



50 YEARS OF COMMUNITY PSYCHOLOGY AT WILFRID LAURIER UNIVERSITY

2026



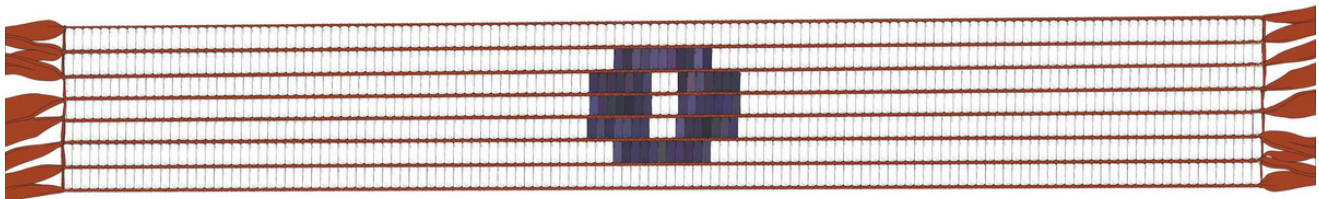
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LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We would like to open up this document with an acknowledgement of the land many of us live, learn, and work on within Wilfrid Laurier University. Laurier is situated on the traditional territory of the Anishinaabe, Haudenosaunee, and Attawandaran (also known as Neutral) peoples. For thousands of years, Indigenous people across different communities, areas, languages, and nations cared for the water, life, and land we are currently situated on. As part of the Haldimand Treaty of 1784 created by the settler Crown, the land within ten kilometres on each side of the Grand River was promised to the Six Nations. Today, less than 5% of the promised 950,000 acres of the Haldimand Tract currently belongs to the Six Nations, including the area where Wilfrid Laurier University resides. To meaningfully acknowledge this land, its caretakers, and its future is to understand its history and work towards meaningful change.

For hundreds of years, the Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee people have made the commitment to work towards harmony, reciprocity, and care of each other through the Dish With One Spoon wampum belt covenant (**pictured below**). The treaty acknowledges that all of us living together on this land are eating from the same dish with finite resources. While the land does its best to nourish us in the ways we need, it is also our collective responsibility to share the spoon and make sure the dish is replenished enough to care for each of us. Our dish, the Great Lakes Basin, has endured hundreds of years of overuse and extraction through colonialism, capitalism, imperialism, and greed. However, this does not mean the dish can't be replenished again: it is more important than ever to work together to ensure the dish is once again full enough to care for all of us, especially those of us in particular need.



As community psychologists, we must all acknowledge the role we collectively play to care for each other and the land on which we live and gather. We encourage our fellow colleagues and friends to meaningfully engage with their land's history and current situation, and to commit (in small or large ways) to restoring sustainable ways of life that care for all, living or beyond.

This document chronicles the history of the Community Psychology (CP) program at Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo, Ontario, Canada. While the M.A. program began in 1976 as what was then called “Social-Community Psychology,” CP began informally with the hiring of Dr. Ed Bennett in the Psychology Department at Waterloo Lutheran University in 1971. Waterloo Lutheran became government-funded in 1973 and changed its name to Wilfrid Laurier University, which was convenient because the abbreviation of the university remained the same – WLU.

THE HISTORY OF CP AT LAURIER

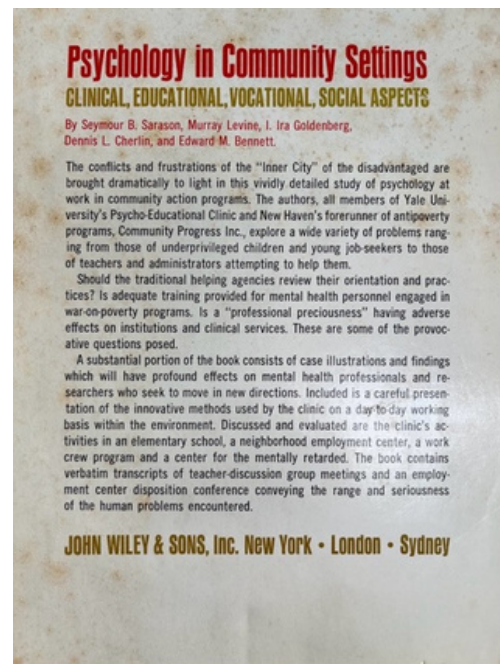
The first part of this section recounts the early history of the program and its founder – Ed Bennett. This part is based on an interview with Ed conducted on September 30, 2024 by two of Ed’s retired CP colleagues – Geoff Nelson and Mark Pancer.

Before the Beginning – The Seeds of Community Psychology Program at Laurier

Ed Bennett was the founder of CP at Laurier. Ed had done his graduate work in the U.S., focusing on disabilities and organization and community development. The most important part of his training was at the Psychoeducational Clinic at Yale University, led by one of the founders of CP – Seymour Sarason. Ed arrived at this clinic in 1964 and worked in three settings: the regional centre for people with developmental disabilities, an inner-city school with 90% Black students, and Community Progress Inc., which focused on alternative education and employment opportunities.

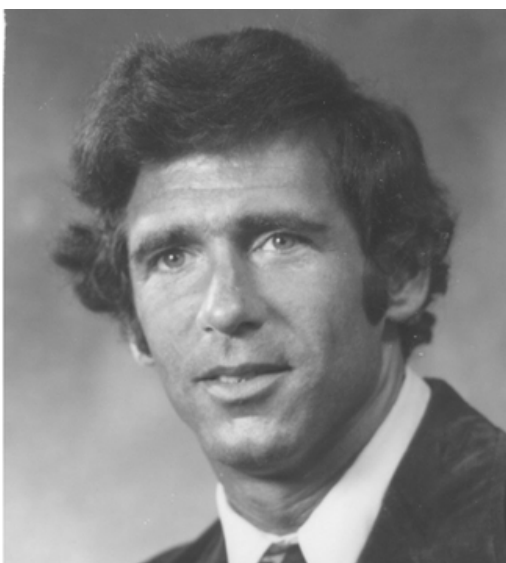
Once a week, Ed met with Seymour to discuss a book Seymour assigned, and he travelled regularly by automobile with Seymour to Boston for a placement, where he learned about CP and many other issues. “I had Seymour locked in the car for two and half to three hours going there and coming back... Seymour was ahead of the game.” Other faculty and staff at the Clinic included Murray Levine, Ira Goldenberg (who later taught summer courses at Laurier), Dennis Cherlin, Fran Kaplan, and later Ed Trickett and Dick Reppucci. The Clinic staff and faculty met a half day every week in the house to discuss the work they were doing in the community.

This Clinic was a hothouse for many of the ideas that came to define CP, and Seymour was the leader of this group. Seymour published many books related to CP and education and was the intellectual lightning rod in a stellar group. Many of his colleagues and students went on to become award-winning leaders in the field of CP. The Society for Community Research and Action (SCRA) has an award given bi-annually in honour of Seymour. In 1966, Sarason, Levine, Goldenberg, Cherlin, and our own Ed Bennett published one of the first books in CP, *Psychology in Community Settings*. Ed is the only surviving author of this book. That’s the front and back cover to the book below.



One of the first books published in CP, *Psychology in Community Settings* (images of front and back cover)

In 1971, Ed was phoned by Don Ashley, a Psychology faculty member at Waterloo Lutheran University, asking him to come for an interview for a faculty position. Ed came for two interviews, and was interviewed by faculty and students. Vern Schaefer was the Chair of Psychology, and Neale Taylor, who eventually became the President of WLU, was the Dean. Ed successfully negotiated teaching a graduate course in CP that would involve taking the students to southeast Ohio to continue his dissertation work on health planning, and teaching courses in Exceptional Children, Youth, and Adults, Group Processes, and Organizational Behaviour. By 1973, Ed was tenured and promoted to Associate Professor, and Waterloo Lutheran became Wilfrid Laurier University.



