



Stand with her.



ywcalgary.ca

Land Acknowledgement

We are gathered in Mohkinstis, on the traditional territories of the Blackfoot Confederacy (Siksika, Kainai, Piikani), the Tsuut'ina, the Iyârhe Nakoda Nations, and the Otipemisiwak Métis Government of the Métis Nation within Alberta, Districts 5 and 6.

We, at YW Calgary, are committed to using our platform to build respectful relationships with Indigenous communities. Please join us as we amplify Indigenous voices, celebrate the vibrance of Indigenous culture, and support all women and their families to thrive in a safe and equitable community.

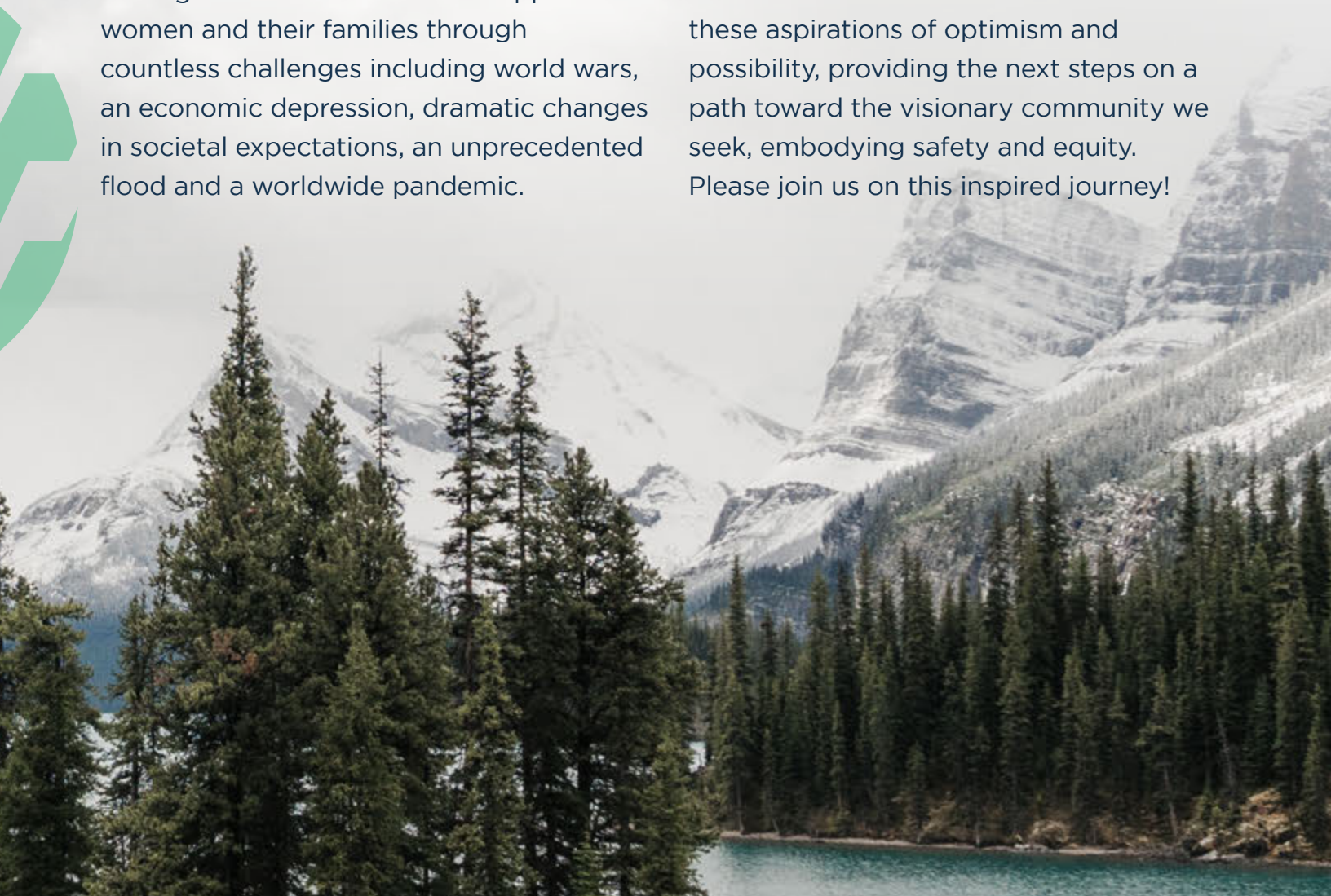


Introduction

Calgary and Alberta are undergoing change, both by experiencing the benefits of becoming more diverse and feeling the stresses of being part of a globalized economy. International immigration into the city and province reached historic highs last year, as women and families strive to establish themselves in life, work and community. Challenges to equity and diversity are more evident than ever, and housing affordability remains a distant dream for some. Yet optimism is justified as YW Calgary continues to build on its 115-year legacy as a hub of hope, trust and stability for women and their families. Throughout that time YW has supported women and their families through countless challenges including world wars, an economic depression, dramatic changes in societal expectations, an unprecedented flood and a worldwide pandemic.

The organization and the community around us have never faltered to continue building toward a better life, always looking for opportunities and being willing to take action to achieve it; assessing risk and stepping boldly to achieve a better future.

Human connection is increasingly important as divisiveness and polarization seem more prevalent and public than ever. Inclusive spaces, accessible to all, that bring a sense of belonging, hope and inspiration are critical to achieving the organization's vision of a safe and equitable community. We believe this document embodies these aspirations of optimism and possibility, providing the next steps on a path toward the visionary community we seek, embodying safety and equity. Please join us on this inspired journey!



About Us

At YW Calgary, we believe that every woman and child deserves to thrive in a safe, equitable community. Over the past 115 years we have reached thousands of Calgarians with programs, partnerships and services that create real change, adapting to our evolving community.

