

A woman with long dark hair, wearing a white, short-sleeved, off-the-shoulder dress with a drawstring waist, is captured in a dynamic dance pose. She is positioned on the right side of the frame, with her arms extended and one leg lifted. The background is black, and the scene is lit with warm, yellow light. Large, diagonal geometric shapes in yellow, green, and red overlay the image. The text '2024' is in a bold, dark green font, followed by a horizontal line, then 'Annual' in a smaller, dark green font, and 'REPORT' in a large, bold, dark green font.

**2024**

**Annual  
REPORT**

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### *A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT*

Looking back at the past 15 years, I want to acknowledge the Board at VEEPI Education Foundation of Calgary, our volunteers, donors, supporters, friends, and family for our continued success. In 2024, we were able to submit a proposal to the Government of Alberta and were one of the successful candidates for the Alberta Ethnocultural Grant.

Recent projects implemented by the VEEPI Foundation have included the empowerment of communities to lift themselves out of poverty and overcome some of the barriers they have faced after fighting for freedom.

We are currently focusing on promoting mental health and well-being among descendants of Caribbean and South American countries living in Alberta. On March 1, 2025, we will hold our first mental health community dialogue in Calgary. Alberta Health Services (2021) reported that racism causes trauma, and trauma paints a direct line to mental illnesses. Ethnic and ethnocultural groups, along with racial and visible minorities, are a source of mutual support that can be strengthened and magnified by sharing resources and ideas.

We intend to promote communication and purposeful collaboration among racialized groups in Calgary to address the mental health needs of their communities through the mental health community dialogue.

I am pleased to present the summarized financial statements for the year ended December 31, 2024.

Stanley Kongnetiman  
President

## FINANCIAL SUMMARY

YEEPI Education Foundation of Calgary Financial Statement For the Period Ending December 31

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
<b>Assets</b>					
<b>Cash-Bank Account</b>	\$4,417.20	\$6,971.63	\$8,444.45	\$265.15	\$40,077.97
<b>Equipment</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>	<b>\$6,837.63</b>	<b>\$5,470.10</b>
<b>Total Assets</b>	\$4,417.20	\$6,971.63	\$8,444.45	\$7,102.78	\$45,548.07
<b>Liabilities</b>					
<b>Accounts Payable</b>	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$13,633.50	\$13,633.50
<b>Bank Loan</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$13,633.50	\$13,633.50
<b>Income</b>					
<b>Fundraising</b>	\$1,220.63	\$502.88	\$0.00	\$6,938.00	\$0.00
<b>Donations</b>	\$3,598.00	\$2,600.00	\$2,718.98	\$16,460.63	\$43,306.00
<b>Bank Interest</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>
<b>Total Income</b>	\$4,818.63	\$3,102.88	\$2,718.98	\$23,398.63	\$43,306.00
<b>Disbursements</b>					
<b>Office Rent</b>	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
<b>Office Expenses</b>	\$0.00	\$405.30	0.00	\$211.98	\$379.80
<b>Telephone</b>	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$549.98	\$0.00	\$132.26
<b>Gaming Licenses</b>	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$58.00	\$275.00	\$0.00
<b>Fundraising Expenses</b>	\$401.43	\$10.90	\$0.00	\$2,932.53	\$2,183.90
<b>Operations</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>	<b>\$206.25</b>	<b>\$454.80</b>	<b>\$29,259.62</b>	<b>\$630.00</b>
<b>Total Disbursements</b>	<b>\$401.43</b>	<b>\$622.45</b>	<b>\$1,062.78</b>	<b>\$32,679.14</b>	<b>\$3,325.96</b>

### MISSION

VEEPI Education Foundation of Calgary seeks to increase access to health care, education, and general support by developing global partnerships, rallying volunteers, and establishing sustainable solutions for the Maroon community and other racialized people living in Canada and Suriname.

### VISION

Our vision is to bring mutual understanding, learning and aid to foster better futures.

