EVENTBRITE  
 For more information email: Humaira.falak@actiondignity.org



**My Father, My Hero**

ActionDignity invites you to its first virtual Father's Day contest. Research shows that a father's positive engagement in their child's life not only helps in building one's self-esteem, confidence, and a strong and healthy personality, but it also plays an integral role in preventing domestic abuse in the next generation. We are celebrating this day to honour the contributions of father's / father figure towards the healthy upbringing of their children and their positive role towards their family and society.

	Category 1	Category 2	Category 3
open to	Kids 5-13	Youth 14-25	Dads
Themes	- My dad is my hero - Lockdown with dad	- My dad is my hero - Lockdown with dad	- "I love being a dad because..."
Submission	Any visual or written expression sharing why your dad is your hero or what life during quarantine looked like with your dad.	Any visual or written expression sharing why your dad is your hero or what life during quarantine looked like with your dad.	Photo with the caption "I love being a dad because..."

My Father My Hero Contest Criteria:

Entries can be emailed to [Fathersdaycontest@actiondignity.org](mailto:Fathersdaycontest@actiondignity.org). Please state the category in the subject of the email. We are accepting entries until 20th June 2020 at 11:59 pm MST. All submissions will be on our Facebook page on June 21st to like and share.

In each category, the 3 posts with the most likes will be shortlisted. Judges will then score based on originality, overall impression, and relevance to theme. Winners will be awarded a \$100 gift card.

Winners will be announced on June 25th during our 1st Live Virtual Father's Day event at 12:00 p.m. In order to be eligible, participants must like our Facebook page.

This project is funded by United Way and Government of Alberta.  
 For any questions or inquiries, please email [humaira.falak@actiondignity.org](mailto:humaira.falak@actiondignity.org)



**ActionDignity**  
**Standing Together: Celebrating Communities' Resilience**  
 Join us to celebrate the work of community groups/organizations to aid Calgarians during COVID-19 pandemic. Personal Protective Equipment will be collected on a first-come, first served basis by eligible groups and organizations.  
 Friday, September 18, 2020  
 6 p.m.  
 Register via Zoom  
 For questions or concerns, please contact [Humaira.Falak@actiondignity.org](mailto:Humaira.Falak@actiondignity.org)

# PROGRAM REPORT

## Initiative for Diversity, Inclusion & Equity (INDIE) for Alberta Non-Profits

**Staff:** Rubirose Ong, Program Coordinator  
Meriam Bravante, Researcher & Policy Educator  
May Lee Muzika, Project Facilitator

**Brokers:** Shiraz Bhoja, Widad Eltahir, Linda Kee, Jasmine Navarro

**Funding Partner:** Alberta Government Ministry of Culture, Multiculturalism, and the Status of Women

### PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

INDIE [Initiative for Diversity, Inclusion and Equity] for Alberta Non-profits supports mutually beneficial collaboration between Alberta non-profit organizations (NPO) and ethnocultural communities (ECC). Through the INDIE Program, ActionDignity's role as facilitator, convenor, capacity builder and connector promotes and increases the collaboration between ethno-cultural organizations/communities and the broader non-profit sector in the areas of mental health advocacy, domestic violence prevention and arts equity.

### OBJECTIVES

- Increased collaboration between NPOs or service providers and ECCs to address systemic issues on diversity and inclusion that relates to the NPO's structure, strategies, and services.
- NPOs to adopt measures and build capacity to increase participation and inclusion of diverse communities.
- Increased ability in the sector (both ECCs and NPOs) to work together to respond and advocate around important and emergent issues on

diversity and inclusion.

- Development of an effective evaluation and measurement framework to demonstrate the value and impact of inclusion and diversity within the sector.

### HIGHLIGHTS OF ACHIEVEMENTS

- Increased integration of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in partner non-profits' services and approaches to program design and client engagement. This is through translations and adaptation of current program workshops to different languages to integrate language and culture and community consultations to understand specific communities better.
- Awareness in mental health and domestic violence prevention is amplified as seen in the increase of attendees in workshops with support from 28 agencies. The COVID-19 pandemic has intensified mental health issues and domestic problems, which encouraged communities to seek help and support through workshops and community events requested from and organized with ActionDignity.

- There is an evident increase in meaningful and sustainable collaborations between ECCs and partner NPOs with 46 and 22 participants, respectively. Identifying and modifying existing programs through in-depth community consultations and more thoroughly recognizing the value of ECC members has resulted in the formation of a youth steering committee in CWES' Child, Youth and Family Program.
- The development of the INDIE curriculum addresses the lack of resources in Calgary and Alberta for the broader non-profits and ethno-cultural communities to increase their awareness and build capacity in the areas of equity, diversity, and inclusion. The initial runs of the training proved effective with heightened commitments

to equity, diversity, and inclusion.

- Through the INDIE program, ActionDignity has been at the forefront of various collaboratives that aim to provide the venue and platform to discuss and share different perspectives and approaches in integrating anti-racism and EDI in program design and services. These conversations have evidently increased in attendance this past year.



To close off the series, the final event serves as a celebration of youth and holistic wellbeing to create **more open and positive conversations about mental health, well-being and breaking down stigma** within Filipinx/o/a youth. The event will present the outcome of the art installation and will host local guest speakers and performers that advocates for mental health and identity.

Date of event: June 26th, 2021  
Time: 3pm - 6pm MST

Our registration is **LIVE NOW!**



Is Covid-19 stressing you and your families out?

Do you have something to share on how we can come out stronger from this crisis?

Buryong ka na ba sa Covid-19?

Sama ka sa usapan para **palakasin ang** ating mga pamilya sa panahon ng krisis.

**Nurturing Roots, Strengthening Filipino Families**  
*Palalimin Ang Ugat, Patibayin ang Pamilyang Pilipino*

Join us in interactive on-line sessions on **November 28 and December 5**. There are activities for kids as well as for couples and individuals. You can join one activity or you can join all

*Makibahagi sa iba't-ibang interactive/ online sessions sa ika-28 ng Nobyembre at ika-5 ng Disyembre. May mga activities para sa mga kabataan, para sa mga magkabayak at mga indibidwal. Maaari kayong sumali sa isa o sa lahat ng mga activities. Kita-kits!*

[Click here to see details](#)



# PROGRAM REPORT

## THE B.L.A.C.K. PROJECT

Becoming Leaders Acquiring Critical Knowledge

**Staff:** Carissa Gravelle, Program Coordinator

**Funding Partners:** Calgary Foundation, Canadian Western Bank

### PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The B.L.A.C.K (Becoming Leaders Acquiring Critical Knowledge) Project was created to strengthen the sense of identity and community among Black youth by building leadership skills, community connections, and youth-led actions to address anti-Black racism.

