



**YMCA of  
Northern Alberta**  
Strategic Plan



*Transforming Our Communities 2017-2021*

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# Transforming Our Communities

## Strategic Plan for YMCA of Northern Alberta 2017-2021

### Introduction

Guided by our vision and grounded in our core values, the YMCA's commitment to serve, learn, lead and renew has ensured our association's relevance, sustainability and impact on a changing community for more than 109 years. Over the past year we worked as a committed team of YMCA leaders on an extensive process to develop a new strategic plan to guide our work and our impact on communities. We looked at what was happening in our community, listened to community leaders, consulted key partners and discussed how all these insights should be reflected in our work. The result? This *Transforming Our Communities 2017 – 2021* strategic plan. This plan introduces a more refined focus, better defined areas of commitment with ten corresponding outcomes, and identifies key priorities within our four interrelated strategic directions: **Excellence in Program and Service Delivery, Extending Our Reach, Increasing Our Capacity and Strengthening Our Brand and Impact.**

The *Transforming Our Communities* strategic plan will guide our work over the next five years and is unique in a number of ways:

- **Builds upon our association's strong foundation and ability to remain relevant to a changing community for more than 109 years;**
- **Looks to the future with optimism and a bold, aspirational vision for our community and our YMCA;**
- **Aligns to community priorities that inform our areas of commitment, focus and impact;**
- **Frames strategies around four key pillars: Excellence in Program and Service Delivery, Extending Our Reach, Increasing Our Capacity and Strengthening Our Brand and Impact; and**
- **Requires long-term financial sustainability, engagement, investment, fund development, operational excellence and partnerships well beyond what we have done before.**

We believe that more people will be helped in deeper, more meaningful ways as a result of our strategic efforts. As we get better, so do the people we serve. Yet there is much more to do, and the next five years will see our team—and every man, woman, teen and child we serve—get that much closer to reaching their potential.

## Our Mission

The YMCA of Northern Alberta creates life-enhancing opportunities for the growth and development of all people in spirit, mind and body.

## Our Vision

Strong kids, healthy families, thriving communities.

## Our Values

Respect

Honesty

Caring

Responsibility

Diversity and Social Inclusion

## Our Values in Action

### Our guide to decision making & behaviour

#### Do the right thing

We are caring, respectful, honest & responsible in all we do

#### Put people first

We believe in each other – our strengths, perspectives & passions

#### Keep our promises

We do what we say we will do

#### Lead by example

We are courageous, speaking with conviction and always willing to listen and collaborate

#### Inclusive and open to all

We welcome every person, regardless of background or circumstance

## The Communities We Envision

- Everyone experiences better health and wellbeing in spirit, mind and body
- Individuals and families thrive and experience a sense of belonging
- All children and youth are active, engaged and healthy
- Everyone has the opportunity to reach their potential
- People respect diversity and experience social inclusion
- People work together to strengthen the foundations of community