### VALUES

We will implement our vision by placing high value on:

We will implement our vision by placing high value on:

**YIELD:** We humbly yield to other perspectives, lived experiences, expertise and understandings.

**EDUCATION:** We provide respectful learning experiences to foster understanding and achieve positive outcomes.

**EXCELLENCE:** We ensure our actions meet the highest standard of quality and serve the greatest needs.

**PEOPLE:** We treat one another with respect and take pride in the significant contributions that come from the diversity of individuals and ideas.

**INTEGRITY:** We are each personally accountable for the highest standards of behavior, including honesty and fairness in all aspects of our work.

Our past and upcoming projects are listed below:

#### Operation Give-a-Bag (GaB)

In 2009, the Foundation carried out Operation Give-a-Bag, which provided students in three Maroon villages backpacks and school supplies. The supplies were acquired in Calgary through fundraising and shipped to Suriname.

#### Operation Give-a-Pair-of-Pants (GaPP)

The purpose of this project was to provide students in the poor areas in Suriname with jeans and other necessities. Jeans are part of the school uniform and are usually a significant burden on the parent's annual budget. This project was finalized at the end of 2014.

#### Operation Care-for-a-Family (CaF)

The VEEPI Team has graciously donated their time and efforts in spreading the VEEPI mission to improve health outcomes and nutrition to other local charities and individuals, like Inn from the Cold, throughout the holiday season.

#### Operation Gym-in-a-Box (GiB)

In 2014, VEEPI Education Foundation of Calgary worked with village authorities and smaller communities in Suriname to provide sports material to foster healthy mental and physical development. These underserved communities do not have access to recreational facilities of any kind.

#### Operation Reading glasses (Rg)

With Operation Reading glasses, VEEPI provided over 2,200 reading and prescription glasses to citizens in December 2016, in partnership with Eudia Cambridge in the Netherlands, the Lions Club Calgary, and Ratan Optometrist in Paramaribo.

**Program benefit:** The overall benefits of providing one pair of glasses to a citizen could be calculated as follows:

The average price of a frame in Canada is estimated at \$250. Converted into Surinamese Dollars (SRD) is SRD 1,750. The average monthly income is SRD 800.

**In summary:** It would take a citizen to save up their entire monthly income for more than two months, to afford one pair of glasses.

**Location of project:** Paramaribo, Para, Brokopondo in Suriname

**Year of delivery:** 2016

## WHAT WE DO CONT'D

Program recipients: Maroon and low-income citizens in Suriname

Number of people involved: 700

### Operation Women hygiene Matters (WhM)

This project was carried out in partnership with Days for Girls™ Canada (Lethbridge and Edmonton). The goal was to provide washable menstrual kits to Maroon girls and women who are experiencing marginalization in Suriname. Through this project, Operation Women Hygiene Matters, we were able to empower, engage and enable these women to take ownership of their health. 1,080 kits were shipped to Suriname in July 2018.

Program benefit: The economic benefits of this project are tremendous.

One of the benefits of these kits is that each has a lifecycle of two to four years.

Has high user-acceptance in a variety of settings

- Uses little water
- Dries quickly
- Saves money over disposables
- Comfortable.
- Hygienic
- Environmentally friendly

Location of the project: Paramaribo, Para, Brokopondo in Suriname

Year of delivery: 2018

Program recipients: Maroon and low-income citizens in Suriname

Number of people reached: 1,080

### How do our programs benefit the community at large?

Most of the services we have provided are part of the Canadian basket of goods and services purchased every month.

In most Canadian municipalities, the change in the price for most of the goods and services as outlined in the Consumer Price Index (CPI), is less than 3%. In Suriname, the informal price change (inflation) is running above 30%. Providing

citizens with the goods and services outlined above have a significant impact on one segment of the population.

Who determines what activities programs the group delivers?

Board of Directors in collaboration with community volunteers in Canada and Suriname. YEEPI Education Foundation of Calgary has established a not-for-profit foundation in Suriname; Stichting tan YEEPI.