Ed (**pictured left**) introduced an education practicum course for teachers, and a course in Exceptional Children, Youth, and Adults, that he taught during the evening and summers. Dr. Jim Dudeck, Chief Psychologist, of the Waterloo County Board of Education, took these courses along with the entire staff of Behavioural Consultants from the board and many teachers. The Exceptional Children, Youth, and Adults course was especially important in preparing teachers and board psychologists for new provincial legislation, Bill 82, about how to best serve children and youth with special needs.

Ed was able to select the seven graduate students, and two undergraduates, for the work in Appalachia. Furthermore, Ed was allowed to teach the Organizational Behaviour course from 7-10am on Thursday morning, so he and his students could drive in Ed's two cars to Ohio at 10am, returning Sunday evening. Ed rented a house for the group of students. He used an adult education approach, and where students learned CP practice and action research. Each student identified a short-term project. "The students were leaders, mentors, and my colleagues is what it evolved to become. Because there were no WLU faculty with that kind of orientation and experience, they really were my colleagues." Some of Ed's original students with whom he has kept in touch are shown below. On the left is Gail Czukar, Judy Gedye, and David Hallman, and Paul Davock is with Ed on the right.



Ed and some of his original students, in order of appearance: Gail Czukar, Judy Gedye, David Hallman, Paul Davock, and Ed Bennett

Ed organized field placements in the Waterloo County Board of Education with students in his CP course, Exceptional Children, Youth, and Adults, and a course taught by his colleague Fred Binding. At the same time, Ed's students worked with K-W Habilitation (Hab) Services to start a Developmental Centre. Hab Services had a proposal for a daycare program that was turned down by government. Ed and his students worked with Hab Services to reframe their proposal away from a babysitting model to one involving human development, emphasizing the capacities of the people they were serving. This proposal was funded and Ed got matching funds from WLU. Ed spoke with the Laurier President Frank Peters to obtain funds from WLU, matched by the Ontario Government on a 3-1 basis for four part-time community-based development positions, filled by WLU graduate students, to complement the work of the Development Centre. Paul Davock was selected as the first Director of the new program and did his M.A. thesis on the creation of this program. Ed and his students also worked with Hab Services to develop the David Fisher residence in Erbsville also for people with developmental disabilities.

Ed worked with the Sunbeam facility, and the Laurier students developed a better diet for the residents and got the medical doctor to stop overmedicating the children. An undergraduate student started an Integrated Recreation program for people with limited vision and who were deaf. Ed also started the Central Ontario Developmental Riding program for people with physical disabilities (shown below) that was expanded to people with other disabilities. This program, that started at Ed's farm, just celebrated its 50th anniversary, and it has Community Service-Learning (CSL) students on placement. Everyone in the university community, including the Psychology Department Chair and the Dean, witnessed how Ed and his students were successful in creating new programs and making significant changes in other community programs in a short period of time.



Photograph of Ed with participants of the Central Ontario Developmental Riding program

All of the work with students mentioned above focused on people with disabilities. But Ed also quickly became active in Waterloo Region and the province in Ontario in mental health. He was a board member and President of the Waterloo Branch of the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) from 1972 to 1975, where he emphasized public education and advocacy. He also served as President of the board for CMHA Ontario Division.

All of this foundational work in CP was done prior to the formal emergence of the "Social-Community Psychology" program in 1976.

The Early Years: 1976–2000

According to Ed, “things were going well until [the administration] wanted to establish a Master’s program in CP. It became a disaster because the people that they wanted as faculty included people that didn’t have the CP orientation. They were coming from a very different worldview. They didn’t have a CP value base or orientation, and they were going to be the ones who would be teaching in this program. The site visitors came and they couldn’t see the difference between what was happening in CP and Experimental Psychology.” Ed had a conversation with the Vice-President Academic, John Weir, and told him that the program needed faculty with a CP orientation. Ed also indicated that he did not want to be a part of the program with existing faculty. “Some months later John Weir called me into his office and said ‘you have to come back, what’s it going to take?’ and I said two faculty members.”

In 1977, the Department hired a Community Psychologist, Brian Sarata, who was a student of Seymour Sarason at Yale. While Brian was a good fit for the program, he left Laurier and returned to the U.S. after a year and a half. After Brian’s departure and in response to Ed’s request, two CP faculty members were hired on limited-term contracts in 1979 – Geoff Nelson and Richard Mason. Like Brian Sarata, Richard also left Laurier after one year and returned to the U.S.

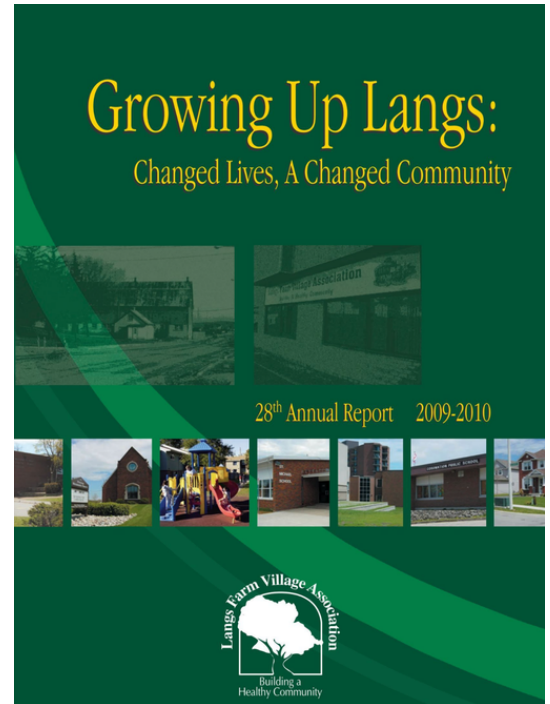
Ed indicated that there were also problems with the Psychology Department Chair, who was unsupportive of the program. There was conflict between the Social-Community program and the General-Experimental program, which began in 1978. This conflict occurred during a time in which the university was striving to make a shift from primarily a teaching university to one that emphasized research. Graduate programs were formed across the university, with Psychology having two of the first programs, and faculty were hired who could bring a research focus to the university. At the undergraduate level, a full-year course in CP was introduced around this time. Later, two more advanced courses were developed – Research in CP and a CP Seminar.

By 1979, a core group of CP faculty was established that included, Ed, Geoff Nelson, Fred Binding, and Sid Hellyer. Fred was a social psychologist who studied with Roger Barker of Kansas, who played a key role in developing environmental and ecological psychology. Sid Hellyer was an experimental psychologist who became interested in CP and spent a year working with Community Psychologist Murray Levine at SUNY-Buffalo learning about CP and program evaluation. Sid was the original director of the CP program. In the 1980s, Josie Naidoo became a member of the CP program. Josie was a social psychologist who specialized in multicultural issues.

Ed negotiated a partnership between the public school board and Laurier for an exchange program. Beginning in 1979, Geoff and Richard Mason worked with two schools in Cambridge 1.5 days per week, and in turn Jim Dudeck of the school board taught 2 courses that these Laurier faculty would normally teach. While Richard moved to another position in the U.S. in 1980, Geoff and Jim continued this exchange through 1985. Geoff and Richard worked at William G. Davis, a grade 7-8 school, and Coronation Public School, a K-6 school, covering typical duties of a Behavioural Consultant. This was an easy transition for Geoff who worked as a School Psychologist in Winnipeg for two years prior to coming to Laurier.

The exchange program provided opportunities for CP training, research, and community work. The Langs Farm area, where the two schools were located, had experiences with youth vandalism. A neighbourhood association was formed, and grant money was obtained for two Laurier students to work in the community. In time, the Langs program grew, and they were ultimately successful in obtaining funding to become a Community Health Centre (see the book *Growing Up Langs: Changed Lives, A Changed Community* written by Geoff Nelson and Rachel Fayter and printed in 2012).

Cover of the book *Growing Up Langs: Changed Lives, A Changed Community*



Geoff also developed a class-wide social skills primary prevention program that was used in more than one school. Several thesis and research projects came out of this exchange program. In addition to Jim Dudeck, Steve Chris, another Psychologist with the school board, became an active contributor to the CP program, teaching the M.A. CP Practicum courses for several years and participating in thesis supervision.

