

e4c envoy

WINTER 2025



1,375

**persons identified
and made
progress on
personal goals.**

**“Take any step, even if it’s a baby step,
because it could be the greatest step you
have ever taken”**

Jennifer* - Wellness Network Participant





Wellness is a holistic concept encompassing more than the absence of illness. Wellness is about actively pursuing a balanced and fulfilling life that promotes optimal health and well-being across all dimensions, including:

Physical Health:

Exercise, nutrition, sleep and overall physical health

Mental Health:

Emotional well-being, stress management, and mental health

Social Health:

Relationships, social connections, and community involvement - being a part of a community is integral to our well-being;

Emotional Health:

Self-awareness, self-acceptance, and emotional regulation;

Spiritual Health:

Finding meaning and purpose in life.

Intellectual Health: Learning, growth, and educational stimulation;

Occupational Health:

Finding fulfillment and satisfaction in your daily tasks and;

Financial Health:

Financial security and well-being, including financial empowerment.

Wellness emphasizes the interconnected nature of these dimensions. Changes in one area can impact others.

"I've been sleeping rough, and it's tough. You can't stay in one place for very long, people always move you along. When I came to WEAC, I can finally sleep through the night. I feel more whole, more ready to take on what's next. I feel like I can think clearly now - I don't have the constant brain fog from being so tired. I feel like I can turn things around for myself."



This small step - allowing the body to improve its physical health through sleep, impacts mental, social, and emotional wellness, allowing her to explore what wellness and the future look like for her.

In essence, wellness is about living a life that's not just healthy - but also fulfilling, meaningful, and enjoyable. It's about taking care of your mind, body and spirit to achieve your full potential.



759

people connected to e4c programming reported forming new friendships or relationships with community groups.

– 2024 Q3 Strategic Progress Report



Growing Community

The e4c Community Garden was a place of vibrancy in 2024, welcoming over 20 regular Community Gardeners to the space, as well as participation from community groups and partners in a variety of gardening and horticulture-based activities.

e4c's Community Garden Coordinator introduced a therapeutic horticulture course consisting of activities like planting, deadheading, flower mandala making, and cultural teachings from Cree, Metis, and Scottish perspectives. Activities were framed around how they relate to the seven dimensions of wellness. Plants were brought in to provide sensory grounding through tactile, olfactory, and visual experiences. Meetings often included time for sharing circles in which participants were able to share their own stories and their personal relationships with plants.

“

This group has made my summer so fun, every Friday night, there is something positive and fun to do. I have not only learned lots of chords and songs on the ukulele, but I have begun singing after 10 years break from singing and even listening to music.”

- Jolene*, Community Gardener

Medicines Promote Healing & Community

Chantelle Gray, a Two-Spirit Indigenous person with extensive experience in working with community and medicine, hosted a comfrey salve making workshop to gardeners, community members, and program participants in August 2024. Throughout the workshop, attendees shared their life stories, traditional Indigenous knowledge, smudged, and created connections with others in attendance. One participant with Ukrainian heritage expressed gratitude for Chantelle's ancestors in helping her ancestors survive when they arrived in Canada. Another participant expressed their appreciation for how welcoming and generous Chantelle and Indigenous people as a group are to newcomers. Many participants also attended this event with family members. As part of the event, attendees learned and practiced: Protocol when meeting a new plant, making offerings to plants for their gifts, asking plants for permission to harvest them, preserving plants in oil for salve making, and caring for preserved plants. Comfrey, used in the salve, is used to treat inflammation, bruising, and other injuries.





955,636 Meals Served By the School Nutrition Program during the 2023-2024 School Year

The program operates in 42 Edmonton area schools.

Wellness through Food

Nourishing Mind, Body and Spirit

“When I come to school, I know that I can get food and things to eat that help me make friends and learn the best!”

In fall of 2024, e4c’s School Nutrition Program transitioned seven remaining schools to our Morning Meal Program. This shift was guided by ongoing feedback from our school partners, and evidence research that demonstrates that breakfast is the most important meal of the day.

We know that healthy bodies equal healthy minds, and providing nutrition at school sets students up for success during their school day.

In fact, teachers surveyed reported that for 32% of their students, the meal they receive at school is the only food they consume during the school day.

According to the National Institute of Health, there is a direct link between nutrition and wellness. Good nutrition provides children with the energy and nutrients they need to:

- Grow and develop properly;
- Maintain a healthy weight and;
- Support their immune system.

Nourishing food gives children’s bodies the energy they need throughout the day to do the things that matter most: to learn, play, grow, and connect with their peers and community, empowering them to create friendships and explore the world around them. A healthy diet supports gut health, which plays a role in brain function and emotional regulation, setting them up for success in school.

One student in sixth grade shared that they prefer the morning meal because “you get to get a meal before you go and learn, and that makes it easy.”