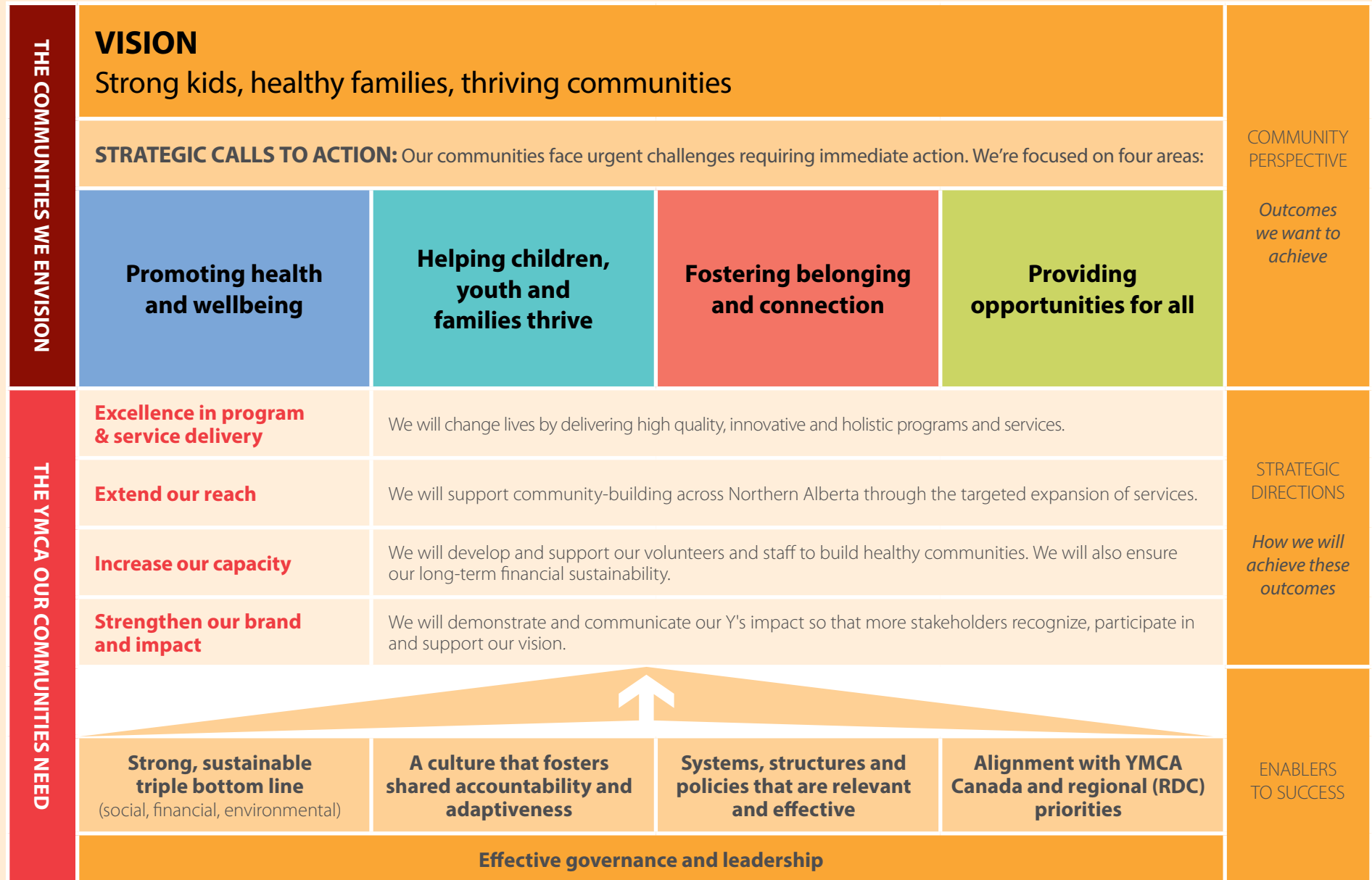


## The YMCA Our Communities Need

- Leads, partners and advocates in order to strengthen communities—local, regional, national and global
- Values the diversity of all people
- Fosters equality of opportunity for all individuals and families in our communities
- Provides safe, caring places—to connect, be active, and learn at every age
- Promotes holistic health and wellbeing in spirit, mind and body
- Cultivates leadership
- Encourages philanthropy in all we do
- Delivers high value and impact



## Vision and Strategy at a Glance





# The Y Lens

We see our work through the lens of key community outcomes. This is how we show up and how we measure our success.

## What's our commitment?

At the YMCA we are committed to helping people reach their potential.

## What's our focus?

The lens focuses on the four reasons we do this work: helping children, youth and families thrive, promoting health and well being, fostering belonging and connection and providing opportunities for all.

## What's our impact?

Among the many important things we do we have selected to focus on 10 outcomes during the five year cycle. We will measure our impact in all 10 outcomes.

Pages 6 through 13 better define these areas of focus, outcomes and intended impact measurements.





## Promoting Health & Wellbeing

### Critical issues affecting our communities

**Today, 27% or more than one in four children in Alberta are overweight or obese.**<sup>(1)</sup> Only 9% of children ages 5-17 meet the recommended physical activity guidelines. Ninety percent of 11 to 15-year olds fail to meet recommended average daily screen time guidelines and students in grade 9 to 12 spend an average of 8 hours per day in screen based sedentary behaviour.<sup>(2)</sup>

**Today 40% of Albertans 18 years and older do not get enough physical activity to maintain optimal health.** Albertan cities have a significantly higher percentage of overweight or obese adult populations than the national average. If current trends continue, up to 70% of Canadian adults will be either overweight or obese.<sup>(3)</sup>

**Mental health issues are on the rise.** One in five adult Canadians will struggle with mental health issues at some point in their lives with anxiety disorders and depression the most common.<sup>(4)</sup>