In the 1980s, the Psychology Department hired faculty members who were scholar-activists and put CP on the map with their various action research projects. Mark Pancer, a Social and Community Psychologist, was hired in 1982 and brought expertise in primary prevention in children's mental health and program evaluation. Mark was an important member of the CP program, and participated as well in the Social Psychology program. Bob Gebotys was hired in 1984 to teach statistics, and Bob taught many CP students over his years at Laurier. Richard Walsh-Bowers was hired in 1986. Richard had a background in clinical psychology, community mental health, and the history of psychology, coordinated the CP program for several terms, and supervised many CP students for their thesis work.

A key turning point in the history of the CP program was the positive review of the Social-Community program by the Ontario Council on Graduate Studies. In 1981, the Social-Community Psychology program was appraised by two external reviewers – Julian Rappaport, a key figure in CP, and David Bakan, an accomplished Psychologist. Rappaport, who had reviewed over 100 Clinical and Community psychology programs in the U.S. for the National Institute of Mental Health ranked the WLU CP program in the top 10% of programs he had reviewed. This review enhanced the credibility of the program in the eyes of the Psychology faculty and the university administration. Following this review, Ed advocated for Geoff Nelson to be moved to a tenure-stream contract, which the university administration approved.

In the early 1980s, there was an aborted attempt to establish a joint Ph.D. program between CP and the Faculty of Social Work. Ed Bennett persuaded the Faculty of Social Work to recruit Barry Trute, an accomplished community mental health researcher from the University of Manitoba's School of Social Work. Barry took a position at Laurier, but shortly after his arrival it became clear that the Faculty of Social Work did not want a joint program with CP; they wanted their own program. Barry left Laurier and returned to Manitoba within one year. Finally, Isaac Prilleltensky joined the CP faculty from 1991 to 2000. Isaac quickly became a CP superstar, who was active in the program and the community and a highly productive scholar.



A photograph of Isaac Prilleltensky and his wife, Dr. Ora Prilleltensky. Isaac and Ora passed away within four days of each other in May 2026. They are survived by their son, Matan Prilleltensky.

Another key partnership for the Laurier CP program was with the Centre for Research and Education in Human Services (subsequently renamed the Centre for Community-based Research), located in Kitchener-Waterloo. Geoff began working with Dr. John Lord, the founder and Director of the Centre, in the late 1980s on projects related to mental health and disabilities. The Centre became an important place for practicum training and employment for students and graduate. In the 1990s, with John's retirement, Dr. Joanna Ochocka became the Director of the Centre. In addition to research projects with Geoff, Joanna was an instructor for the M.A. practicum during this time period. Students continued to do placements with the Centre, and some graduates of the program were hired to work there.

The Later Years: 2001–2026

In 2003, the Psychology Department hired two more Community Psychologists – Terry Mitchell and Colleen Loomis. That same year, Laurier launched a Ph.D. program in Psychology with concentration in several key areas of Psychology, including CP. In 2006, another CP faculty member, Scot Evans, joined Laurier. The development of the Ph.D. program in CP was another turning point in the life of the program, as the Laurier program was the only one of its kind in English-speaking Canada.

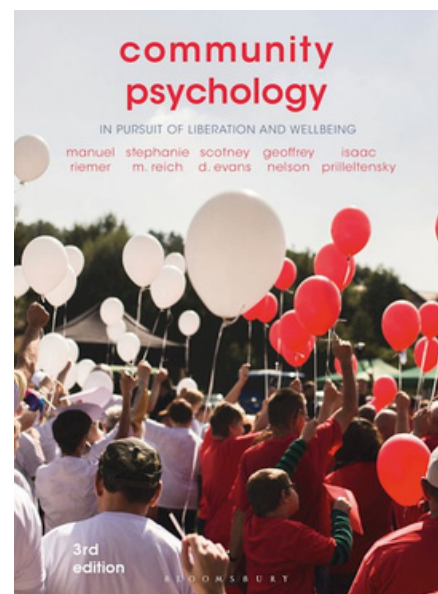
Between 2007 and 2008, Scot and Mark, with the support of Natalie Kivell, a MA graduate student at that time, conducted a community consultation that identified a need for a research centre at Laurier that could serve as an easy entry point for community groups and organizations to engage with the university and support them with community-engaged research. In response to this identified need, they founded the Centre for Community Research, Learning and Action (CCRLA), which was officially launched in 2009 ([see page 28](#)). With Scot's departure to the University of Miami to support Isaac in developing new programs there, Terry became the first official director of CCRLA.

In 2008, new faculty members, Robb Travers and Manuel Riemer joined the faculty and brought two new areas of focus to the CP program: health equity for sexual and gender minorities and climate change and sustainability. In 2009, the program conducted an extensive evaluation of its graduate programs that led to major curriculum revisions in the Ph.D. program the following year exploring the ways that students could further integrate their research and practice into their communities and prepare them for careers in critical social sciences beyond CP by strengthening the breadth of their theoretical and methodological training. Between 2012 and 2016 several education programs were developed under the leadership of CCRLA, including a program evaluation certificate program for professionals and students, the Laurier Summer Institute for Research Methods (LSIRM), and a two-term community-based research internship program for upper year undergraduate students. After a couple of iterations, the latter was transitioned into an official course and became the capstone course for a new undergraduate Minor and Specialization in community psychology.

In 2015, Ciann Wilson joined the program as the only Black faculty member in the Psychology Department, bringing with her an important perspective grounded in critical race theory and became an award-winning mentor to many racialized students and a Canada Research Chair in Community-Based Research, Ethics and Well-being. Ciann's research and mentorship helped to attract more racialized students to the CP program, including Ann Marie Beals, who later joined the program as faculty.

A year later, Maritt Kirst and Simon Coulombe became faculty in the program. Maritt strengthened the area of community mental health, housing and homelessness. Hired just before the retirement of Geoff Nelson, Maritt's research program was uniquely positioned to build where Geoff had left off growing housing and homeless research into the next generation. Maritt continued the important research on the Housing First program, which has been an important research area within our program.

Simon brought perspectives from positive psychology and contributed his knowledge on wellbeing in the workplace before he left for a position at the Université du Québec à Montréal in 2021. In 2019, Robb Travers transitioned full time to the Health Sciences Department where he served as chair for several years. A couple of years prior, Terry Mitchell and Colleen Loomis transitioned from CP into the Balsillie School of International Affairs. The third edition of the CP textbook *Community Psychology: In Pursuit of Liberation and Well-being* was published in 2020, with Manuel taking over the lead authorship from Geoff. The third edition cover can be seen **pictured right.**



In a time of turnover, growth, re-imagining, and our ongoing commitment to advancing a CP rooted in ethical, rigorous, and emancipatory praxis, our program hired Natalie Kivell, Anne Marie Beals, and Alexis Buettgen. In 2020, Natalie Kivell joined the CP faculty after completing her Ph.D. in Community Well-Being at the University of Miami with Scot Evans. At Laurier, Natalie built the Critical and Transformative Praxis Research Collective, a research space to explore community and social movement theorizing, and participatory practices for knowledge synthesis and mobilization within social movements. She is also the host of the first Global Community Psychology Podcast Indaba. Ann Marie Beals joined the faculty in 2022 while completing their PhD in the program. As an Afro-Indigenous scholar, Ann Marie brings a critical Indigenous perspective to the program. Recently, Ann Marie founded the Wele'g Dwennimmen Roots of Survivance Institute to promote Indigenous, Black, and Afro-Indigenous ways of being, knowing, and survivance, emphasizing holistic approaches to health and wellbeing. The most recent faculty addition to the program is Alexis Buettgen, who joined the program first as a Limited Term Appointment in 2024, before becoming a tenure track faculty member this year (2026). Alexis, brings a critical disability lens to the program, including the intersection of disability and climate change. She is serving as the Associate Director of VERiS. Over the years, the program was also supported by several scholars serving in as Limited Term Appointments, including Felix Munger and Livia Dittmer, both of who are graduates of our Ph.D. program.