### OBJECTIVES

- Engage the youth, identify their priorities, and provide the platform for safe spaces to explore identities, learn and build a sense of community. The following are key priorities:
  - » Mental Health, self-esteem and wellness
  - » Financial literacy and entrepreneurship
  - » Addressing anti-Black racism
- Enhance natural supports and develop their leadership skills through mentorship.

### HIGHLIGHTS OF ACHIEVEMENTS

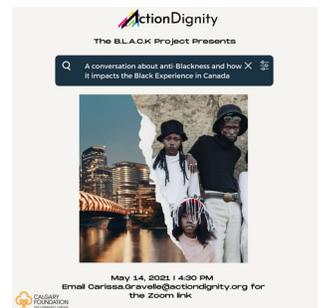
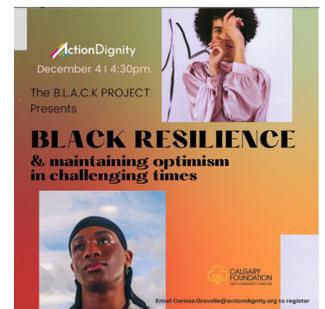
- 30 participants were engaged for the B.L.A.C.K Project Launch in July 2020 on Zoom. It was a fun and interactive session with live music and lots of jokes. Youth participated in ice breaking activities to get to know one another. There was a discussion about Black Lives Matter and the ensuing protests in Calgary due to the murder of George Floyd. Youth had a chance to hear about

the program and what they could expect moving forward with programming. The key outcome was bringing Black youth together in a space where they can learn and speak about their experiences and find themselves reflected in the guest facilitators. The major achievement is creating the safe space for Black youth to be unapologetically themselves.

- Knowing your rights session with Dr. Monetta Bailey and Grace Ajele on Zoom had 25 youth participants engaged in discussion on human rights and basic rights all Black youth should know. Tips on navigating the system as a Black youth while discussing how anti-Black racism impacts confidence. This was an open and honest raw dialogue about the challenge's Black youth face in our society. It highlighted the importance of knowing your rights, as it can be lifesaving. The takeaway from this session was the knowing your rights tip sheet that youth can keep understanding how to navigate anti-Blackness in society.
- Black resilience session with Professor Dr. Ubaka Ogbogu had 10 youth attended. Dr. Ubaka shared stories and knowledge with the youth regarding Black resilience and how to stay optimistic in times of uncertainty. It was a raw and open dialogue for youth to begin their journey of self-discovery and healing. Dr. Ubaka shared personal experiences with anti-Blackness, and for youth to see that even

role models in the community experience racism, discrimination, and prejudice. The tips shared on Black resilience and how to move forward was a critical piece of learning youth were able to take away from the session. Anti-Blackness is exhausting, but this session instilled hope.

- A key component to the B.L.A.C.K Project is teaching Black youth skills they can utilize as they enter the workforce. The project engaged youth on the topics of entrepreneurial thinking, how to make dreams a reality which had youth brainstorming ways they could start small businesses and utilize social media. The workshops also focused on budgeting and finance, as these are crucial skills to learn from young. Income disparities within racialized communities in Canada exist due to a number of systemic issues that impact Black communities on a larger scale. "Canada's Colour coded Income Inequality" document published by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives in 2019 speaks to this issue. The B.L.A.C.K Project created space for Black youth to learn financial literacy and spark entrepreneurial dialogue which can be life-changing to Black youth who don't have access to this type of dialogue.
- The B.L.A.C.K Project has made headways in partnering with organizations to provide additional supports to youth i.e., NPower Canada, Canadian Western Bank. Establishing youth connections with these organizations ensures a wider network for them. Also, Canadian Western Bank's partnership with ActionDignity opens opportunities on youth financial literacy on a long-term basis, including available expert facilitators and funding.



# PROGRAM REPORT

## Response Advocate & Volunteer Engagement (RAVE)

**Staff:** Adanech Sahilie, Project Facilitator (From September 2020)  
Jason Klinck, Program Coordinator (May to August 2020)

**Brokers:** Befekadu Dereje, Maram Hajjo, Silvestre Seva

**Funding Partners:** United Way of Calgary, Calgary Foundation

### PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The RAVE (Response Advocate Volunteer & Engagement) is an emergency response program to the COVID 19 pandemic. It works with partner ethnocultural communities to mobilize volunteers and lead projects to provide food, information on COVID 19 and in staying safe and PPEs, and to navigate individuals to access emergency benefits and technology supports in ways that match the cultures and languages of communities.

ActionDignity and partner organizations are also addressing systemic and structural barriers that increased vulnerabilities of ethnocultural communities to the pandemic and are pushing for the rights of essential workers and for safer working conditions to prevent future tragedies.

### OBJECTIVES

- Provides support to meet the urgent needs of individuals and families impacted by COVID 19 including culturally appropriate food, medicines, supplies and PPEs.
- Improves understanding of COVID 19 and staying safe through information materials and community conversations in first language.

- Supports people impacted by COVID 19 to self-isolate according to Alberta Health guidelines.
- Connects community groups/organizations with technology they need to support their community members.

### HIGHLIGHTS OF ACHIEVEMENTS

- At an individual level, the project reached 20651 disadvantaged people with food, medicines, infant milk, diapers, PPEs; provided information on COVID 19; provided 14,500 care packages, assisted in navigating benefits and enhancing their capacities. The supports “bridged” them through their challenges. They felt loved, connected, and integrated at this most trying times. Meeting the needs of those impacted with COVID 19 enabled them to isolate with dignity and heal with honour that, ultimately, helped reduce COVID 19 transmission and probably contributed to flattening the epidemic curve.
- The project reached out to people where they are and not the other way around. We sought the homeless during the winter season to provide blankets and hot meals. Cancer survivors received groceries in their homes, so they are not exposed to COVID 19. Essential workers on quarantine/isolation got their culturally appropriate hot

soups and meals from a partner-restaurant.

- Twenty-one (21) ethno-cultural organizations implemented action plans and mobilized resources to respond to the challenges their members faced. This includes the quick action to address the outbreak at an Orthodox Church to help families in isolation/quarantine with culturally appropriate food, medicines and milk but also advocate to social media a stop to discrimination and racism hurled against the affected communities.
- Parallel response to address shadow epidemics such as increasing domestic violence, mental

health, discrimination, and unemployment had the project working closely with different programs within ActionDignity and external agencies. This heightened awareness on these issues, assisted in navigating the systems and linked those affected to service providers.

- The project has been supporting essential workers at Cargill Meat Packing plant, which suffered the single highest outbreak in a workplace in Canada. ActionDignity together with 7 partner organizations and essential workers are advocating for the protection of essential workers' rights and for safer working conditions to prevent future tragedies.