Hear from students at about what they enjoy most about the morning meal at school!

Sharing a meal is a practice that transcends cultures, religion, and nationalities. It’s a practice that empowers us to develop connections, learn about the foods we consume, and fosters a sense of belonging. Some students reported in the survey that sitting down and sharing a meal with their friends was their favourite part of the program.

Whether through a healthy morning meal, an apple from a school fruit bowl, or a yogurt to supplement food from home, the impacts of the nutrition program continue to benefit over 6,200 students each school day.

Introducing Moose

“ I have a dog at home, at my family’s farm. Seeing Moose here makes me feel like I’m part of a family. It makes me feel like I’m where I belong, even if it’s not where I envisioned myself to be.”

- Josh*, Elizabeth House Lodge



Meet Moose, e4c’s trained Facility Dog from Aspen Service dogs. In 2021, e4c met with the Morris Family Foundation and began a conversation around an item on our e4c wish list - a trained emotional support facility animal that could be engaged and utilized in our practice to benefit the people we serve. The suggestion was met wholeheartedly; and so began e4c’s creation of the Paws of Hope Program.

“ We chose the project not only because we wanted to help e4c, but we wanted to contribute so you could do something ‘out of the box.’ We wanted to make a difference. We were delighted to finally meet up with Moose in the fall; he is such a handsome and affable fellow! He is very professional and enjoying his work. It is a pleasure to be associated with him and all of you at e4c.

The Paws of Hope program helps to support the people that we serve as they work through challenging situations with the aid of Moose. Moose is trained to provide emotional support when sensing anxiety, redirecting to more positive activities (like petting the dog), and they can provide vitally important reality affirmations for those experiencing flashbacks or nightmares by providing persistent nudges or a calming disposition.

Moose joined e4c in June 2024, and has since become a valued member of the WEAC team. Moose’s handlers underwent extensive training and onboarding with the Aspen Service Dogs team to equip them with the skills, cues, and support required to set Moose up for success in his workday.

Over time, Moose will be incorporated into daily programming at each site, as both a proactive and responsive approach to wellness. Moose is a member of the specially trained team that aims to provide goal-directed interventions which promote improvement in physical, social, emotional or behavioural aspects of an individual’s well-being. Additionally, Moose has been deployed as a support to Long Term Supported Housing sites to support residents through their grief after the loss of a resident.



Did You Know?

Moose engages with over 15 people each day

Interactions are anywhere from a few moments, up to 30 minutes. Moose demonstrates support by licking, cuddling, resting his chin on their lap or laying at their feet. Moose engages in more extensive interactions with participants requiring more complex trauma support.



Moose's impact is far reaching. Short-term accommodation in spaces like WEAC can be stressful, and even more so if an individual has experienced significant trauma that has resulted in intense anxiety and panic.

Tracey, a member of the WEAC social work team and one of Moose's daily handlers, shares a story of the profound impact Moose has made in a short period.

"Lauren* came to the shelter after being physically assaulted, threatened, and robbed of valuable possessions in her encampment. Moose lay in his oversized dog bed with Lauren, cuddled with her, and licked her face. Lauren shared that she "feels safe with Chocolate Mousse" (a term of endearment with the women when referring to Moose), and shared her story through tears of relief.

Both Moose and Lauren fell asleep for approximately two hours, though Moose would wake up periodically and check with me if it was time to complete his mission, continuing to nap after being provided with reassurance. Once Lauren was rested, she remained with Moose and shared a meal with Moose at her feet. Throughout her two-month long stay at WEAC, each time Lauren was reunited with Moose, she visited for a few minutes and spoke highly about how grateful she was for his comfort in her time of need. It's evident the impact that Moose is having on the work that we do."

"About 1,000!"



pets is what Moose estimates he receives during his workday, but shares that truthfully, he doesn't know how to count.

The Joy of The Season

Thanks to the generosity of our community and donors, over 150 personalized Christmas gifts were distributed to the women at WEAC and our Long Term Supported Housing sites over the Christmas holiday. Each gift is carefully selected after a curated wishlist is shared with the team.

"I just love my purple robe! It's something that I can put on and snuggle with on cold nights."

- Rhonda, The Lodge



Creating Opportunity

David's Story

When we first met David, a recent graduate of Intensive Case Management's Housing First program, we were greeted with a big smile, and an apology after arriving a few minutes late due to traffic after work. A sheet metal fabricator, David is working towards his journeyman certification.

David's journey with e4c began after becoming evicted from a housing program for veterans last winter, but he says that it ended up being for the best.

"You should take a look at my place now," he grins. "It's pretty big – two bedrooms and a balcony! My last place was just over 250 square feet, I could touch the walls if I put my work bag down over there. And it was costing me over \$650 a month! I really lucked out."