As an interdisciplinary area our Community Psychology program has built lasting partnerships across Laurier with cross-appointed faculty who advise CP graduate MA and PhD students and who are active and appreciated members of our learning community. These cross appointed faculty members include: 1) From health sciences Todd Coleman, Melody Morton Ninomya, and Ketan Shankardass, and 2) from our Brantford Campus Sandra Danilovic from the Game Design and Development program.

This rich 50-year history has resulted in two vibrant graduate programs with a strong international reputation as high-quality, critical programs for developing the next generation of Community Psychology scholars and practitioners.

Our MA and PhD CP students make our program what it is. We strive for relational experiences and collaborative community building in our engaged research and courses, but we have always understood the importance of community and care. Faculty and students sit on a number of committees including the Difficult Conversations Committee which has taken different shapes including reading, writing, and co-learning spaces to build our capacities for difficult conversations in our research and praxis; The social committee that brings folks together for making, crafting, trivia, and potlucks with the goal of nurturing our community through joy and relationality; The policy and evaluations committees which have formed as needed to conduct curriculum and program evaluations and draft policies for our program and update our program guide.

As our program developed over the past 50 years we continue to grow and change to respond to the world around us and to the needs of our students and communities.

The M.A. and Ph.D. Community Psychology Programs

The M.A. CP Program

The Master of Arts in Community Psychology program at Wilfrid Laurier University is a two-year graduate degree that utilizes an ecological framework to tackle complex social problems such as inequality, racism, colonialism, environmental destruction, oppression, marginalization, and community wellbeing. The curriculum blends advanced theoretical research with practical field application, requiring students to complete six half-credit courses, a community-engaged research thesis, and a 200-hour supervised practicum in a community, corporate, or government setting. Students receive core training in statistical analysis, community research methodology, and program evaluation.

The primary goal of the program is to train skilled scientist-practitioners who can effectively collaborate with community partners to design, implement, and evaluate social service interventions and social change initiatives. Through this training, students learn to critically analyze how large-scale structural and systemic shifts impact the delivery of local services through systems thinking. By partnering directly with community organizations, students generate systemic solutions designed to enhance long-term community well-being through a critical social justice perspective. Ultimately, this comprehensive training prepares graduates for immediate professional employment in community development or for successful advancement into doctoral-level studies.

The Ph.D. CP Program

The Ph.D. Community Psychology program is an advanced doctoral degree rooted in a research apprenticeship model. Unlike the master's program, this doctoral path shifts focus toward developing independent scholars capable of leading macro-level social interventions, conducting complex policy and applied research, and teaching within higher education. Students work closely with faculty advisors to conduct original, dissertation-driven research, while completing specialized coursework in qualitative research methods, multi-level modelling, program evaluation, and the ethical application of social science theories to community issues. A hallmark of the doctoral curriculum is the comprehensive research experience, which requires students to design and execute an independent research project or review paper under the guidance of a faculty member outside of their primary advisory team.

The primary goal of the Ph.D. program is to foster advanced critical thinking, strengthen knowledge of structural and systemic processes, and to develop strong ethical sensitivity regarding social systems analysis, transformative change and human service policy. Through rigorous training, the program aims to equip doctoral candidates with the knowledge and skills required to catalyze large-scale social action, shape public policy initiatives, and manage complex human service organizations. Additionally, it prioritizes pedagogical training, ensuring that graduates are fully prepared to provide high-level education and community training in both academic faculty positions and professional public sectors. Ultimately, the program strives to transform students into autonomous research investigators whose empirical findings and critical initiatives offer clear, practical solutions to ongoing societal challenges.

Laurier Community Psychology Faculty



As has been described previously, **Ed Bennett** was the founder of Laurier's CP program. Ed is Emeritus Professor of Psychology at Wilfrid Laurier University. He was hired as a Psychology faculty member in 1971 at Waterloo Lutheran University (now Wilfrid Laurier University or WLU) and retired in 2005. Ed obtained a B.A. in Political Science from Sir George Williams University (now Concordia). Ed has two Master's degrees – one from Boston University in Special Education with Dr. Burt Blatt, and one from Yale University in Administrative Sciences with Dr. Chris Argyris – and then a PhD in organizational behavior at Case Western Reserve University.

The late **Fred Binding** was one of the original members of the Social-Community Psychology program. Fred joined the Psychology Department at Waterloo Lutheran in 1971 and retired in 2003. Fred obtained a Ph.D. in Psychology from the University of Kansas, where he studied with Roger Barker, who was one of the founders of the ecological approach to Psychology and developed the concept of behaviour settings. In the Social-Community program, Fred taught a course in Field Methods, as well as serving on M.A. thesis committees.

The late **Sidney Hellyer** was another original member of the Social-Community Psychology program. He joined the Psychology Department at Waterloo Lutheran in 1963 and retired in 1984. Sid obtained a Ph.D. in Experimental Psychology from Indiana University. With the arrival of Ed Bennett in the 1970s, Sid took Ed's graduate course in CP. He followed this up by spending a one-year sabbatical with a senior Community Psychologist, Murray Levine, at the State University of New York in Buffalo to learn more about CP and program evaluation. Sid served as Chair of the Psychology Department, and he was the Director of the CP program in its first years. He also served on M.A. thesis committees. The Sid Hellyer book award was awarded annually to a graduate student in CP during the 1980s and 1990s.



The late **Brian Sarata** was the first faculty hire for the new M.A. CP program at Laurier. Brian obtained his Ph.D. in Psychology from Yale University, where he was supervised by Seymour Sarason. He was at Laurier from 1977 to 1978 before returning to the U.S. to take a position at the University of Nebraska. Brian worked and did research on settings for people with developmental disabilities.



Geoff Nelson was hired in 1979 and retired in 2017 from Laurier. He obtained a Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology from the University of Manitoba with a specialization in CP. Geoff's research focused on two broad areas – primary prevention programs for young children and community mental health and housing for people with serious mental illness. Two particularly noteworthy projects that he contributed to were the Better Beginnings, Better Futures project for children, families, and communities and the At Home / Chez Soi project that evaluated Housing First people experiencing homelessness and serious mental illness. Geoff served as Chair of Psychology, Psychology Graduate Program Coordinator, and Director of the CP program. Since his retirement, the Geoff Nelson Community Impact Scholarship has been awarded annually to a CP graduate student, <https://www.laurieralumni.ca/s/1681/15/social.aspx?sid=1681&gid=2&calcid=6071&calpgid=2059&pgid=1239&crid=0>.

The late **Richard Mason** was a CP faculty member from 1979 to 1980. Richard had a Ph.D. in Sociology from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto. During his year at Laurier, Richard worked with community residents to form the Langs Farm Village Association, a centre for children and youth in a low-income neighbourhood in Cambridge, ON.

Jim Dudeck was an Adjunct faculty member in the Psychology Department from 1979 to 1985, who contributed to the CP program. Jim obtained a Ph.D. in Psychology from George Peabody College in Nashville, Tennessee, and was Chief Psychologist for what was then called the Waterloo County Board of Education. As part of an exchange program between the school board and Laurier, Jim taught undergraduate Psychology courses, while Geoff Nelson (and for one year, Richard Mason) worked with two schools in Cambridge. Jim also participated on CP thesis committees.

Steve Chris was an Adjunct faculty member in the CP program. Steve obtained a Ph.D. in Psychology from the Ontario Institute of Graduate Studies, University of Toronto. Steve co-taught the CP practicum courses first with Geoff Nelson then with Isaac Prilleltensky in the 1980s and 1990s and he contributed to M.A. thesis supervision. In addition to his work with schools, Steve was active in the mental health sector in Waterloo Region. He is **pictured below with Geoff (left) and Isaac (middle).**



Mark Pancer was hired as a Psychology faculty member at Laurier in 1983 and retired in 2014. Prior to Laurier, Mark was a faculty member at the University of Saskatchewan from 1976 to 1980 and Director of Evaluation and Research at Dellcrest Children's Centre in Toronto from 1980 to 1983. Mark obtained a Ph.D. from the University of Waterloo in Social Psychology, and at Laurier he contributed to both the CP and Social Psychology graduate programs. He served as Chair of Psychology and CP Area Coordinator. In the CP program, Mark taught a course in Program Evaluation. Some of Mark's research focused on children's mental health and primary prevention. He was one of the leads for the qualitative program model research for the Better Beginnings, Better Futures project.