Distribution of food hampers, PPEs and other urgent needs.



# PROGRAM REPORT

## People's CAFE

Coalition to Advance Fairness & Equity (CAFE)

**Staff:** Tyra Erskine, Strategy Lead – Anti-Racism and Equity

**Partner Organization:** Alberta Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies (AAISA)

**Funding Partner:** Human Rights Education and Multiculturalism Fund

### PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The People's CAFÉ (Coalition to Advance Fairness and Equity) has grown from a two-year pilot project into an ongoing initiative to address issues of discrimination, inequity, and racism. The project seeks to amplify collective voice, strengthen community leadership and action towards upholding the rights of those impacted by inequality and discrimination. The project's focus in the past year has been to analyze the intersection of anti-racism and COVID-19, to facilitate the capacity of non-profit organization in anti-racism, to support the centralization of anti-racism and equity resources, and to address hate within the province.

### OBJECTIVES

- Conclude the development of SHARP (Shared Anti-Racism Portal) where organizations, groups, and individuals can input their anti-racism and equity events and resources into a shared portal.
- Collaborate with the Coalitions Creating Equity
- Address racism and inequity within Calgary
- Support communities in developing tools to address discrimination

### HIGHLIGHTS OF ACHIEVEMENTS

- Finished the development of SHARP (Shared Anti-Racism Portal) where organizations, groups, and individuals can input their anti-racism and equity events and resources into a shared platform. 207 people/organizations were contacted for the development of SHARP.
- Continuing the engagement with the Alberta-wide Coalitions Creating Equity, a collaborative that is aimed at addressing hate within the province.
- Presenting at the 2020 Pathways to Prosperity conference with the Rural Development Network and AAISA on presentation titled: Anti-Racism During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Education to Action.
- Presenting at the PNT Small Centre Conference on a presentation titled: Anti-Racism and Responding to COVID-19. The attendance of the 3-day conference was 250.
- Facilitating 4, 4-week anti-discrimination courses and 1, 4-week course on supporting multi-barriered clients for AAISA. These courses were in collaboration with the Rural Development Network. A total of 115 registered for these courses.

# NEW PROGRAM

## Co-Creation of the City of Calgary's Community-Based Anti-Racism Action Plan

**Staff:** Tyra Erskine, Strategy Lead - Anti-Racism & Equity

**Brokers\*:** Isra Abdelrahim, Melvi Alvarado, Anne Azucena, Louise Crane, Widad Eltahir, Tsegay Gebreibanos, Sarah Huang, Min Li, Lionel Migrino, Crystal Mulik, Hadiya Qazi (\*hired June 2021)

**Partner Organization:** Habitus Consulting

**Funding Partner:** City of Calgary

### PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

This strategy will focus on The City's role in addressing systemic racism in Calgary and our community-based services. The project will be facilitating a targeted engagement process with certain persons, groups, and organizations to invite them to co-host events or participate in focus groups starting in May 2021. Leveraging existing community connections, over 30 events and online focus groups will be hosted. This is a collaborative project between ActionDignity, Habitus Consulting Collective, and the Anti-Racism Action Committee.

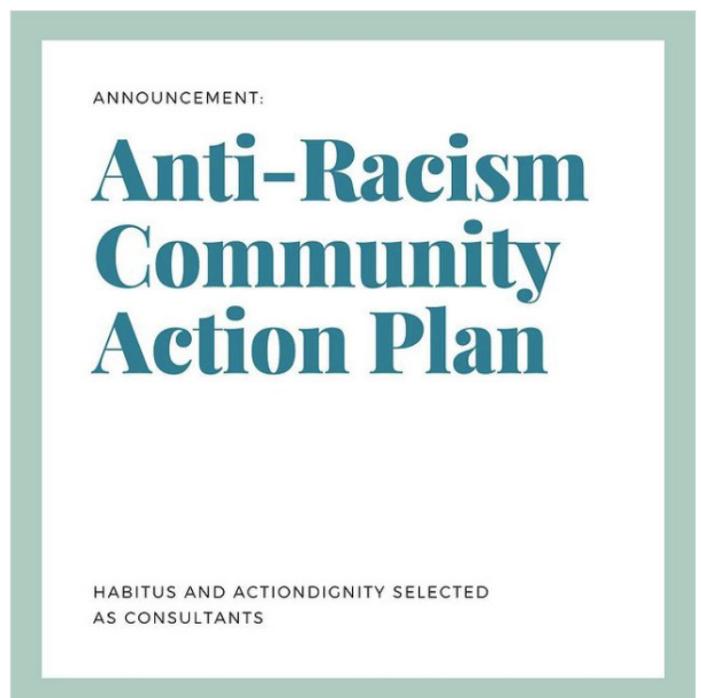
### OBJECTIVES

To identify inequalities and racism within the City of Calgary and the wider community by listening and learning from those who have been impacted by it and develop concrete actions to address factors that contribute to racism. This will require:

- Hosting 30+ community events with over 500 racialized attendees to inform the community-based anti-racism action plan.
- Hiring 13 community brokers and find community

co-hosts to plan and facilitate community engagements.

- Attending regular meetings with the Anti-Racism Action Committee to co-develop the project.



# NEW PROGRAM

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## Calgary CARES

Calgary Collaborating for Anti-Racism, Equity, and Social Justice

**Staff:** Tyra Erskine, Strategy Lead – Anti-Racism and Equity

**Brokers:** Crystal Mulik and Lionel Migrino

**Funding Partners:** City of Calgary, Anti-Racism Capacity Building Fund

### PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Calgary CARES strengthens the collaborative capacity of 15 diverse racialized organizations to do impactful actions with decision-making bodies to combat racism at a sustainable and systems level.

ActionDignity serves as the backbone organization of Calgary CARES collaborative, guided by a community development and empowerment framework with clear accountability structures. It works in close collaboration with racialized organizations and groups who expressed commitment to do collaborative Anti-Racism work using ActionDignity's Shared Platform strategy.

### OBJECTIVES

- Engage community members in Anti-Racism cross-cultural initiatives, including online education forums, Anti-Racism theatre forums, systems change efforts.
- Participate in monitoring and learning to assess progress and draw lessons for improvement and sustainability.
- Co-design content, methodology and implementation of Training and Action plans.