**Affordable housing, food security and healthy nutrition are key determinants of health and well-being.** Food security and health nutrition are not a given for over 10% of Alberta households.<sup>(5)</sup> The cost of healthy eating has increase by more than 60% in the past 10 years; 30% of Albertans fail to meet nutrition guidelines for heathy eating.<sup>(6)</sup> Of the approximately 79,000 Albertans who access food banks annually, 39% are children and these rates have increased by 136% since 2008.<sup>(7)</sup>

Approximately 24% of all Albertans and 39% of renters experience housing affordability challenges where they pay more than 30% of total income on housing. In recent assessments, over 5,000 people in Alberta's largest cities including Edmonton, Grande Prairie and Wood Buffalo were found to be homeless.<sup>(8)</sup>





## Our Beliefs and Commitments

**We believe holistic healthy living improves quality of life and enables people to reach their potential.** That's why we use the Social Determinants of Health as a framework and offer programs and services that enable people to thrive in spirit, mind and body.

**We believe developing healthy attitudes and behaviours at a young age helps prevent chronic disease and improves quality of life.** That's why we include fun physical activities, social and skill development in all our child and youth programming.

**We believe people must be active and make healthy choices at every stage of life.** That's why we provide supportive environments and quality programming with a range of opportunities to support all ages and stages with their healthy lifestyle choices.

**We believe that every individual has the right to access affordable, stable housing and sufficient nutritious food to meet their needs for a healthy life.** That's why we offer programs and support to those most vulnerable along the continuum of their housing and nutrition needs.

**We believe the YMCA can play a leading role to integrate community health systems.** That's why we advocate and partner with like-minded organizations to impact the overall health of communities we serve.

## Desired Community Outcomes

## Measures

<p>1 Children under 12 are active and healthy</p>	<p>Extent to which children develop physical literacy skills and report experiences that promote commitment to lifelong physical activity because of Y participation</p>
<p>2 Adults experience optimal health as they age</p>	<p>Extent to which people report overall health and wellbeing has improved as a result of Y participation</p>
<p>3 Individuals and families are supported in meeting basic needs such as safe, affordable housing, income and nutritious food</p>	<p>Extent to which people receive necessary supports and report basic needs are met (safer affordable housing, income, nutritious food) as a result of YMCA programming and support</p>



## Helping Children, Youth & Families Thrive

### Critical issues affecting our communities

**Almost 30% of kindergarten-aged children are developmentally vulnerable.**

In Alberta, nearly 26% of children entering kindergarten are having trouble in one or more areas of development including physical, mental, social and emotional challenges.<sup>(9)</sup>

**The after school hours are critical. Children left alone between 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. are more likely to be sedentary and may participate in high risk behaviour.**

In Alberta, 69% of couples with children are dual earner families and 14% of all families are single parent.<sup>(10)</sup> Children and youth whose parents work full time spend, on average, 20 to 25 hours alone each week.<sup>(11)</sup>

**Teens who don't complete high school have bleak economic, health and social prospects.** Alberta Education reports that 24% of students do not complete high school in three years (the five-year rate is 21%). A staggering 62% of self identified First Nations, Metis and Inuit students do not complete high school in three years.

**Family instability increases demands on social services.** Demand for social services including social support, income support and subsidized child care has both diversified and intensified largely because of family instability which includes unemployment, family violence and household debt.



## Our Beliefs and Commitments

**We believe that the early years (0-6) are critical for future development and building lifelong wellbeing.** That's why we provide play-based programming that nurtures children's social, emotional, cognitive and physical development.

**We believe it is critical for our children (7-12) to acquire the skills and confidence to make their own healthy choices.** That's why we provide a wide variety of programs and services to children and their families to support them to make healthy choices and lead more active lives.

**We believe youth (13-17) and young adults (18-29) face a variety of challenges as they develop autonomy and take steps towards realizing their potential.** That's why we're there to help them build their sense of identity, gain leadership skills and confidence, find social connections and ensure their wellbeing.