The late **Josephine Naidoo** was hired in the Psychology Department at Waterloo Lutheran in 1969, and she retired in 1997. Josie was originally from South Africa, and studied Social Psychology at the University of Illinois, where she was supervised for her Ph.D. by cross-cultural psychologist Harry Triandis. Josie's interests were in multiculturalism, and she taught a course in Multicultural Processes in the CP program, as well as supervising CP thesis students.





Richard Walsh joined the Psychology faculty in 1986 and retired in 2015. Prior to joining Laurier, Richard worked as a Psychologist at what used to be called K-W Hospital with a focus on children and families. Richard obtained a Ph.D. in Psychology from York University, where he focused on the History of Psychology, but he also was trained in Clinical Psychology at the University of Manitoba where he earned his M.A. Richard taught CP in the graduate program, and contributed to thesis supervision. He was the recipient of the Award for Teaching Excellence in 1999. His research focused on the social-ethical dimensions of psychological research and practice, creative drama as a preventive intervention for children, and housing for people with serious mental illness. He was first author of the book, *A Critical History and Philosophy of Psychology* published in 2014 by Cambridge University Press. Richard also ran for provincial and federal office for the New Democratic Party and the Green Party, espousing values of social, economic, and environmental justice.

The late **Isaac Prilleltensky** was a CP faculty member from 1991 to 2000. Isaac obtained his Ph.D. from the University of Manitoba. At Laurier, Isaac taught CP graduate courses, including the practicum and supervised M.A. students. He was also Coordinator of the CP area. Isaac led the federally-funded Family Wellness project, a review of approaches to promoting family wellness and preventing child maltreatment. Isaac has written several books and was an influential prolific scholar and award-winning Community Psychologist. **Isaac is pictured below with three of the founders of CP: Emory Cowen, George Albee, and Seymour Sarason.**



Joanna Ochocka was an Adjunct faculty member in the CP program who taught the practicum and community research courses in the M.A. program during the 1990s until the early 2000s. Joanna had a Ph.D. in Sociology from Silesia University in Poland. Joanna was the Director of the Centre for Community-based Research (formerly the Centre for Research and Education in Human Services). Her research focused on people with disabilities and used community-based and qualitative methods. Joanna won Laurier's part-time teaching award in 2005.

Terry Mitchell joined the CP faculty in 2003. She obtained a Ph.D. in CP from the Ontario Institute of Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. Terry was the director of Centre for Community Research, Learning, and Action (CCRLA) from 2009 to 2012. She used participatory, qualitative methods in research with Indigenous people, cancer survivors, and the impacts of the Swiss Air disaster in Nova Scotia. Her research explored colonial trauma and human rights of Indigenous people. Terry joined the Balsillie School of International Governance at Laurier and is now retired.

Colleen Loomis also joined the CP faculty in 2003. She obtained a M.A. and Ph.D. in CP from the University of Maryland Baltimore County, and completed a post-doctoral fellowship from the Stanford University Medical Center and Veterans Affairs. Her research focused on psychological sense of community, prevention and children's mental health, schools, and education. Colleen later joined the Balsillie School.

Scot Evans was faculty member in the CP program from 2006 to 2008. Scot obtained a Ph.D. in Community Research and Action from Vanderbilt University working with Isaac Prilleltensky. While at Laurier, Scot founded the Centre for Community Research, Learning and Action CCRLA ([see page 28 below](#)) aligned with his community research and action that used critical, transformative approaches. He was a very popular instructor for PS282, the introduction to CP at the undergraduate level, which helped with recruiting many students to our graduate program. Scot is currently an associate professor and chair in the department of Educational and Psychological Studies at the University of Miami where he has been since 2008. Together with Manuel Riemer and Stephanie Reich he took over the leadership for the third edition of the popular graduate-level textbook *Community Psychology: In Pursuit of Liberation and Wellbeing*, which was originally co-authored by Geoff Nelson and Isaac Prilleltensky.





Manuel Riemer is a faculty member who joined the CP faculty in 2008. He earned his PhD in Quantitative Psychology with a minor in Community Psychology from Vanderbilt University. He founded the Community, Environment and Justice Research Group and served as director of CCRLA from 2012 to 2018. In 2018, he founded the Viessmann Centre for Engagement and Research in Sustainability (VERiS), which he has directed since. He co-authored two textbooks on CP and received the Early Career Award from the Society for Community Research and Action for his contributions to the field, especially in regard to sustainability and climate change and the intersections of these with social justice.

Dr. Ciann L. Wilson is an Associate Professor and Canada Research Chair in Community-Based Research, Ethics, and Wellbeing based at Wilfrid Laurier University. Wilson is a Co-Director of the Centre for Community Research, Learning and Action (CCRLA). She has extensive experience in research, consulting, advocacy and community development related to Black, Indigenous, and racialized community health and wellbeing. Dr. Wilson also brings experience in developing intersectional, anti-oppressive educational and evaluation frameworks. Dr. Wilson's interdisciplinary research program addresses the multi-faceted and complex drivers that impact the mental-, sexual-, reproductive-, as well as, the overall health of racialized and Indigenous communities.



Maritt Kirst is an Associate Professor in Community Psychology and Co-Director of the Centre for Community Research, Learning and Action (CCRLA) at Wilfrid Laurier University. Maritt joined the Laurier Community Psychology program in 2016. She has extensive experience in conducting community-based research with marginalized populations focused on improving access to housing and health services. She has led several evaluations of health and social programs including Housing First programs for people experiencing homelessness and housing precarity.

Simon Coulombe was an Assistant Professor of Psychology at Wilfrid Laurier University from 2016 to 2021 before joining Université Laval. Simon obtained a Ph.D. in Community Psychology from the Université du Québec à Montréal. At Laurier, he directed the Flourishing Communities research group, housed within CCRLA. Simon's research has integrated positive and environmental psychology to promote well-being and social inclusion for marginalized groups, including LGBTQ+ individuals and people living with mental health challenges.



Natalie Kivell joined the CP faculty in 2020. She obtained her PhD in Community Well-Being at the University of Miami. Before her PhD she completed her BA (Psychology) and MA (Community Psychology) right here at Laurier. Natalie built the Critical and Transformative Praxis Research Collective, a research space to explore community and social movement theorizing, participatory practices for knowledge synthesis and mobilization within social movements, and which draws on abolitionist thought and critical and liberatory practice. She is host to the first Global Community Psychology podcast Indaba, where she continues to nurture the development of a global collective of scholar activists in Community Psychology in Chile, South Africa, Indonesia, Palestine, Australia, and Canada in our efforts learn across global manifestations of our everyday praxis for social transformation.

From the territory of Mi'kma'ki, **Ann Marie Beals** joined the Community Psychology program at Wilfrid Laurier University in 2016 as a master's student and continued into the PhD program. Their work centres Afro-Indigenous identity, storytelling, survivance, and relational approaches to Indigenous and Black wellbeing. In July 2022, while completing their dissertation, Ann Marie was hired as faculty in the Community Psychology program. Ann Marie is the founder of the Wele'g Dwennimmen Roots of Survivance Institute and received the Canadian Psychological Association (CPA) Certificate of Academic Excellence for top doctoral thesis in the Department of Psychology at Wilfrid Laurier University in 2025.





Alexis Buettgen joined the CP faculty in 2024. She obtained a Ph.D. in Critical Disability Studies from York University and MA in CP from Laurier. Alexis brings more than 20 years experience with the disability movement and community advocacy, research and policy analysis. She is the Associate Director of the Viessmann Centre for Engagement and Research in Sustainability (VERiS) and accessibility coordinator for the CP program. Her research addresses various issues of social, economic, and environmental justice and in the public, private and non-profit sector in Canada and internationally; and has been published extensively for academic, government and community audiences, including numerous books, peer-reviewed journals, policy briefs and accessible community publications.