David first met his follow-up support worker, Rayden, at an LRT station where he was staying after being evicted, sharing that "It was cold [last] winter. When I got evicted, I had just a little bike pup tent, and that was the week back in January where we got a foot of snow. It wasn't easy."

David is no stranger to the snow, after working stints in Jasper, Alberta during the pandemic at a ski resort, as well as in hospitality before heading to Canmore to try his luck. "The cost of living is just so expensive in mountain towns," shared David, a snowboarder himself. "I enjoyed the work but without subsidized housing for workers, it's really hard to make ends meet."

After leaving Canmore, David returned to Edmonton to be closer to his two children, and was connected to the Veteran's Food Bank, the Legion, and ultimately a housing program for homeless veterans.

"I served in the British Armed Forces," David shares, "I don't want to talk much about that time in my life though, because I'd like to look forward and not back. However, I can tell you that being deployed at 17 changes you. It's not something that's easy; it's something that shapes you and it shaped me."


David struggled to access the pension and benefits that he was eligible for. "The Veterans Food Bank connected me to a Legion in Calgary, who ultimately helped me get access to my pension." The challenges in navigating a dual-Commonwealth system created barriers to accessing additional community benefits like Alberta Works.

"I was working retail for awhile while I was housed with the homeless veterans program, but they cut my hours down to three hours a week, which just isn't sustainable. This led to delays in EI paperwork – which ultimately led to delays in paying my rent. That [delay] got me evicted, and if you've never been homeless in the winter, let me tell you, it's not a place where you want to be."



495

persons increased their housing security in Q3 of 2024



Ultimately, David slept rough in a tent for a number of weeks during Edmonton's cold snap last winter, and shared that it was one of the most challenging times. After connecting to Housing First, David shares that it was a turning point in his journey.

"My worker, Rayden, he hooked me up with benefits. Once you've got those, you can really start to tackle the others. I could concentrate on becoming food secure, and moving in to keep moving forward."

Programs like the Food Bank offered him a bundle deal on his fall & lift tickets, offering them for just \$200 to help him continue to pursue avenues of employment.

"I'd love to eventually work for Edmonton Police Service – I feel like I've had a lot of experience in my life," shares David. "I was a Commissionaire for awhile, I've worked in hospitality, and even worked with the Edmonton Ski Club as an Emergency Medical Responder (EMR)." For now, however, David is looking forward to keeping up with the work in his current job – doing HVAC venting sheet metal work in a condo development. "As long as the condos keep selling, they'll keep building," he laughs. "I guess it's not a bad position to be in!"

Since becoming housed, David's resilience has been a beacon for his worker, Rayden, who is evidently impressed by his progress.

"David has really put in the work. I left [on vacation] for a week, and David had shared that he lost his job, but was looking for another," he shares. "By the time I got back, he had already found another job."

David used some of his income to purchase a Triumph motorbike this past summer, journeying to Nordegg to spend time in the mountains, and celebrate his successes. "After spending so much time there working, it was great to be able to get out there and hike, drive the Icefield Parkway to Jasper, and then head home." He visited Jasper just weeks before the wildfire swept through the town.

"For me, that journey was celebratory. As someone who loves to snowboard, and mountain bike, being in the mountains marked a turning point in how far I've come."

For now, that journey is continuing, and David is faced with a new conundrum: purchasing a car to have transportation during the winter months, or using those savings towards courses at NAIT to finish his journeyman certification. "I think heading back to school during the winter months makes sense," he shares. "That way, I can take the bus to class, and make some money in the summer months when I have my motorcycle to access job sites. After that's done, I'll focus on saving for a car."

Together, We can change lives and grow communities.

Whether you're passionate about promoting wellness through connections in the community garden, feeding kids in schools across Edmonton through our School Nutrition Program, or supporting individuals like David to thrive in the community, we can't do our work without you.

You've read about the increasing needs facing our community, and the incredible work happening between our programs and partners. Together, we can continue to empower women experiencing homelessness to take the next step on their journey home. We can continue to empower students across 42 Edmonton area schools by providing a healthy meal to set them up for success during their school day. And we can continue to foster community connections and relationships that improve our health and well-being.

There is no doubt that it takes a community –thank you for continuing to change lives and grow communities here in Edmonton.

You can help:

- \$25** purchases a pair of pajamas for a woman at WEAC
- \$50** purchases a pair of winter boots for a person in our programs.
- \$100** feeds 26 students for one school day.

Become a community connector.

Your gifts of time are valuable. If you have an interest that you'd like to share with the people we serve, we'd love to hear from you! Please send us an email to connect@e4calberta.org.



For over 50 years, e4c has been helping Edmontonians get what they need to tackle life's challenges. e4c believes that people deserve to be listened to and respected, no matter their circumstances or challenges. We see people and welcome them without judgement or bias.

e4c's vision is to limit, alleviate, and eliminate poverty.

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