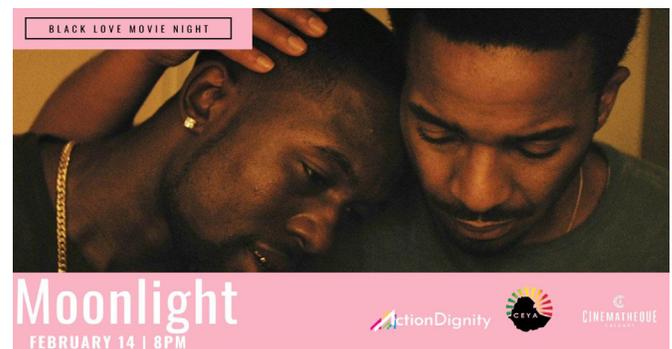
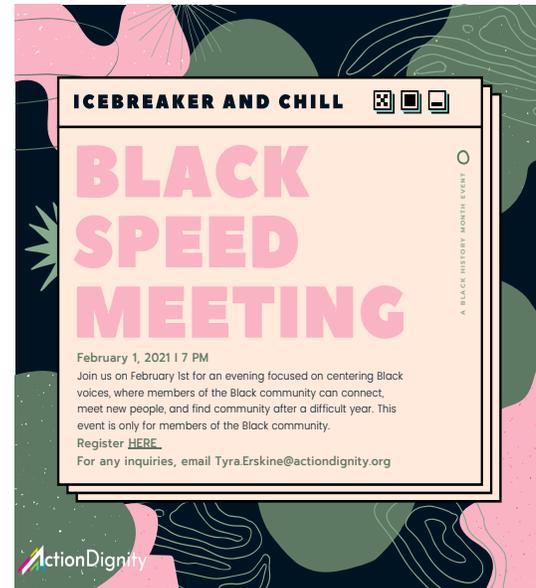
- Participate in Community-Based Participatory Action Research to support Anti-Racism policy and system change initiatives.
- Facilitate or take on leadership roles in a collaborative action plan/implementation

### HIGHLIGHTS OF ACHIEVEMENTS

- Coordinating inter-groups meetings between the Calgary CARES brokers, ActionDignity staff, and the Calgary CARES collaborative to discuss priority anti-racism issues, what anti-racism looks like in each community, and develop a 3-day anti-racism curriculum.
- Coordinating internal anti-racism staff development sessions for staff. These sessions have included trainings on the importance of a land acknowledgement, understanding of pronouns, trauma-informed care and the ways it relates to anti-racism work, incorporating self-care into the workplace, and deep discussions on anti-racism organizational development.
- Organizing 2 Black History Month events:
  - a. Black Speed Meeting event for Black community members to connect and build

community together. This event had a registration of 37 participants.

- b. Black History Month Film Screening of the film *Moonlight*. This event was in collaboration with the Calgary Ethiopian Youth Alliance and Calgary Cinematheque. This event had a registration of 57.
- Building community understanding of anti-Black and anti-Asian hate through the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination Event. 102 participated. This event also had a specific focus on the rights of essential workers and the way that intersect with racism and other forms of oppression. This event had presentations from ActionDignity community brokers on COVID-19 and essential workers' rights, the Multi-lingual Emergency Response to COVID program that ActionDignity has and collaborating for change from a youth perspective. This event allowed attendees to learn about anti-racism and to understand how to collaborate to make systemic change.
- Mobilizing ethnocultural organizations and communities to voice their lived experiences and thoughts during the Anti-racism rally in March. ActionDignity was one of 4 key event organizers and mobilizers. 450 ethnocultural community members participated, with 17 speakers from diverse BIPOC communities. This platform has raised the level of discourse on anti-racism and respond to racist attacks and assault against two Muslim girls in Princess Island Park. It created a venue to actively focus on anti-racism. The Anti-Asian Racism Statement, which ActionDignity released, another Anti-Racism statement that ActionDignity co-signed for the rally increased awareness on anti-racism and gained support in the social media.



# NEW PROGRAM

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## BRAVE Workers

Believe in the Rights and Value of Essential Workers

**Staff:** Rubirose Ong, Program Coordinator  
Meriam Bravante, Researcher & Policy Educator

**Funding Partner:** Mariam Assefa Fund - World Education Service

### PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The BRAVE Workers Program (Believe in the Rights and Value of Essential Workers) aims to highlight, understand, and address the challenges and barriers of racialized essential workers in meat-packing plants. COVID-19 outbreaks in meat-packing plants (re)surfaced ongoing systemic barriers that essential workers have been experiencing for decades; including poor and unsafe working conditions, job insecurities and vulnerabilities, the significant challenges they face in advocating for themselves along with increased racism in and outside their workplaces.

Through various approaches such as capacity-building, research through storytelling, community broker strategy, and the community development shared platform model, the BRAVE Workers Program is designed to increase the capacity of racialized essential workers to meaningfully drive decisions for job safety, timely wages, job security and immigration status. These program activities will help pave the way to policy and systems change as communities continue to engage with labor groups and unions, service providers and government agencies.

### OBJECTIVES

- To analyse the systemic and structural causes

of the meatpacking plant outbreaks as well as dissecting the impacts of institutional policies and programs including the Temporary Foreign Workers Federal program, Internal Responsibility System, & Occupational Health & Safety.

- To work for the empowerment of essential workers and ethnocultural communities through community-led initiatives, representation in the system, capacity building and collaborative action.
- To capture the stories, vulnerabilities and lived experiences of essential workers affected by COVID-19 to drive workplace practices and policy and systems change.

### HIGHLIGHTS OF ACHIEVEMENTS

- BRAVE Workers Program Launch. Collaborations with community partners were established and community action planning initiated. About 30 community members and leaders participated and represented 4 partner-ethnocultural community organizations whose members were severely impacted with COVID 19.
- 4 Community Action Plans (CAP) developed and to be implemented starting July 2021.

These CAPs focus on community engagement, network building with essential workers in Cargill, empowerment for essential workers and community leaders and organizations, capacity building, knowledge mobilization, awareness building and advocacy work towards policy and systems change to benefit essential workers in the meat-packing industry.

- Building a network of groups and individuals advocating for essential workers' rights. Inspired by EWRAG (Essential Workers Rights Advocacy Group), a group that organically materialized to address the urgent issues from the Cargill outbreaks, a province-wide network of organizations, groups, and professionals who advocate for essential workers to tackle ongoing and urgent issues within the industry, build capacity and develop meaningful collaborations towards systems and policy change is initiated. The network begins with the 4 partners, Migrant Alberta, and Social Workers for Social Change.
- Speaking Out Our Truth. A storytelling and sharing session with Cargill essential workers bared the serious issues and impacts of COVID-19 and the irresponsible response of employers to the workers that led to unsafe working conditions, the outbreaks and even death. These stories paved the way to fuel the need to urgently support racialized essential workers.

# SPEAKING OUR OWN TRUTH

July 22, 2020 / 7:00-8:45 pm

A Zoom storytelling by essential workers

Register [HERE](#).

