

# Calgary Regional Gathering Report

The Calgary Regional Gathering was held on January 30th, 2026, at SAIT (Southern Alberta Institute of Technology) in Calgary. The meeting was attended by 40 participants from 10 Alberta Campuses and 3 community organizations.

## Event Summary: Collaboration Activities

Following the theme of the Edmonton Regional Gathering, the Calgary Regional Gathering was centered on networking and topic-focused discussions pertinent to the CoP, which were selected by attendees. These topics were pulled from 2024-25 feedback, common themes throughout campus visits, and conversations with the community of practice.

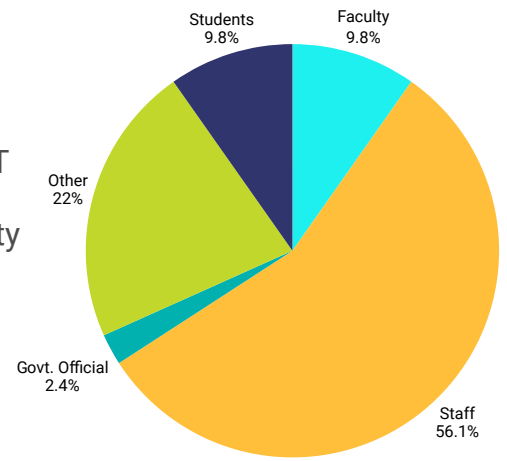


Chart showing the **roles** of the participants at the Regional Gathering.



Participants from the 2026 Calgary Regional Gathering during the collaboration activities

## Key Insights from Collaboration Activities

### 1. Food Insecurity & Social Determinants of Health

Key Challenge Themes	Key Takeaways (Strategies, Actions & Examples)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impacts health, focus, and student resilience</li> <li>• Stigma around food and financial insecurity</li> <li>• Limited funding and long-term capacity</li> <li>• Intersectional barriers, including off-campus students</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Holistic, multi-modal food support models (e.g., cooking series, food boxes, grab-and-go, emergency supplies)</li> <li>• Education-centered approaches linking food, wellness, culture, and connection</li> <li>• Beyond emergency aid toward sustainable solutions while maintaining crisis supports</li> <li>• Stigma reduction and targeted outreach to diverse and vulnerable student groups</li> <li>• Student-led, accessible, and sustainability-focused initiatives that are welcoming and barrier-free</li> <li>• Integrating food security with sustainability and community-building efforts</li> </ul>

## 2. Accessing, Communicating & Navigating On - and Off - Campus Supports

Key Challenge Themes	Key Takeaways (Strategies, Actions & Examples)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Reliance on digital and advisor-based outreach</b></li><li>• <b>Information overload and cultural stigma barriers</b></li><li>• <b>Staff turnover disrupting long-term initiatives</b></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Multi-channel outreach with regularly audited resource pages</li><li>• Clear staff and peer referral pathways with information sharing</li><li>• Strong student response team coordination and support</li><li>• Accessible mental health nurse resources and appointment navigation</li><li>• Collaborative crisis response and peer-led stigma reduction initiatives</li></ul>

## 3. Substance Use, Addiction & Recovery

Key Challenge Themes	Key Takeaways (Strategies, Actions & Examples)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Addiction stigma and undiagnosed mental health conditions</b></li><li>• <b>Coping through risky or addictive behaviours</b></li><li>• <b>Resource precarity and unstable infrastructure</b></li><li>• <b>Confidentiality limits counsellor collaboration</b></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Integrated professional and peer support models</li><li>• Adaptable programming based on student readiness</li><li>• Peer recovery models and visible pop-up engagement</li><li>• Expanding campus conversations on addiction and recovery</li><li>• Accessible, community-based recovery spaces and networks</li><li>• Incentivized participation and shared, non-gatekept resources</li><li>• Meeting students in gathering spaces and informal settings</li><li>• Staff engagement modeling safety and legitimizing support</li></ul>

## 4. Student Engagement & Loneliness

Key Challenge Themes	Key Takeaways (Strategies, Actions & Examples)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Seen as an individual responsibility</b></li><li>• <b>Anxiety around engagement and fear of the unknown.</b></li><li>• <b>How to engage w/ events not directly related to academics/career</b></li><li>• <b>Lack of spaces (including outdoor spaces) OR spaces not known/hidden</b></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Educational campaigns on relationship-building, social capital, emotional resilience, and life stages in post-secondary</li><li>• First-Year Experience committees intentionally building early community and belonging</li><li>• Low-stakes, low-barrier, food-focused and faith-based student-driven events with competitions and prizes</li><li>• On-campus faculty–student collaboration with ongoing evaluation and shared accountability</li><li>• Niche interest and activity-based engagement (D&amp;D, speed friending, home games, tailgates, volunteering)</li><li>• Embedding structured social connection in classrooms, coffee carts, and intentional gathering spaces</li><li>• Trained peer-to-peer engagement models operating beyond traditional campus hours</li></ul>