Our strategic plan will build on this momentum. It centres women and families, strengthens communities and drives innovation, moving beyond short-term solutions to long-term impact.

VISION

Women and their families thriving in a safe and equitable community. We believe that healthy women and healthy families lead to thriving communities.

MISSION

Prevention, intervention, empowerment and leadership for the benefit of women and their families.

VALUES

Integrity | We are driven by our social purpose, being fair and consistent and doing the right thing.

Innovation | We understand risks, we learn, we have courage, we are curious and pursue a ground-breaking agenda for change.

Inclusivity | We bind together as a unit when members of our community are feeling left behind.



OUR NORTH STAR

Stand with her.

This is more than our guiding light, it's our call to action.

Our new North Star, *Stand With Her*, provides focus as we look to the horizon over the next five years. It is a vision rooted in empathy, solidarity and empowerment. *Stand With Her* means walking alongside women at every step of their journey—meeting them where they are, honoring their unique experiences, and supporting them through their challenges, triumphs and moments of uncertainty. It's a commitment to stand by their side, ensuring they have the strength and support to continue making progress, even in the face of adversity.

As we grow and adapt to the evolving needs of our community, *Stand With Her* will remain a core principle in our decision-making, ensuring that every action we take upholds this shared commitment to women's empowerment.

I just wanted to connect with other women in person. Everyone was so friendly and warm. I made so many connections I didn't even know I needed"

YW Program Participant

BACKGROUND

Reflecting on the Past to Look Boldly Ahead

With 115 years of strength behind us, we naturally reflect on the past as we look ahead. Staying true to our legacy, we've remained agile and responsive to community needs. In our previous strategic plan, we focused on deepening our credible influence, and added our focus in Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, Sustainable Business Models and Economic Prosperity. We refreshed our mission, vision and Practice Framework to reflect a broader impact, supporting women in crisis and on their path to a prosperous future, always upholding their dignity. We also embraced values like Intersectionality, Enduring Impact, Social Innovation and Supportive Supervision as keys to lasting change. As we look forward and continue to *Stand With Her*, the commitments of our past guide and inspire the path ahead.