For more info, email [Jason.Klinck@actiondignity.org](mailto:Jason.Klinck@actiondignity.org)



# NEW PROGRAM

## MERC PROJECT

Multilingual Emergency Response to COVID-19

**Staff:** Phuong Foang, Program Coordinator  
Edwin Chavez, Project Facilitator

Sukhwant Parmar, Project Facilitator  
Shiraz Bhoja, Research & Database Facilitator

**Cultural Brokers:** Abdul Ali, Bishnu Bajgain, Patricia Bernal, Widad Eltahir, Yordanos Hadgu, Fauzia Khedri, Joseph Kuol, Seid Lamer, Quynh Le, Bruce Luo, Aya Mhana, Henry Ngo, Malina Nguyen, Catherine Ozturk, Rodel Paguirigan, Rajendra Prasai, Shahzad Qazi, Sameeha Sarwar, Yonas Tesfagabr, Clarita Torres

**Collaborative Partner:** Calgary East Zone Collaborative (CENC)

**Funding Partners:** Government of Alberta, City of Calgary, United Way of Calgary, Calgary Foundation

### PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Multilingual Emergency Response to COVID 19 (MERC) is the nucleus of the Calgary East Zone Newcomers Collaborative (CENC), a collaborative of 17 organizations, to reach out and engage community members from the Northeast in response to the COVID 19 outbreak.

With 21 Community Brokers who speak 24 languages, ethnocultural community members impacted with COVID 19 could call the hotline number and speak to a community broker in first languages and receive supports to meet their urgent needs in a culturally appropriate way i.e., food, counselling, employment training, navigation to emergency benefits and income support. The aim is to provide their needs so they could isolate/quarantine in a dignified way. In addition to providing basic needs, MERC addresses structural barriers that create vulnerabilities to immigrants and essential workers that contract COVID 19 through community conversation and advocacy work and supports community-based prevention through education, engagement, and awareness.

### OBJECTIVES

- Ensure individuals and families with confirmed COVID 19 cases receive appropriate supports to enable them to quarantine in a dignified way.
- Provide relevant information to confirmed COVID 19 cases, including their rights to say No if they are being requested by employers to return to work during the isolation period.
- Monitor clients' situation until they are well and safe for them to go back to their regular schedule.
- Ensure everyone has access to vaccines, provide solutions to barriers to the vaccines such as language, transportation, lack of a health card or status in Canada

### HIGHLIGHTS OF ACHIEVEMENTS

- The project supported 17,783 community members impacted by COVID 19 with basic needs to ensure that they isolate/quarantine in a dignified and safe manner. About 1034 callers

were COVID 19 positive. By providing for their needs, they were able to adhere to isolation guidelines and disrupted the transmission cycle of COVID 19 infection. This has probably contributed to the reduction of cases / flattening of the curve in Calgary.

- Extensive outreach to community organizations, ethnic media, faith-based organizations and social media influencers enhanced and strengthened MERC's community engagement. This has increased the reach of information, supports the needs of those infected by COVID 19, including vaccination uptake. The use of different community approaches improved relationships with community leaders and enabled us to expand and recruit more active community members to become outreach volunteers.
- Listening to and understanding the fears and misconceptions around vaccination among ethnocultural communities enabled MERC to address vaccination hesitancy. 17 community conversations in 15 languages were organized with support from international medical graduates of AIMGA (Alberta International Medical Graduates Association). This has increased vaccination uptake as reflected in our internal survey, contributing to the public target of achieving a 70% first dose vaccination rate. Through community engagement ActionDignity with partners was able to mobilize 2,277 immigrants to receive their first dose of vaccination in a matter of five days.



# NEW PROGRAM

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## Mental Health CARES Project Culturally Appropriate Response and Engagement (CARES)

**Staff:** Humaira Falak, Program Coordinator

**Broker:** Jing Han

**Funding Partner:** United Way of Calgary and Area

### PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Mental Health CARE is a community-based project that uses culturally appropriate prevention strategies through cross-cultural collaboration towards mental health and wellness among racialized communities. It envisages to help highly barriered essential workers and community members to deal with mental health issues using art and non-traditional community engagement methods and connect affected families from racialized communities to relevant resources. To sustain the project, it engages ethnocultural communities and faith-based organizations and service providers to jointly implement community action plans to address mental health issues in their communities.

### OBJECTIVES

- Capacity building of community organizations to support essential workers and community members with mental health issues.
- Exploring art and other non-traditional community engagement methods to deal with mental health issues
- Bridging the gap between the mainstream mental health service providers and the racialized

communities.

### HIGHLIGHTS OF ACHIEVEMENTS

- A mental health survey was conducted prior to the launch of this project to gauge the impact of COVID-19 and subsequent economic downturn on mental well-being of racialized essential workers and community members. The survey not only served as a tool to effectively engage community members but also helped in designing the activities of this project according to the needs of impacted communities.
- Community members had the opportunity to explore art and other non-traditional practices i.e., cooking to deal with mental health issues. They expressed that the project provided them with psychological safety and felt comfortable and safe while sharing their experiences. Considering the challenges in navigating mental health issues among ethnocultural communities, the trust developed around the project improved connectedness, rapport, and openness.
- The community forums brought together mainstream service providers and community leaders, which created a platform to share valuable insights regarding available mental health



# TOOLKITS & RESOURCES

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- **[Reviewing Current & Future Policing System](#)**

Focus group discussion report of racialized communities' lived experiences on impacts of police brutality and recommendations for greater equity in current and future policing system.

- **[Workers Rights Resource Info - OHS in Alberta](#)**

Policy Advocate Team members developed resource information on OHS in Alberta (Nov 2020) as a public education document for racialized communities to increase understanding of occupational health and safety in workplaces..

- **[Policy Advocacy Toolkit](#)**

Toolkit that provides policy advocates with guidelines and resources on ways to engage racialized communities in system and policy change work.

- **[Anti-Discrimination Course](#)**

This recorded webinar was created in partnership with the Alberta Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies and Alberta Rural Development Network. The webinar covers an introduction to anti-discrimination and also provides a current context of the Black Lives Matter Movement.

- **[COVID-19 Webinars](#)**

These recorded webinars were created in partnership with the Alberta Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies and Alberta Rural Development Network. This 3-part series discusses the relationship between [COVID-19](#), [racism](#), [online hate](#), and [intersectionality](#).

- **[MERC \(Multi-lingual Emergency Response to COVID-19\) Resource Book](#)**

This is the list of services currently available in Calgary for food hamper, income support, mental health support, job and skill training, support for youth and kids.

- **[Take A Stand Booklets](#)**

These are resource materials for community members to learn how one can support victims of family violence and abuse. Booklets are in Filipino, Arabic, Urdu and Punjabi languages.