## Desired Community Outcomes

## Measures

<p>4 Children enter kindergarten ready for school</p>	<p>Readiness of children entering kindergarten from YMCA Child Care compared to EDI indicators</p>
<p>5 Individuals and families report an improved quality of life</p>	<p>Extent to which individuals and families report an improved quality of life through YMCA participation compared to baseline research</p>
<p>6 Youth are healthy and engaged in their community</p>	<p>Extent to which youth are engaged in the community (leadership, volunteering, international) as a result of Y participation</p>



## Fostering belonging and connection

### Critical issues affecting our communities

**Social isolation greatly compromises quality of life.** Approximately 40% of Albertans do not feel a sense of involvement or belonging in their community.<sup>(12)</sup>

**The risk of social isolation is much higher for seniors and new immigrants.** New immigrants report a wide range of difficulties related to social connection including learning a new language, adapting to new cultures, lack of social interaction and discrimination or racism. Of seniors 65 years and older, 1 in 4 report they would like to have participated in more social or recreational activities in the past year.<sup>(13)</sup>

**Kids who are bullied have more stress and less academic success.** One in three Canadian youth reports having been bullied recently (either direct bullying like physical aggression or indirect like cyberbullying) and 47% of parents report their child being a victim of some form of bullying.<sup>(14)</sup>

**Discrimination and marginalization are common forms of intolerance.** Alberta has the fourth highest level of reported hate crime in Canada and this trend has been on the rise since 2014.<sup>(15)</sup>



## Our Beliefs and Commitments

**We believe that social connections enhance quality of life and extend life expectancy.** That's why we offer inclusive, safe and welcoming environments free of discrimination where everyone can feel connected and engaged to their community, and to each other.

**We believe healthy communities are diverse and inclusive.** That's why the YMCA encourages and supports diversity in all of its dimensions.

**We believe social isolation is a complex problem that requires us to work with others to find effective solutions.** That's why we partner and collaborate with organizations, government and individuals to build more connected and engaged communities.

## Desired Community Outcomes

## Measures

<p>7 People are involved in and feel a sense of belonging to their community and each other</p>	<p>The extent to which YMCA participants report community involvement and a sense of belonging compared to baseline data</p>
<p>8 Ongoing collaboration between community organizations and stakeholders to find effective solutions</p>	<p>The extent to which the Y is collaborating and actively influencing outcomes on critical issues included in our plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The number of partnerships built and sustained to address targeted community needs</li> <li>• Whether the Y is represented on specific community tables</li> <li>• The extent to which there's YMCA engagement outside of Y facilities</li> </ul>



## Providing Opportunities For All

### Critical issues affecting our communities

**More than 400,000 Albertans, including an estimated 170,000 children and youth, continue to live in poverty or are at risk.**<sup>(16)</sup> Child poverty is approximately 16% in Alberta communities.<sup>(17)</sup>

**Poverty is particularly prevalent in Indigenous, immigrant, and lone-parent families.** While 9.1 per cent of Albertans live in poverty, visible minorities and Indigenous people are overrepresented at 15.8 per cent and 19.2 per cent respectively. 23.2 per cent of children aged 5-18 who recently immigrated (less than five years ago) live in poverty. Female lone-parent families with children have the highest poverty levels in Alberta, at 30.5 per cent.<sup>(18)</sup>

**All Alberta families face significant barriers to recreation.** While 94% of Albertans believe physical activity and recreation will improve their health, only 59% get enough physical activity. Less than 50% of Albertans have the confidence to participate or overcome barriers like lack of time, tiredness and bad weather.<sup>(19)</sup>

Only 47% of Canadians in the lowest income bracket rate their health as very good or excellent, compared with 73% of Canadians in the highest income group.<sup>(20)</sup> About 62% of persons with reported low income are considered less active and 62% of persons without a high school education are considered inactive.<sup>(21)</sup>



## Our Beliefs and Commitments

**We believe everyone has value and can benefit from access to programs, services and community recreation.** That's why the YMCA engages the entire community and our membership, participants and leadership reflect the communities we serve.

**We believe equal societies fare better based on quality of life indicators.** That's why we provide access to YMCA programs and services to those with a demonstrated need.

**We believe vulnerable and marginalized individuals and families experience significant barriers for success in life.** That's why we seek funding from donors and government sources to support programming for vulnerable children, youth and families and we partner and collaborate to deliver these important services.

**We believe families face multiple challenges including finances, child care, family instability and time.** That's why we provide supportive family based programs and services to enhance family functioning and quality of life.