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

This strategic plan is shaped by the voices of our community at a time when EDI is under growing attack. Equity programs are being dismantled across public institutions and the principles of EDI are being misrepresented as harmful, despite their true intent. Since 1910, women's equity has been central to our mission, embedded in everything we do. We remain unwavering in our belief that Equity and Inclusion are non-negotiable and essential to building the safe, equitable community we envision.

Engagement

This strategic plan is inspired by many diverse voices. In keeping with our values, we engaged a broad and inclusive section of inspiring individuals to hear what matters. The voices included program participants, service users, staff at all levels, board members, community partners, donors and influential community members. Each voice brings a unique perspective and collectively provides direction for our future work. While no single voice rises above the rest in this document, we feel that it provides a barometer of the future. New ideas, approaches and goals emerged, while our foundational programs and legacy remain unaltered. **We are here, purposefully and without apology, to support the women and families in our community.**



State of our Community

AS OF MAY, 2025

As YW Calgary embarks on this next chapter of our strategic plan, we remain as committed as ever to building collaborative relationships with our municipal, provincial and federal partners. These relationships are integral to YW's work in many ways. Not only do our government partners provide direct and indirect funding to YW's programs and services, but they are also responsible for policy and funding decisions that create changes for our sector, our employees and our clients. As such, YW advocates for our direct organizational needs, as well as for changes to policies, legislation and funding frameworks that will create broader benefits and change.

Given the importance of all three orders of government to our work, the only constant in our government relations is the need to adapt to changing environments. At time of writing, a new federal government has been formed that will be responsible for federal issues impacting our clients such as immigration and newcomer supports, and joint jurisdictional issues with provinces such as housing and childcare systems. While Canada faces uncertainty from an international trade perspective and concerns from within the confederation, our engagement across the YWCA movement with federal partners remains as important as ever.

The province has jurisdiction over many of the social issues important to YW, and is our largest direct funder of the three orders of government. At this juncture, the government of Alberta is focused heavily on its relationship with the federal government while facing questions about Alberta's role in confederation. YW will continue to expand and build on its close relationships with key Alberta leaders and decision makers with the aim of ensuring that our priority social issues do not get left behind.

Within the first year of this strategic plan, Calgary will also see changes to its municipal government with a Fall 2025 election. City Council sets the tone for community engagement between the non-profit sector and the municipal government, and YW expects to continue to engage with our city government to achieve local results for the clients we serve on issues related to housing zoning decisions, community engagement, and transportation opportunities for our clients.

YW prioritizes our engagement with government leaders so that we can advocate for the needs of our clients and community. We will remain flexible and adapt when necessary to ensure that we can be a bold voice for change.

ANDREA COX
GOV. RELATIONS MANAGER



Strategic Focus Areas

At YW Calgary, strategy leads to action. Our strategy directions are made real programmatically, through our primary focus areas:

MENTAL HEALTH | HEALTH EQUITY

Participants build self-awareness and gain tools to enhance emotional resilience, allowing them to manage challenges with greater confidence.

They strengthen their mental and emotional well-being, while developing awareness of the resources and supports that promote healing and resilience. Participants also increase their understanding of the role community, connection and safety play in mental health and equitable access to resources.



DOMESTIC VIOLENCE | HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

Participants are empowered with the knowledge, self-awareness and confidence to recognize, build and sustain healthy relationships across all aspects of their lives.

By understanding the foundations of healthy connections, participants gain the confidence to build relationships that reflect their values and well-being. With tools to foster meaningful support, they strengthen their resilience and ability to thrive in their communities

ECONOMIC PROSPERITY

Participants experience economic freedom by actively shaping their futures —grounded in financial security and empowered through meaningful careers, entrepreneurial pathways and a supportive community network.

This journey is supported by an inclusive continuum of empowerment support that build self-sufficiency, long-term stability and the confidence to thrive—equipping participants to create and sustain their own path to prosperity.



Strategic Principles

These four principles guide how we work, not just what we do. They reflect our commitment to innovation, collaboration and accountability, ensuring that every action we take is grounded in trust, purpose and long-term impact. Our principles shape how we impact our community and how we grow our sustainability as an organization.