# FUNDERS



**United Way**  
Calgary and Area



**CALGARY FOUNDATION**  
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**MARIAM ASSEFA FUND**



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# MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

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- Action Committee for Black Affairs Calgary
- Active Treatment
- African Caribbean United Foundation of Calgary
- African Canadian Immigrant Society
- African Community Association of Calgary
- Afri-Can Connect Society
- Akuar Lang Juk Community Association of Canada
- Alberta Rehabilitation-Integration and Care Services
- Altamas for Peace and Development Association
- ARSII OROMO Self-Help Association
- Association De La Communaute Haitienne De Calgary (Haiti Association of Calgary)
- Association of Colombian Canadian Professionals of Alberta
- Association of Mexicans in Calgary
- Association of Mon Women of Canada
- BABAE: Council of Filipina Canadian Women
- Bafut Manjong Cultural Association Calgary
- Bag by Bag
- Bangladeshi Community Association
- Binam of Calgary- Bamileke Association
- Bor Community Association of Calgary
- Bridge International Church
- BTO Foundation
- Calgary Canadian Sudanese Community Association
- Calgary Chinese Community Service Association
- Calgary Chinese Elderly Citizens' Association
- Calgary Ethiopian Community Association
- Calgary Ethiopian Youth Alliance
- Calgary Family Peer Connections
- Calgary Filipino Methodist Church
- Calgary Hambastegi Cultural Association
- Calgary Japanese Community Association
- Calgary Korean Women's Association
- Calgary Multicultural Seniors Association Alberta
- Calgary Nepalese Community Association
- Calgary Vietnamese Culture and Arts Association
- Calgary Vietnamese Women's Association
- Calgary Vietnamese Youth Association
- Cameroonian Association of Calgary
- Cameroonian Canadian Association of Calgary
- Canadian Artists for the Poor
- Canadian Guatemalan Community Association
- Canadian Pakistani Support Group
- CANAVUA (Canadians Volunteers United in Action)
- Chilean Canadian Community Association of Calgary
- Chinese Professionals and Entrepreneurs Association of Calgary
- Clinique De L'Education LTD.
- Council of Sikh Organizations
- Dinka Language Development School Society
- East Oromia Self-Help Community
- ECSSSEN Career School
- El sistema Calgary Calgary Multicultural Orchestra Foundation
- Eritrean Canadian Community Association of Calgary
- Eritrean Seniors Community Calgary
- Ethiopians and Eritreans COVID-19 Support Group in Alberta
- Excel Family and Youth Society
- F.O.C.U.S. on Seniors
- Filipino-Canadian Women Multi-Purpose Cooperative
- Foundation for the Voice of Immigrants in Canada for Empowerment
- Fountain of Orphans and Vulnerable Women
- FRIENDS (Filipinos Rising for Inclusion and Equity to Nurture Democracy)
- Global Parvasi (Immigrant) Seniors Society
- Green Crusader Inc. Diversity Magazine
- Haiti Alberta Sports et/and Culture Club Ltd.
- Haiti Association of Calgary

- Hindu Society of Calgary
- Imatari Otuho Community Association
- India Canada Association of Calgary
- Indo-Canadian Ex-Teachers Association
- Institute of Integrated Electrical Engineers Philippines, Alberta Canada
- Intercultural Dialogue Institute Calgary
- Ireri-Mexican Latino & Cross Cultural Society, High River
- Islamic Association of Canadian Women
- Jamaican Canadian Association Alberta
- Korean Community Association
- Kurdistan Alberta Culture Immigrant Society
- Ladies in the Family Foundation
- Latin American Literary Association of Calgary
- Latin American Women's Association
- Lebialem Cultural & Development Association
- Madi Heritage Foundation
- Mapua Alumni Association, Alberta Chapter
- Migrante Alberta Association
- National Federation of Pakistani Canadians
- Nepalese Community Society of Calgary
- Nepalese Literary Society of Calgary
- One Voice Canada
- Oromo Muslim Association of Alberta
- Outreach Program Canada
- Pakistani Canadian Cultural Association of Alberta
- Peruvian Rhythms Society
- Philippine Calgarian Social of Club
- Philippine Festival Council of Alberta
- Pilipino Educators and Advocates Council
- Portail De L'immigrant Association
- Professional STAR Calgary
- Professional STAR Edmonton
- Purpose-Driven Human Services Society
- Regroupment Afro-Calgareen des Jeunes Francophone
- Salvadorian Community Association of Calgary
- Sankofa Arts and Music Foundation
- Sayyoo Innovation
- Somali Canadian Society of Calgary
- Somaliland Community of Alberta
- Somaly Community Association
- South Asian Community Service
- South Sudanese Canadian Cultural Society
- South Sudanese Catholic Society of Alberta
- South Sudanese Community Association of Calgary
- Sweet Corner YYC
- The Color Factor
- The Oladele Foundation / African Cancer Support Group
- University of the Philippines Alumni Association of Alberta
- Women of Vision Society of Alberta
- Youth Helping Youth Calgary
- South Sudanese Catholic Society of Alberta
- South Sudanese Community Association of Calgary
- Sweet Corner YYC
- The Color Factor
- The Oladele Foundation / African Cancer Support Group
- University of the Philippines Alumni Association of Alberta
- Women of Vision Society of Alberta
- Youth Helping Youth Calgary

# PARTNERS & NETWORKS

## Community Groups and Organizations

- Afghan Community Group
- African Canadian Immigrant Society (ACIS)
- Afri-Can Connect Society
- African Francophone Community
- Altamas For Peace and Development Association
- Asian Heritage Foundation
- Association of Mexicans in Calgary (AMexCal)
- Bahaghari
- Best Health Family Foundation
- Black Leadership Alliance Council
- Calgary Canadian Sudanese Community Association
- Calgary Chinese Elderly Citizens' Association (CCECA)
- Calgary Cinematheque
- Calgary Ethiopian Youth Alliance
- Calgary Korean Women's Association
- Calgary North Sudanese Community
- Calgary Vietnamese Women's Association (CAVWA)
- Canadian Zalmi Society
- Chilean Canadian Community Association of Calgary
- d.talks
- Dingka Language Development Society
- Dover Community Association
- Dover Patch
- East African Immigrants Support Group
- Erin Woods Community Association
- Essence School
- Ethiopian Community Association
- Ethnocultural Diverse Working Group of Calgary Domestic Violence Collective
- Excel Family and Youth Society
- F.O.C.U.S. on Seniors
- Filipino Working Group for Healthy Family Relationships
- Filipinos Rising for Inclusion & Equity to Nurture Democracy (FRIENDS)
- Forest Lawn Community Association
- Forest Lawn Hubs (Bob Bahan Arena)
- GFL 55+ Society