## Desired Community Outcomes

## Measures

<p>9 All individuals who require assistance (financial or recreation counselling) to participate at the Y get the support they need</p>	<p>Number of unique participants who receive assistance to participate in YMCA programs, services and recreation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opportunity Fund</li> <li>• Provincial Child Care Subsidy</li> <li>• Recreation Counselling</li> </ul>
<p>10 Our Y reflects the diversity of the communities we serve</p>	<p>Program and service expansion into new communities or targeted at specific underserved populations in the YNAB</p>





# Strategic Directions

Our YMCA has both the duty and the opportunity to be a strong leader, partner and advocate for healthier, more engaged communities. Supported by a strong, financially sustainable organization, this strategic plan focuses on four interrelated strategic directions:

## Excellence in Program and Service Delivery

We will continue to change the lives of children, teens, young adults and families by developing and delivering an innovative, holistic approach to all our programs and services.

## Extend our Reach

We will extend our reach, supporting community-building across Northern Alberta through the deliberate, targeted and innovative expansion of services. This will be done through collaboration within our YMCA and with our local, provincial, national and international partners.

## Increase our Capacity

We will work together to develop and support our staff and volunteers to build healthy communities. We will also ensure our long-term financial sustainability.

## Strengthen our Brand and Impact

We will demonstrate and communicate our Y's impact on the lives of individuals and communities—who we are, what we do and why it matters—so that more stakeholders recognize, participate in and support the achievement of our vision.



# Excellence in Program and Service Delivery

We will continue to change the lives of children, teens, young adults and families by developing and delivering an innovative, holistic approach in all our programs and services.

## EXCELLENCE IN PROGRAMS AND SERVICE DELIVERY **STRATEGIES**

**Ensure all programs and services meet or exceed regulatory and best practice standards and consistently maintain a high level of quality service.**

**Evaluate member and community feedback as well as industry trends to ensure program relevance and ongoing innovation in response to the evolving needs of our communities.**

**Demonstrate evidence-based impact of our programs and services on our communities.**

**Ensure a consistent holistic focus and integration of a social determinants of health framework for all YMCA programs.**

## EXCELLENCE IN PROGRAMS AND SERVICE DELIVERY **INITIATIVES**

Specific initiatives will be included in the annual association financial and operations plan.

# Extend our Reach

We will extend our reach, supporting community-building across Northern Alberta through the deliberate, targeted and innovative expansion of services, and through collaboration within our YMCA and with our local, provincial, national and international partners.

## EXTEND OUR REACH **STRATEGIES**

**Create and implement a program and service expansion strategy to address unmet or emerging community needs for Health, Fitness and Aquatics, Child Care and Community and Housing Initiatives in all regions.**

**Invest in and renew our assets through our association refurbishment and Capital Investment Plan.**

**Develop strategic partnerships that align with our expansion of service strategy including facility expansion, program and service expansion and capital re-investment.**

## EXTEND OUR REACH **INITIATIVES**

Specific initiatives will be included in the annual association financial and operations plan.

# Increase our Capacity

We will work together to develop and support our staff and volunteers to build healthy communities. We will also ensure our long-term financial sustainability.

## INCREASE OUR CAPACITY **STRATEGIES**

**Ensure the overall long-term financial sustainability of our organization (triple bottom line—social, financial, environmental).**

**Develop and implement a comprehensive Human Resource strategy for staff.**

**Evaluate and evolve our senior management structure and leadership model ensuring effective and sustainable regional service delivery.**

**Develop and implement a comprehensive Volunteer strategy.**

**Continue to enhance the governance function of our association.**

## INCREASE OUR CAPACITY **INITIATIVES**

Specific initiatives will be included in the annual association financial and operations plan

# Strengthen our Brand and Impact

We will demonstrate and communicate our Y's impact on the lives of individuals and communities—who we are, what we do and why it matters—so that more stakeholders recognize, participate in, and support the achievement of our vision.

## STRENGTHEN OUR BRAND **STRATEGIES**

**Develop and implement a comprehensive YMCA brand and communications strategy.**

**Collaborate and partner with YMCAs across Canada to leverage YMCA brand and service delivery for greater local and national impact.**

**Enhance the philanthropic culture that grows our annual giving, major gifts, endowment and capital funding initiatives.**

**Enhance the YMCA's role in the development of citizenship and leadership at a local, national and global level.**

**Enhance strategic relationships that align with our vision and strategic directions.**

**Advocate to influence both public policy and opinion on issues related to our four community calls to action.**

## STRENGTHEN OUR BRAND **INITIATIVES**

Specific initiatives will be included in the annual association financial and operations plan.