### Operation HealthFirst Online Conferences (OhF) 2021 and 2022

The objective of the conferences was to start initial discussions around the mental health and mental well-being of Maroon people living in Suriname. The following themes related to the Maroon people in Suriname were explored: (1) mental health, (2) mental well-being, and (3) mental illness. The conference organizers invited: (a) community leaders, (b) teachers, (c) students, and (d) health care professionals either from Maroon background or working with Maroon people. The goal was to build greater awareness on perceptions of mental health and mental well-being and understand the mental health support systems available. These online conferences were held in October 2021 and October 2022.

### Operation Fill-a-Container (FaC)

The purpose of this project is collect non-perishable food items, gently used bed linen, bath and kitchen towels, small household items and washable menstrual pads and ship them to Suriname in a container. This project will commence in January 2023 and conclude in May 2023.

The past few years have been extremely challenging for different individual households and communities in Suriname. Many basic needs items are expensive or difficult to acquire. YEEPI would like to support some of these families and bring some reprieve in what the Surinamese community is experiencing.

### Operation HealthFirst 2023

Out of the shackles, shadows, and silence: embracing mental health – our journey of becoming ...what an amazing theme. History has taught us that our struggles with colonialism and oppression had a tremendous impact on our mental health and mental well-being which in turn resulted in poor mental well-being from one generation to the other. Without an opportunity to pause and discuss this as a nation. At



this conference, we have stressed the courage, bravery, and resilience we have displayed, despite being placed in shackles enslaved and transported to Suriname, hiding behind the waterfalls in the hinterland and coming out of the shadows in 1760 and 1762 through Treaties and now attempting to break the silence in various aspects of our lives. The conference gave us an opportunity for future generations to start from a place of empowerment not oppression.

### **Mental Health Community Dialogue**

Early YEEPI projects focused on soliciting and transporting direct donations of needed goods to impoverished communities in Suriname. More recently, our projects have included empowering these communities to lift themselves out of poverty and produce their own supplies, for example, by establishing a locally owned and led micro-enterprise and a sister non-profit organization in Suriname.

We are also focusing increasingly on promoting mental health and well-being, having organized three Suriname Maroon Mental Health Conferences involving government, mental health professionals, and community leaders from Suriname, Canada, the United States, England, the Netherlands, and the Caribbean. Another is planned for 2025. The importance and power of information resource sharing and collaborative action were strikingly demonstrated to us. We now seek to apply this learning to the needs of racialized Canadians.

### **Description of the project**

Many Albertans who are descendants of countries in the Caribbean are members of their country's associations. These associations operate independently rather than collectively to identify, discuss, and share resources with their constituents. Through mental health community dialogue, we intend to promote communication and purposeful collaboration among these groups to address the mental health needs of their communities.

People from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds can experience race-based bias, discrimination, and systemic barriers that can negatively affect their health and well-being and make it more difficult for them to find a job or access housing, education, health care and social services (Government of Alberta, 2023). Alberta Health Services (2021) reported that racism causes trauma, and trauma paints a di-

rect line to mental illnesses. Ethnic community associations are a source of mutual support that can be strengthened and magnified by sharing resources and ideas.

### **The organization's knowledge and capacity to deliver this project**

Our Board members, volunteers, partners, and donors are equipped to start conversations and sustain cross-cultural engagement around mental health and well-being. They include many health and mental health professionals who have successfully organized and led similar events. A list of those involved and descriptions of their qualifications and experience is attached.

#### **Partners:**

- Mount Royal University (MRU) – Department of Child Studies and Social Work
- Jamaican Canadian Association Alberta (JCAA)
- Calgary African Community Collective
- Immigrant Champions of Canada

#### **Partner's role**

Partnering organizations will be invited to present information on their resources, efforts, and outcomes, as well as their perceived strengths and challenges regarding the mental health and well-being of the communities they represent. They will be asked to identify ways to collaborate, make more efficient use of available resources, and create new resources to improve outcomes.