SOCIAL INNOVATION

Articulated in our practice framework and reinforced here, social innovation provides a mechanism for continued progress. We continuously look for more impactful ways to provide support to participants and other organizations in the sector.



PARTNERSHIP

We live and work in a complex system of services, people and organizations. Critical relationships expressed as partnerships are the leverage necessary for us to achieve the scale of impact we seek. We value every relationship and work to make it valuable for our participants and our partners as well as ourselves.



PREVENTION

While we will always support the most vulnerable in their moment of greatest need, we also strive to provide support earlier, building personal agency and helping women and their families avoid the traumatic consequences of deep vulnerability.



CREDIBILITY

We value the trust of the community, but we don't take it for granted. We work to build and maintain credibility at all levels and in all relationships for the greatest positive impact.

Strategic Objectives

As we look to the future, our strategic objectives are rooted in leadership, intentional growth and a collective commitment to equity. Through our focus on evolving, expanding and optimizing, we will strengthen our impact, uplift the sector and contribute to lasting change in society for the women and families we serve.

> EVOLVE

YW Calgary has a legacy of adapting to meet the evolving needs of women and their families. Today, that legacy calls us to not only remain relevant, but to continue evolving, guided by the growing complexity of the lives we support, the strategic importance of the non-profit sector and the collective hope for a more inclusive and equitable future. We choose to move forward with purpose: not only to respond to change, but to help lead it. As we evolve, we aim to strengthen the futures of those we serve, unlock new possibilities across our sector and engage our community more deeply in creating lasting change.

YW will continue to lead the evolution and growth needed to make this possible, creating impact that extends beyond our organization. **This includes promoting healthy relationships as a foundation for preventing domestic violence, embedding Equity, Diversity and Inclusion across programs and operations, and advancing Truth and Reconciliation through meaningful, measurable action. Efforts will focus on deepening collaboration with immigrant and newcomer communities, evolving HR practices to reflect progressive, people-centred values and engaging men and boys as active allies in gender equity.** Through strengthened real-time evaluation and continuous learning, we will remain adaptive, accountable and positioned to influence change at every level.

>> EXPAND

Our ambition is to lead sector-wide progress by expanding our reach, increasing brand recognition and deepening our influence across the systems that affect women and their families. YW approaches growth with intention by scaling what works, embracing innovation and addressing the structural barriers that limit access and opportunity. This purposeful expansion is rooted in a desire to amplify impact, close gaps and create lasting pathways to equity.

By strengthening core offerings, forging new partnerships and enhancing community awareness, we aim to increase access to early childhood development, quality childcare, economic opportunity and safe, supportive systems. In doing so, we also strengthen our advocacy efforts and help shape more equitable systems for the future.

>>> OPTIMIZE

To create lasting change, we must focus on strengthening the systems and capacities that support our impact. YW Calgary is committed to leading innovation and resilience within our organization and across the sector.

Optimization goes beyond operational efficiency. It is a strategic approach that ensures we remain adaptable in a changing environment, build trust with partners and funders and model what sustainable, forward-thinking non-profits can achieve. **By advancing how we use data, technology and evidence, and by investing in new revenue streams and research partnerships,** we aim to strengthen our foundation and elevate our collective ability to drive social progress.



Thank you to our contributors.

This document was inspired by the many voices both internal and external to YW Calgary who care deeply about the mission and support our work every day.

We thank the program participants who took time to share their hopes, encouragements and concerns with us. We thank our employees who provided invaluable feedback during our consultation sessions and many who took individual opportunities, because it matters. We thank our partners and the many community members who took the time to talk to us, providing authentic, thoughtful and insightful guidance. We thank our Board of Directors and Alumni who invested their time as well as their hearts and minds to shape this plan.

Finally, this document would not have taken shape without the commitment of a small but dedicated internal team who ensured that this strategic plan captured the essence of the views expressed throughout the consultation process:

Kailey Armstrong - Director, Economic Prosperity

Talia Bell - Chief Programs and People Officer

Andrea Stordy - Creative Director

Randy Thornhill - Director, Organizational Impact

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YW CALGARY - 2025

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