Sandra Danilovic joined the Game Design and Development faculty in 2020 and is an affiliate graduate faculty member in the CP program. She obtained a Ph.D. in Information from the University of Toronto, an MA in Media Production from Toronto Metropolitan University, and a BFA in Film and Video Production from York University. Sandra has nearly 20 years of experience as an award-winning independent documentary filmmaker and multimedia artist in the creative industry. Her research addresses various issues of digital health humanities, inclusive design, and game-based storytelling for mental health and addiction recovery among marginalized populations.

Ketan Shankardass is an Associate Professor in the Department of Health Sciences with a secondary appointment in the CP program at Wilfrid Laurier University. Ketan obtained a Ph.D. in Epidemiology from the University of Southern California. He joined Laurier in 2011, where he leads the Health Equity Systems Interventions (HESI) research lab, which is based at CCRLA.

Ketan's community research and action has used social epidemiological and interdisciplinary approaches to understand health inequities from "cell to society". He is a leading researcher on Health in All Policies (HiAP) and the impacts of chronic stress on population health.





Robb Travers is a Professor and former Chair of the Department of Health Sciences at Wilfrid Laurier University, who was part of the CP program from 2008 to 2019. Robb obtained a Ph.D. in Public Health Sciences from the University of Toronto and MA in CP at Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. At Laurier, he co-founded the Social Inclusion and Health Equity Research Group, housed within CCRLA. Robb's community-based research and action has used interdisciplinary and participatory approaches to address transgender health and health equity for sexual and gender minorities.

Todd Coleman is an Associate Professor in the Department of Health Sciences with a cross-appointment in Community Psychology at Wilfrid Laurier University. Todd joined Laurier in 2017 following postdoctoral training in HIV prevention and experience as a public health epidemiologist. At Laurier, he co-founded the Social Inclusion and Health Equity Lab. Todd's research focuses on population and community health, with particular attention to health inequities related to sexual orientation and gender identity. Todd examines access to health care, mental health, and chronic and infectious diseases, including HIV, while collaborating with community partners to support policy- and practice-relevant research that advances health equity.



Melody Morton Ninomiya is an Associate Professor in the Department of Health Sciences with a cross-appointment in Community Psychology at Wilfrid Laurier University, and holds a Tier 2 Canada Research Chair in Community-Driven Knowledge Mobilization and Pathways to Wellness. Melody joined Laurier in 2019 and brings extensive experience in Indigenous health and wellness, critical public health, mental health and addictions, and community-based and decolonizing research methodologies. Melody's research is grounded in community-driven approaches and focuses on culturally defined indicators of wellness, knowledge mobilization in Indigenous contexts, fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD), and community-driven research ecosystems.

From the Field Placement Program to Community Service-Learning

As noted earlier, field placements began in the early 1970s with students in Ed Bennett's undergraduate courses in CP and Exceptional Children, Youth, and Adults doing placements with the then Waterloo County Board of Education. Paul Davock, one of the early students in the graduate program who focused on CP, was hired by the Psychology Department as Coordinator of the Field Placement program, which expanded to include other courses in Psychology, such as Developmental Psychology. Many CP M.A. students did their Teaching Assistantships (TAs) with Paul Davock, supervising undergraduate field placements. Paul was also a part-time instructor who taught the M.A. practicum course.

Eventually, the Field Placement program evolved into a university-wide Community Service-Learning (CSL) program. WLU was one of ten institutions to receive McConnell Foundation funding to expand CSL on their campuses and in local communities. From that funding the Laurier Centre for Community Service-Learning began with a Director and three Associate Directors of Community Partnerships, Research, and Faculty. As well, coordinators were hired on the Waterloo and Brantford campuses. Curricular-based experiential learning expanded from Community/Developmental Psychology to many other Departments on the Waterloo campus including Sociology, Religion and Culture, Cultural Studies, Geography, Women and Gender Studies, Kinesiology, Music, and more. CSL expanded through Psychology on the Brantford campus, as well as such programs as Human Rights and Human Diversity, Criminology, Contemporary Studies, Child and Youth Studies, and more. In 2006 the Laurier Centre for Community Service-Learning was working in seven departments and by the end of 2008 in thirteen. The McConnell funders emphasized reciprocity in community/university work, the increase of community capacity, and meaningful student learning/active citizenship. In 2010 the McConnell Foundation ended and Laurier has funded CSL ever since. That same year, Laurier developed Student Learning Outcomes in 2010 that are now a list of Competencies for all experiential learning activities.

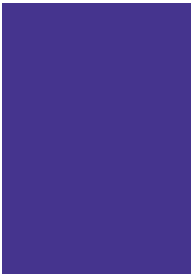
The Laurier Centre for Community Service-Learning went from mass paper mailouts to hundreds of community partners each year to online platforms to house all information pertaining to community partner organizations, programs, and specific opportunities for engagement. Many of our long-standing partners have been with us through years, if not decades of transitions: the Working Centre, Open Sesame Head Start, YMCA and YWCA, Muslim Social Services, Pathways to Education/Camino, Extend-a-Family, Emmanuel at Brighton, House of Friendship, KW AccessAbility, the City of Waterloo, local school boards, and more.

PS282 Placements

The PS282 Introduction to Community Psychology course is often the first exposure to CP for undergraduate students. As part of this course the students have to complete a minimum of 20 hours of community service learning (CSL). Since the CSL office started tracking student placements in their current system (i.e., since 2018) there are records for 4133 CSL students in PS282. These 4100+ students have logged more than 63,000 hours with community partner organizations.

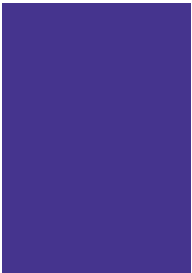
Our top partners for PS282 include: Waterloo Region District School Board, The Working Centre, English at First, Waterloo Catholic District School Board, Waterloo Wayside Centre, Waterloo Cooperative Preschool, YMCA of Three Rivers, House of Friendship, and Adults in Motion.

Students reflections on their CSL experience in PS282 are often very positive as these examples illustrate:



"You leave the course with a heightened awareness on how complicated these issues are, and how so many of these issues are a result of systematic inequalities; it really shows how issue like homeless is not an individual issue. You don't realize how much privilege you have until your face to face with people who are similar to you and life in your community, yet they have such a different lived experience." - 2026

"This experience strengthened my confidence in working with youth, improved my ability to adapt in challenging situations, and helped me develop skills in communication, patience, and de-escalation that will benefit me both personally and in my future professional roles." - 2025



"The relationships I built with the participants, staff, and fellow volunteers were a highlight of my experience. These connections provided a supportive network and enriched my understanding of the importance of community and inclusion." - 2024

Graduate CP Practicum Settings

Since the CP program at Laurier is a “Community Psychology” program, local community settings have played an important role in the history of the program. M.A. students are required to take a two-term course in CP Practicum, spending around eight hours per week in a setting in the role of researcher-consultant, as opposed to direct service worker. Often times, a community practicum setting provides an opportunity for the students to do their M.A. thesis research. Each year, students are presented with a range of options for practicum placements. Many local settings have a lengthy history of involvement with the CP program. In some cases, CP faculty members have been a researcher-consultant with these settings, while in other cases, they have helped to create these settings. Some examples of these placements include the following, but include many more in this vibrant community that is the home of Laurier as well as in other surrounding regions.

The **Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA)** – Waterloo-Wellington Branch is one of the settings with a long-standing relationship with the CP program. Ed Bennett was the President of the Board of Directors in the 1980s, and Geoff Nelson was board President in the 1990s. One of the graduates of the program whom Geoff supervised, Connie Van Andel, became the Program Director of CMHA in the 1980s, and Don Roth, another former student of Geoff’s became the Executive Director of this agency in the 1990s. Several M.A. students did their practicum placement and thesis research at CMHA over the years, and others became staff members.