# Our YMCA at Work

## YMCA programs that empower people of all ages and stages:

- Child Care
- Health, Fitness and Aquatics
- Education and Training
- Youth Leadership
- Employment Services
- Immigrant Services
- Housing Services
- Global Initiatives
- Opportunities to Give

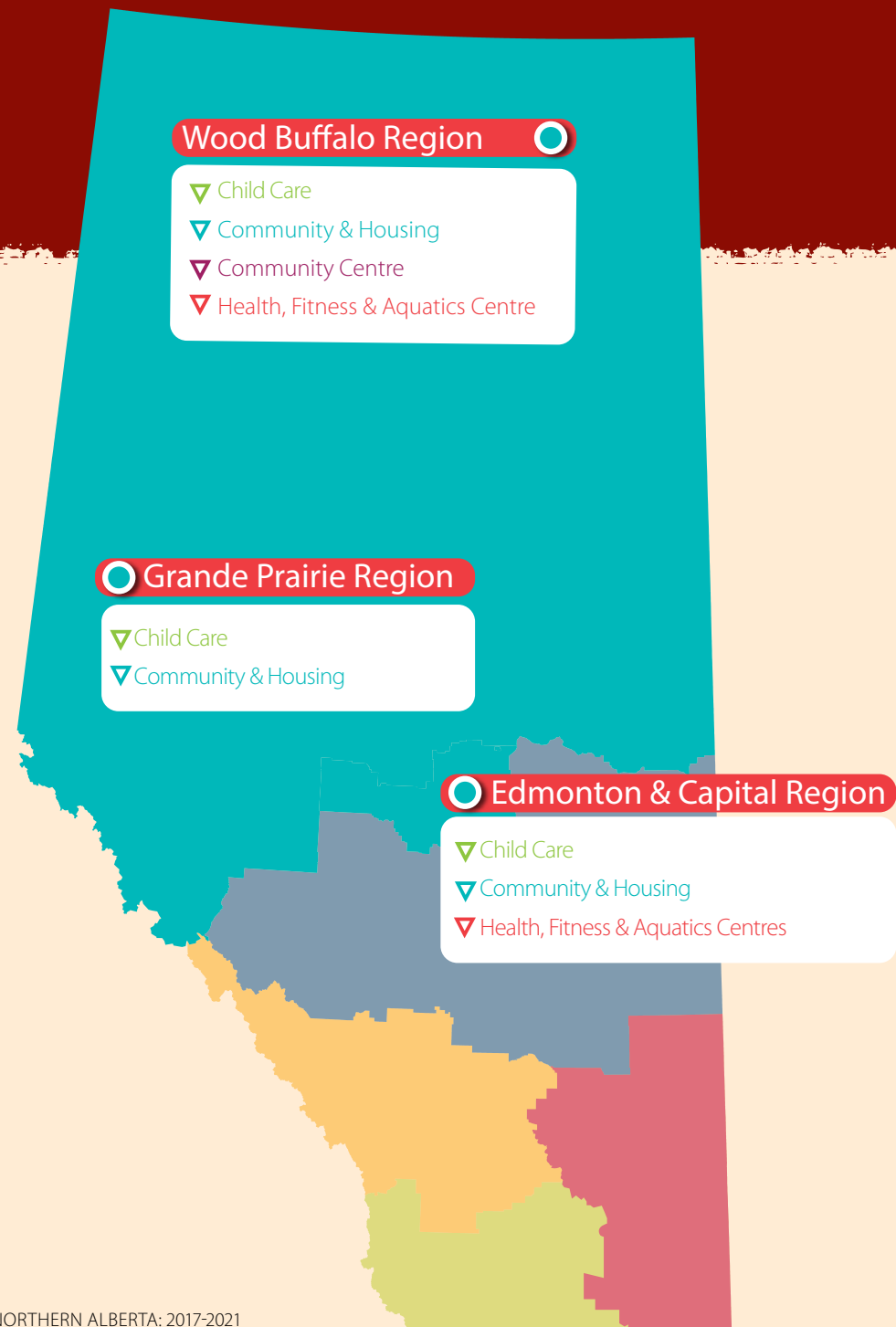
## YMCAs in Alberta:

YMCA of Northern Alberta

YMCA of Calgary

YMCA of Medicine Hat

YMCA of Lethbridge



# Acknowledgements



**The YMCA of Northern Alberta extends its sincerest thanks to the many individuals involved in developing *Transforming Our Communities*. Our community, and our YMCA, is a much better place because of your efforts and commitment.**

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## **Endnotes**

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YMCA of  
Northern Alberta

Strong kids, healthy families,  
thriving communities