- Greater Forest Lawn Anti-Racism Committee
- Handsome Alice Theatre
- IMAGINE Citizens
- Learning Mums - Afghan Women
- Love with Humanity
- Migrante Alberta
- Nepalese Community Society of Calgary
- Nepalese Literary Society
- Oasis for Seniors
- Outreach Programs of Canada
- Parent Support Network
- Philippine Emergency Response Team (PERT)
- Professional STAR - Filipino group
- Raices del Peru
- Resident PLEX
- Sayyoo Innovation
- Sikolohiyang Pilipino
- Soaps n Suds
- Soul of the Next Economy
- Step Forward
- The Eritrean Canadian Community Association
- The Oladele Foundation/African Cancer Support Group
- Vibrant Communities Calgary
- Woezo Africa Music and Dance Inc.
- Youth Empowerment and Skills Development - YES Centre
- Youth Empowerment Program (YEP)
- YYC Eritreans

## Nonprofits and Service Providers

- 12CSI
- Action Hall
- Alberta Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies (AAISA)
- Alberta Association of Social Workers
- Alberta International Medical Graduates Association (AIMGA)
- Alberta Rural Development Network (ARDN)
- Apathy Is Boring
- Arts Commons
- Basic Income Alberta
- Calgary Ability Network
- Calgary Alliance for Common Good

- Calgary Chamber of Voluntary Organizations
- Calgary Chinese Response to Family Violence
- Calgary Communities Against Sexual Abuse
- Calgary Community Development Learning Initiative (CDLI)
- Calgary Dollar
- Calgary Mental Health Association
- Calgary Public Library
- Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter
- Canadian Mental Health Association
- Centre for Newcomers
- Coalitions Creating Equity
- Community Trans-Cultural Support Services
- Immigrant Outreach Society (IOS)
- Immigrant Services Calgary
- John Humphrey Centre for Peace and Human Rights
- Keep Calgary Strong (Calgary Alliance for Common Good)
- Love with Humanity
- Main Street Group
- Marlborough Community Association
- MEAT - Municipal Election Action Team
- Multi-Cultural Health Brokers Coop (Edmonton)
- NPower Canada
- One Voice Canada, Alberta
- Outreach Programs of Canada
- Penbrooke Community Association
- PREM State of Mind
- Red Midwife Community Society
- Salvation Army (Forest Lawn)
- Salvation Army (High River)
- Social Workers for Social Change
- Spirit of GFL Committee
- The Alex Community Food Centre
- The Colour Factor
- The Distress Centre
- The Immigrant Educational Society
- ThirdSpace Playback Theatre
- Trellis
- Vibrant Communities
- Women in Need Society
- Wood Buffalo Strategy Group
- Wood's Homes
- YMCA Saddletown

#### **Institutions or Government**

- Age-Friendly Calgary

- Age-Friendly Calgary
- Alberta Assembly of Social Workers
- Alberta Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women (Community Development Unit)
- Alberta Government Community Development Unit
- Alberta Health Services
- Alberta Health Services (Educations Services)
- Bow Valley Immigration Partnership
- Calgary Housing
- City of Calgary
- City of Calgary Community Development
- City of Calgary Planning & Development
- CRA
- Healthcare 101
- Office of the Mayor, The City of Calgary
- Peter Singh MLA Calgary East
- UFCW 401
- Ward 9 Councillor

#### **Educational Institutions**

- Sir Winston Churchill High School Volunteers
- Southern Alberta Institute of Technology (SAIT)
- University of Calgary
- University of Calgary - W21C
- York University

#### **Religious Groups:**

- Champion Life Centre
- Dashmesh Cultural Centre
- First Alliance Church
- Grace Baptist Church

#### **Media**

- 660 News
- 680 News
- Calgary Foundation Spur Magazine
- Calgary Herald
- CBC
- CFJC Today
- CTV News
- Global News
- Globe and Mail
- Huffington Post
- National Post
- Philippine Canadian News
- Ponoka News
- Toronto Star

# STATEMENT OF OPERATIONS

	2021	2020	% (-/+)
REVENUE	\$ 2,232,385	\$ 1,654,590	35%
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$ 2,040,300	\$ 1,602,554	27%
EXCESS OF REVENUE OVER EXPENSES	\$ 192,085	\$ 52,036	269%
% OF EXPENSES TO REVENUE	91%	97%	

# OUR TEAM

## STAFF 2020-2021

**Marichu Antonio**  
Executive Director

**Aurelio 'Jun' Naraval**  
Programs & Policy Manager

**Sheeba Vijayan**  
Strategy Lead, Policy & Leadership  
Lead for Change, We All Belong, Social Inclusion

**Linh Bui**  
Strategy Lead, Neighbourhoods  
GFL, Social Inclusion

**Tyra Erskine**  
Strategy Lead, Anti-Racism & Equity  
People's CAFE, Calgary CARES, ARAP

**Carissa Gravelle**  
Program Coordinator  
B.L.A.C.K. Project

**Humaira Falak**  
Program Coordinator  
North Star, SHARE, Social Inclusion

**Rubirose Ong**  
Program Coordinator  
INDIE & BRAVE Workers

**Meriam Bravante**  
Researcher & Policy Educator

**Nazia Amin**  
Community Engagement Coordinator  
LEAD for Change

**Phuong Hoang**  
Program Coordinator  
MERC

**Adanech Sahilie**  
Project Facilitator  
RAVE

**Edwin Chavez**  
Project Facilitator  
MERC

**Sukhwant Parmar**  
Project Facilitator  
MERC

**Shiraz Bhoja**  
Database & Research Facilitator  
MERC

**May Lee Muzika**  
Project Facilitator  
INDIE

**Krizia Carlos**  
Artistic Facilitator

**Mandy Zhu**  
Finance & Payroll Coordinator

**Anne Zabala**  
HR and Executive Office Coordinator

**Wengel Kebede**  
Finance Administrator

**Mary Getaneh**  
Communications Assistant

**Ligia Yanez**  
Admin & Program Support

**Ileana Gonzalez**  
Admin & Program Support

*Former Staff:*  
**Hala El Madani**  
**Jason Klinck**  
**Vic Lantion †**

*Former Brokers:*  
**Rawya Gumaa**  
**Sandeep Malhi**  
**Falak Shakir**  
**Yonas Tesfagabr**