The **Self Help Alliance and Waterloo Region Self Help** are Consumer/Survivor Initiatives that have become a CMHA program. Again, the Alliance has worked on research and practicum projects with CP students and faculty.

Waterloo Regional Homes for Mental Health Inc., which was originally a CMHA program, spun off to become a separate organization in 1980. This organization grew rapidly during the 1980s and 1990s to become a major provider of community mental health housing programs. The organization has changed names and it is now known as Thresholds. One CP graduate was Executive Director, and this agency has hosted research and consultation projects with CP faculty and students.

The Region of Waterloo – Public Health, and Social Services has been a regular setting to host student practicum placements. Within the Health Department, both the Planning and Evaluation and the Lifestyle Resources, Environmental Health sections have been managed by CP graduates. CP students have also worked within the Housing and Homelessness section of Social Services. CP graduates can be found in many programs with the Region.

The **Centre for Community Based Research (CCBR)**, which is directed by CP M.A. and Ph.D. graduate Rich Janzen is another often used setting for CP practicum students. The CP program has had a long-standing partnership, dating back to the 1980s when Geoff worked with the founding Director, John Lord, and then Joanna Ochocka, who became the Executive Director in the organization that was originally named the Centre for Research and Education in Human Services. This partnership resulted in grant funding for community mental health and self-help research projects. As was noted earlier, Joanna also served as instructor the practicum course for several years.

The CP program has worked with three organizations devoted to criminal justice: **Community Justice Initiatives, the former Community Safety and Crime Prevention Council, and the John Howard Society**. These settings focused on victim-offender reconciliation, crime prevention, and assistance to people who have been incarcerated. Christiane Sadeler was the founding Executive Director of the Community Safety and Crime Prevention Council beginning in the 1990s, working with Mark Pancer of the CP program on prevention-related initiatives. CP students used these setting for practicum placements and thesis research.

The **Langs Farm Village Association**, now simply called **Langs** has been an important practicum setting. In its early days in the 1980s, CP faculty and students used a community development approach to assist the Langs community. It has come a long way since it occupied a townhouse donated by the Region into a large Community Health Centre on Coronation Boulevard in the Preston area of Cambridge.

Big Brothers Big Sisters: CP practicum students have worked on program evaluation projects as well as research related to the effectiveness of virtual mentorship programs including literature reviews, creating safe-practice guidelines and activity resources for virtual mentoring (ages 6–16). Students have also gathered research to support funding cases related to mentoring and reducing poverty, mental-health challenges, and social isolation.

Kind Minds Family Wellness: The partner welcomed practicum students to do a formative evaluation in order to provide feedback on the Healing Horizon support group. Students worked on data analysis and literature review related to the Black Youth Impact project as well as Black Wellness Waterloo Region.

Sexual Health Options, Resources, and Education (SHORE) Centre: Practicum students have worked on a range of projects over a number of years including program development for a virtual theatre initiative and support within the education team for workshop development and delivery, knowledge translation, social media content creation, and resource development.

Social Development Centre Waterloo Region: MA Practicum student contributions include: Support to chronic-homelessness research initiative through data collection and coordination with community agencies; conducting literature reviews and grant scans; contributing to knowledge mobilization and program evaluation; and participating in research and policy meetings through shadowing, note-taking, and collaborative analysis.

The Centre for Community Research, Learning, and Action (CCRLA)

In response to community needs and under the leadership of Dr. Scot Evans and Dr. Mark Pancer, the CP program launched the Centre for Community Research, Learning, and Action (CCRLA) in 2009. CCRLA is an interdisciplinary research centre housed within Laurier's Faculty of Science. Rooted in the field of CP the centre was established to bridge the gap between academic scholarship and grassroots and organizational community work. It serves as a collaborative hub that brokers partnerships between Laurier faculty, students, and diverse non-academic stakeholders, including local community groups and organizations and policy makers. By utilizing participatory and community-based research methodologies, CCRLA aims to amplify marginalized voices, co-produce practical knowledge, and actively address complex societal issues to advance community well-being. The centre facilitates student engagement through hands-on learning, offering applied community research internships and specialized professional development programs.



Logo of the Centre for Community Research, Learning, and Action (CCRLA)

The strategic direction of CCRLA has been shaped by its dedicated leadership, transitioning from single directorships to a collaborative co-leadership model. After founder Scot Evans left Laurier, Terry Mitchell became the first official director starting with CCRLA's inauguration in 2009. Manuel Riemer served as its director from 2012 to 2018, steering strategic planning initiatives such as the development of Laurier's Summer Institute in Research Methods, a program evaluation certification program targeted at professionals, and an internship program for community-engaged research that has now evolved into the capstone course for the CP undergraduate program. In more recent years, leadership transitioned to a co-directorship structure to reflect the center's collaborative ethos. Currently, Dr. Maritt Kirst and Dr. Ciann L. Wilson serve as the Co-Directors of the centre. Together with an active board of directors, they oversee CCRLA's six distinct thriving research interest groups and its state-of-the-art Community Hub infrastructure, including an arts-based research computer lab and collaborative spaces. Among others, they lead the Centering Community Calls for Ethical Research Engagement Series and a research project focused on equitable approaches to evaluation. The centre is well supported by admin manager Ela Desmarchelier.

Viessmann Centre for Engagement and Research in Sustainability (VERiS)

The Viessmann Centre for Engagement and Research in Sustainability (VERiS), an interdisciplinary university-wide centre at Laurier, was founded in 2018 by CP faculty Manuel Riemer with strong grounding in CP values and system-ecological thinking. As a transdisciplinary community-engaged research and action hub, VERiS focuses on driving societal transitions toward strong cultures of sustainability and climate justice. The centre brings together academic experts, students, practice-based professionals, and community members to collaborate on community-engaged research grounded in clear social justice and sustainability values established by its active Board. Its active research programs span diverse fields, including youth climate activism, municipal climate action, and the intersection of climate change with disability inclusion. The latter is a focus of CP faculty member Alexis Buettgen who serves as the Associate Director of VERiS. The centre is well supported by admin manager Ela Desmarchelier.



Logo of the Viessmann Centre for Engagement and Research in Sustainability (VERiS)

Additionally, VERiS serves as the home for the Flourishing Enterprise Institute, an applied research institute and global network dedicated to helping organizational leaders design and implement deeply sustainable, regenerative and flourishing organizational practices, as well as for the Wele'g Dwennimmen Roots of Survivance Institute, which was founded by CP faculty member Ann Marie Beals in 2024 to promote Indigenous ways of being, knowing, and survivance, emphasizing holistic approaches to health and wellbeing. Indigeneity for the context of this institute is inclusive on Indigenous Peoples globally – all around Mother Earth. At Wele'g Dwennimmen, the members embrace survivance as a living, dynamic expression of Indigenous wellbeing that thrives through our connection to Mother Earth and the continuance of our stories. Survivance is more than survival, more than resilience – it is a powerful narrative of presence and resistance against erasure, rooted in the wisdom of our ancestors and the land that sustains us. It honours the strength and vitality of Indigenous cultures, weaving together the strength of our communities, the essence of the natural world, and the commitment to creating balance and harmony for future generations.

CP in Canada

CPA and the Community Psychology Section

The CP program played a key role in the development of CP in Canada. In 1982, Bruce Tefft of Manitoba edited special issue of the new *Canadian Journal of Community Mental Health (CJCMH)* on CP in Canada. At the same time, Bruce started a CP Section of the Canadian Psychological Association (CPA). Geoff chaired the section for a term in the 1980s, and was succeeded by Dr. Steve Chris, an Adjunct Faculty member in the CP program in the 1980s and 1990s. The CP Section was one vehicle for bringing Community Psychologists together from across Canada. In 2010, Tim Aubry and Geoff Nelson edited a special section of *Canadian Psychology* on CP in Canada. More recently, there has not been much involvement by Community Psychologists or CP students in CPA, and the CP Section has gone by the wayside

The Canadian Journal of Community Mental Health (CJCMH)

Another important source for CP in Canada is the bilingual (French and English), interdisciplinary *CJCMH* that was founded by Ed Bennett, Barry Trute, and Maurice Payette in 1982. The *CJCMH* is an important outlet for Canadian Community Psychologists to publish their research. Ed was one of the Senior Editors from 1982 to 1989, and Geoff Nelson succeeded him as the English Senior Editor from 1990 to 1996.