## 5. Transitions (K-12 to Post Secondary & Post Secondary to Community)

Key Challenge Themes	Key Takeaways (Strategies, Actions & Examples)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Shift from structured small classes to large, independent learning environments</li><li>• Increased expectation of self-motivation and personal agency</li><li>• Uneven transition pathways (K-12 to undergrad stronger than undergrad to grad; post-COVID campus engagement challenges)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Encourage connection-building beyond formal programs</li><li>• Early academic advising before transition and course selection</li><li>• Sit-ins, orientation week, and targeted admissions events</li><li>• Mental health groups and drop-in MH Week sessions</li><li>• Smaller colleges often better equipped for personalized supports</li><li>• Graduate students face similar transition challenges</li><li>• Stronger guidance, advising, and networking for life beyond school</li><li>• Targeted supports for international students</li><li>• Course-based life skills: financial literacy and mental preparation</li><li>• Professional development and identity exploration beyond academics</li></ul>

## 6. Stigma Reduction & Culturally Appropriate Approaches to Mental Health & Wellness

Key Challenge Themes	Key Takeaways (Strategies, Actions & Examples)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Stigma, cultural barriers, and delayed help-seeking</li><li>• Limited access to culturally appropriate and affordable care</li><li>• Reliance on Western, siloed mental health models</li><li>• Structural and sector-specific barriers (space, historic harm, executive buy-in, trades culture, gender norms)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Weekly walk-in supports and culturally customized wellness sessions</li><li>• Campus-wide anti-oppressive and cultural intelligence initiatives</li><li>• Neuro-affirming group models with non-hierarchical peer support</li><li>• Psychological safety embedded across organizational structures</li><li>• Student-led and co-designed programming with instructors</li><li>• Innovative, shared models for culturally appropriate care across campuses</li><li>• Integrating cultural values, Elders, and strength-based approaches into campus life.</li><li>• Language-accessible counselling and inclusive communication tools</li><li>• Diverse staffing and Indigenous liaison roles to reflect community needs.</li></ul>

## 7. Mental Health Frameworks & Strategies

Key Challenge Themes	Key Takeaways (Strategies, Actions & Examples)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Siloed structures limiting cross-campus collaboration</li><li>• Policies and deadlines that hinder student mental health</li><li>• Lack of clarity and shared responsibility in wellness strategy and PSMH expectations</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Targeted mental health frameworks for apprenticeships and specific faculties</li><li>• Employee well-being and leadership development beyond HR models</li><li>• Expanded anti-bullying and psychologically safe campus initiatives</li><li>• Alignment with national and global frameworks (Okanagan Charter, National Standard, SDGs)</li><li>• Integrated strategies linking suicide prevention, student success, and EDIA</li><li>• Sustainable funding, resources, and cross-campus collaboration</li><li>• Shared campus-wide responsibility with clear support navigation pathways.</li></ul>

## 8. Staff/Faculty Wellness

Key Challenge Themes	Key Takeaways (Strategies, Actions & Examples)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Staff and faculty burnout within grind and productivity culture</li><li>• Limited data and visibility on staff well-being</li><li>• Ripple effects on students and the broader campus ecosystem</li><li>• Gaps in accountability and integrating well-being as a core priority</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Comprehensive campus-wide staff well-being strategy</li><li>• Embedding cultural intelligence and psychological safety in workplaces</li><li>• Stronger alignment and shared language with People &amp; Culture/HR</li><li>• Robust employee wellness data collection and assessment tools (e.g., CCWS survey)</li><li>• Faculty mental health toolkits to shift time-off and resource culture</li><li>• Clear role boundaries, workload expectations, and referral pathways</li><li>• Experiential staff wellness events aligned with peak and slow cycles</li><li>• Leadership capacity to “scan” and respond to staff well-being signals</li><li>• Executive buy-in and wellness-integrated decision-making structures</li></ul>

## Participant Feedback: Participants shared how they felt at the end of the Regional Gathering

“

Loved the activities, the format, and the opportunity to share amongst our peers. Everyone is doing such great work, it's nice to see that we're on track with everyone!

It was a wonderful day and there was invaluable learning and connection.

So many people want to collaborate and support each other

I don't have to do this work alone!!

Having colleagues who understand is great for my MH and WB

”

refueled  
optimistic  
thankful  
rejuvenation  
connected  
encouraged  
excited  
inspired  
valued  
grateful  
energized

### What's Next?

#### HCA Online Regional Gathering

March 13<sup>th</sup>, 2026  
9:00 am - 12:00 pm  
On Zoom

#### HCA Wellness Summit

May 21-22<sup>nd</sup>, 2026  
Concordia University, Edmonton

[hcaadmin@cmha.ab.ca](mailto:hcaadmin@cmha.ab.ca) @  
[www.healthycampusalberta.ca](http://www.healthycampusalberta.ca) 🌐