### Community/ Cultural Brokers:

Badria Abubaker  
Abdul Ali  
Jasmine Alsarraj  
Melvi Alvarado  
Mario Ayudo  
Anne Azucena  
Bishnu Bajgain  
Tina Belay  
Patricia Bernal  
Louise Crane  
Befekadu Dereje  
Widad Eltahir  
Tsegay Gebreibanos  
Yordanos Hadgu  
Maram Hajjo  
Jing Han  
Sarah Huang  
Fauzia Khedri  
Joseph Kuol  
Quynh Le  
Min Li  
Bruce Luo  
Aya Mhana  
Lionel Migrino  
Crystal Mulik  
Jasmine Navarro  
Henry Ngo  
Isra Abdelrahim  
Malina Nguyen  
Cathering Ozturk  
Rodel Paguirigan  
Rajendra Prasad Prasai  
Hadiya Qazi  
Shahzad Qazi  
Sameeha Sarwar  
Silvestre Seva  
Promila Sharma  
Clarita Torres

# OUR TEAM

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### **Dr. Ilyan Ferrer**

Chair

### **Holy Linton**

Vice Chair

### **Hiroko Nakao**

Secretary

### **Ernestine Bissou**

Treasurer

### **Kiranpreet Grewal**

Director

### **Dr. Yahya El-Lahib**

Director

### **Anh Bui**

Director

### **Arsaima Sultan**

Director

### **Ivan Leung**

Director

### **Chanakya Gupta**

Director

### **Ram Sankaran**

Director

### **Ashley Sayson**

Director

### **Lovella Dizon**

Director

## BOARD COMMITTEES

### **Governance**

*Chair:*

Arsaima Sultan

*Board Members:*

Dr. Yahya El-Lahib, Lovella Dizon

*Volunteers:*

Azmera Mamo, Zulfira Pulotova,  
Jessica Lortie, Ayisha Khalid,  
Harnoor Kochar

### **Finance**

*Chair:*

Ernestine Bissou

*Board Members:*

Anh Bui, Chanakya Gupta

*Volunteers:*

Kevin Cho, Ruth Estrella

### **Research & Policy**

*Chair:*

Hiroko Nakao

*Board Members:*

Dr. Yahya El-Lahib, Ram Sankaran

*Volunteers:*

Cesar Cala, Kaltrina Kusari,  
Maimuna Khan, Ghada Alatrash

### **Human Resources**

*Chair:*

Kiranpreet Grewal

*Board Members:*

Dr. Yahya El-Lahib, Ivan Leung,  
Hiroko Nakao

### **Community Engagement**

*Chair:*

Holy Linton

*Board Member:*

Ashley Sayson

*Volunteers:*

Tanvir Alam, Meghana Valupadas  
Lemlem Kebede,  
Dr. Turin Tanvir Chowdhury

### **Executive Transition Task Force**

*Chair:*

Kiranpreet Grewal

*Board Members:*

Dr. Ilyan Ferrer, Dr. Yahya El-Lahib,  
Ivan Leung, Hiroko Nakao

### **Strategic Planning Task Force**

*Chair:*

Dr. Ilyan Ferrer

*Board Members:*

Holy Linton, Hiroko Nakao,  
Ashley Sayson

# MARICHU ANTONIO: CITIZEN OF THE YEAR



**The 2020  
Calgary  
Awards**



Citizen of the Year  
Marichu Antonio

Marichu Antonio is a pioneering leader and innovator with close to 50 years of working passionately towards community development and empowerment. She is a strong advocate of social justice, human rights, and equity for all citizens.

Marichu came to Canada from the Philippines in 1994 and worked as Community Development Manager at the Centre for Newcomers for 13 years. Marichu is a proud recipient of the 2012 Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal and Avenue Magazine's A-List of Volunteers in 2009 in recognition of her contributions towards strengthening communities.

Marichu is Executive Director of ActionDignity (previously Ethno-Cultural Council of Calgary or ECCC), a community-based organization that promotes full civic participation and integration of ethnocultural communities in Alberta. As Executive Director for nearly twelve years, Marichu's leadership has transformed ActionDignity into a strong platform organization that serves to amplify the collective voice of over 100 culturally diverse groups and organizations. Through her leadership, these empowered communities became a force in transitioning public institutions and in advocating for public policies that are responsive to racialized communities. She is a strong advocate of providing safe spaces for racialized communities to speak out and be heard. She believes that those that are greatly impacted by inequities are the best people to provide solutions and to guide policy and systems change.

Throughout out her life serving Calgarians of diverse backgrounds, Marichu has been a trailblazer for many initiatives and provided leadership to important community endeavours. Marichu's leadership is deeply anchored to her commitment to help those in need. Always on the lookout that no one falls

through the cracks and the systems.

Below are examples of her work within the last five years:

During the pandemic, Marichu quickly shifted ActionDignity's focus to emergency support to Calgarians including essential workers in Cargill and JBS meat plants. She co-founded the Multilingual Emergency Response Centre (MERC) Hotline in response to COVID-19 and sits as a key player in the Calgary East Zone Newcomers Collaborative (CENC). Offering support in 24 languages, CENC served 12,400 COVID-impacted Calgarians with food, financial and mental health supports as they healed with dignity.

Marichu's leadership is felt in many city-wide initiatives including Calgary's Cultural Plan, Calgary Local Immigration Partnership, Calgary Arts Development's Aisinna'kiiks Initiative, and Advocacy for Workers' Rights. Before this, she started EthniCity at the Centre for Newcomers, a pioneering food catering social enterprise providing employment to newcomer women. She has been a Board member of two of Calgary's important social agencies: the Women's Centre of Calgary and Momentum. She has also been a founding Board member of Fiesta Filipino and Filipinos Rising.

Retiring from ActionDignity in June 2021, Marichu has helped elevate the work for communities and equity-seeking organizations towards social justice, human rights and equality for all citizens.

2020 Citizen of the Year Award, under the Community Achievement Awards category of the Calgary Awards, is given to an outstanding individual Calgarian who, within the last five years, has made extraordinary contributions to the community, as a volunteer and/or professional, that improved the quality of life in Calgary or brought recognition to Calgary.

The City of Calgary established the Calgary Awards in 1994 to celebrate and recognize exceptional achievements and contributions made by Calgarians. Each year, individuals, corporations, community groups and organizations are nominated in five major award categories. More information on each award category, eligibility criteria, and previous award recipients can be found here: [calgary.ca/calgiaryawards](http://calgary.ca/calgiaryawards).

This year, the City of Calgary received a record number of nominations.

A group of diverse people are shown in a meeting or workshop setting. In the foreground, a woman with curly hair is smiling broadly and clapping her hands. Behind her, a man is also smiling and clapping. The background is slightly blurred, showing other people and what appears to be a whiteboard or screen. The overall atmosphere is positive and collaborative.

It's our choice what kind  
of future we build.

*Our actions define us.*





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 ActionDignity  
 actiondignity  
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