CP faculty and students have published their work in the *CJCMH* (cover page **pictured left**), and some CP faculty have edited special issues like Mark Pancer (on program evaluation) and Isaac Prilleltensky (on prevention). There have been two reviews of the contents of the *CJCMH*. A review by Peirson and Walsh-Bowers (1993) of Laurier found that over its first decade, that women constituted half of the authors of the journal. In a 25-year review, Fortin-Pellerin, Pouliot-LaPointe, Thibodeau, and Helene-Gagne (2007) reported that researchers from Wilfrid Laurier University had published more articles in the journal than any other Canadian university. This journal is still going strong after 44 years, and is one of the legacies of CP in Canada.

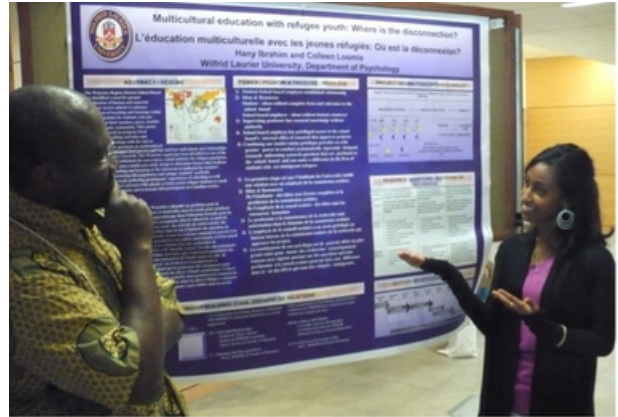
Community Psychology Conferences in Canada

One year at the Biennial conference of the Society Community Research and Action (SCRA), Canadian CP colleagues Tim Aubry, Francine Lavoie, Camil Bouchard, and Geoff Nelson talked about having a Canadian Biennial CP conference. The first of these conferences was held at the University of Ottawa in 2002, followed by l'Université Laval in Quebec City in 2004, l'Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM) in 2006, Laurier in 2008, Ottawa again in 2010, and Laurier again in 2012. At the 2010 conference in Ottawa, several of the founders of CP in Canada were invited to participate on a panel and speak on some aspect of CP. This session was audio-recorded and included Jerome Guay, Marie-Helene Gagne, and Francine Lavoie from l'Université Laval, Camil Bouchard from UQAM, the late Margaret Kiely from l'Université de Montréal, Ed Pomeroy from Brock University, the late Patrick O'Neill from Acadia University, and Bruce Tefft from the University of Manitoba.

There was a strong emphasis on student presentations at these bilingual conferences. As well, the University of Ottawa hosted the SCRA Biennial conference in 2017. Unfortunately, there have not been any Canadian CP conferences since the 2017 Biennial with all of the founders of the Canadian CP conferences now retired.

The CJCMH Senior Editorial Board with both French and English editors and the Biennial bilingual Canadian CP conferences enhanced collaboration between French-speaking and English-speaking Community Psychologists. Geoff Nelson reviewed the status of CP in Canada in an article with French-speaking colleague, Francine Lavoie of l'Université Laval, and a book chapter with Francine and Laurier colleague, Terry Mitchell. Richard Walsh-Bowers also published on CP in Canada in *Canadian Psychology*.

CP Conferences in Action!



Hany Ibrahim & Julian Hasford



Tim Aubry, Geoff Nelson, Liesette Brunson, Bruce Tefft, Pat O'Neill



Marie-Helene Gagne, Natalie Kivell, Manuel Riemer, & students



Tim Aubry, Geoff Nelson, Margaret Kiely, Ed Bennett, Francine Lavoie, Pierre Ritchie



Ed Bennett & students

International Recognition of the Laurier CP Program

Research and Publication

Geoff Nelson and Isaac Prilleltensky wrote and edited a CP textbook, *Community Psychology* (1st Ed., 2005, 2nd Ed., 2010), which is now in its third edition (2020) with new authors, Manuel Riemer as the lead author, Stephanie Reich, and Scot Evans. Ed Bennett also edited the book *Social Intervention* in 1987 that provided students with another foundational source in CP.

In their review of the number of publications in the two major U.S. community psychology journals – the *American Journal of Community Psychology* and the *Journal of Community Psychology* – Ruesnik and Jason (2023) reported that Laurier ranked 29th of all institutions, tied with Harvard University.

Manuel Riemer was a co-editor together with Stephanie Reich, Isaac Prilleltensky and Martiza Montero for the first community psychology textbook featuring community psychology across the world: *International Community Psychology: History and Theories*, which was published by Springer in 2007.

Alexis Buettgen co-authored a book alongside Susan Eriksson titled *Young People in Times of Crises: Global Revelations and Social Change*. This book enlightens the situation of youth amidst global intersecting crises – known as the polycrisis – and remarks on seeds of hope planted by young people looking for change towards a better world.

Society for Community Research and Action (SCRA) Award Recipients from the Laurier CP Program

Several Laurier faculty, students, and graduates have been recognized by SCRA for their contributions to CP.

- Harry V. McNeill Award for Innovation in Community Mental Health, jointly awarded by the Society for Community Research and Action and the American Psychological Foundation, Geoff Nelson and the Canadian Mental Health Association / Grand River Branch (1999)
- John Kalafat Applied Community Psychology Award (2010) – Isaac Prilleltensky
- Distinguished Contributions to Theory and Research in Community Psychology – Isaac Prilleltensky (2010), Geoff Nelson (2013)
- Community Psychology Dissertation of the Year Award – Susan Eckerle Curwood (2014)
- Early Career Award – Manuel Riemer (2014)
- Emory L. Cowen Dissertation Award for the Promotion of Wellness – Simon Coulombe (2017)

- Award for Distinguished Contribution to Practice in Community Psychology – Christiane Sadeler (2018)
- Award for Outstanding Contributions to the Mentoring of Ethnic Minority Community Psychologists – Ciann Wilson (2019)
- Seymour B. Sarason Award for Community Research and Action – Isaac Prilleltensky (2019)

Celebration at 50 Years

As we are celebrating our 50th anniversary we can proudly look back at a rich history of hundreds of MA and Ph.D. students, many award-winning faculty members with strong international reputations and local community connections, two active community-engaged research centres, vibrant community-engaged teaching and learning focused on the action, research, and theory of community psychology and related fields, several major textbooks, multiple large-scale influential research projects, and a lasting impact on our local community and beyond. To honour this important milestone, we are inviting our retired faculty members, our alumni graduate students and our community partners for a day of celebration and two days of holding the 2026 Canadian Community Psychology Conference in May of 2026. We are also editing a special issue for the American Journal of Community Psychology that will feature manuscripts related to our conference theme of hope in the time of the polycrisis and Canadian contributions to community psychology. Looking forward, we are excited about continuing our critical work on advancing community well-being, social justice, and care for our Mother Earth.



The Community Psychology logo created at 25 years (left) and 50 years (right)

Current Students

PhD Students

Erin Dekker
Jennifer Dobai
Margaret Douglin
Allison Eady
Ian Heft
Raymond McKie
Lauren Munro
Sarah Ranco
Victoria Rozycki
Moni Sadri
Samson Tse

MA Students

Aisha Aderinto
Fitsum Areguy
Rinkle Bhatia
Julia Cherniak
Emily Escoffery
Rachel Kasujja
Tanaz Kherani
Jayashri Maraj
Shazia Mohamed
Brittany Palmer
Alexsia Persaud
Erica Poulin
Nicole Powell
Adriana Salazar
Ashley Shaw
Adelaide Swanton
Rebecca Thomas Khan
Pariya Tofigh
Samuel Van Wyck

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