### **Tools or resources to be developed**

Resources for parents, guardians, and caregivers (reports, flyers, brochures on mental health and well-being tailored to targeted ethnic communities)

Links to government and community resources

Creation of a shareable directory of subject matter experts

Benefit to communities and organizations

Documentation from community dialogues, along with resources for parents, guardians, and caregivers and links to government and community resources, have real network effects: as dialogues and community engagement grow, the

community becomes aware of the issues, the community and healthcare providers can respond faster to issues and challenges, support becomes more globally available, and ultimately generates more value.

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### Stanley Kongnetiman - President

Stanley Kongnetiman is the co-founder and President of YEEPI Education Foundation of Calgary and President at K+Ai. He provides interviews, presentations, and training in English and Dutch. He earned a BA in Economics from the Anton de Kom University in Suriname, a Master of Science degree in Mineral Economics and Operation Research from Colorado School of Mines and an executive MBA from Haskayne School of Business at the University of Calgary. He is also a Certified Business Economist (CBE®) with the National Association for Business Economics (NABE) and a Prosci® Certified Change Professional (CCP).

### Linda Kongnetiman - Vice President

Linda is a Registered Social Worker (RSW) with the Alberta College of Social Workers (ACSW), the Social Workers Association of Alberta (SWAA), the British Columbia College of Social Workers (BCCSW), Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers (OCSWSSW), and Nova Scotia College of Social Workers (NSCSW).

She is the Vice Chair and co-founder of YEEPI Education Foundation of Calgary Inc., and the Vice President with K+Ai. Linda earned a bachelor's degree in social work from the Academy of Higher Education in Arts and Culture (AHKCO) in Suriname, a master and Ph.D. degree in Social Work from the University of Calgary, and she is also a Prosci® Certified Change Professional (CCP).

**Vacant - Director Social Media & Marketing**

**Vacant - Secretary**

**Vacant - Treasurer**

### Kirsten Steenstra - Director of Fundraising

Kirsten joined our Board in December 2022 as the Director of Fundraising. She brings to our Board many years of experience working in the airline industry. Kirsten was instrumental in raising funds and getting our container ready for shipment to Suriname in May this year.

### Seyi Owopo - Director of Community Engagement

Seyi is a life science professional, a product manager, a data analyst, and a scrum master. She joined our Board as the Director of Community Engagement in October this year. Seyi will manage volunteer resources to assist in the delivery of our programs and services. This includes directly managing volunteers, and/or providing guidance, support, resources, and tools to staff who supervise volunteers.

## HELP OUR COMMUNITY

Our next projects will involve the following:

**Community-Driven Roundtable Discussion on Mental Health.** Through a mental health community roundtable discussion, we intend to promote communication and purposeful collaboration among these organizations to address communities' mental health needs.

The objectives of the project are as follows:

- Encourage members of community associations to engage in conversations about mental health to dispel misconceptions and foster recovery and healthy communities;
- Discover innovative, community-driven solutions that address mental health needs, particularly for young individuals; and
- Outline specific steps for ethnic and ethnocultural communities, as well as racialized groups, to address their mental health experiences that complement existing local initiatives (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), 2013).

We are using the SAMHSA model to guide these conversations because they have been proven effective in other jurisdictions.

**Conversations About Racism.** With this project we intend to help more Albertans participate to their full potential in



society and extend the many benefits of diversity. Systemic racism is a persistent problem in Canada, however we want to focus on how we can collectively learn, unlearn, and relearn.. No organization and no government is immune. It is up to all of us to uncover and reject all forms of racism and discrimination (Canadian Human Rights Commission, n.d.).

Actions undertaken by the various orders of government underscore the need for a conversation about racism in Calgary.

## THANK YOU

We would like to thank the following volunteers, who were instrumental in achieving our goals in the past thirteen years:

Angela Koal, MBA, CPA, Treasurer  
Arna Poetisie  
Astrid Menzies  
Chunlee Jackson, Desktop Publisher  
Denise Mitchell  
Dorota Laskowska, Web Developer  
Estella Scruggs, Desktop Publisher  
Georgina Metzler, Web Developer/Desktop Publisher  
Heather Harding Lisa Stephen, BA, Director Fund Development  
Herman Jintie  
Jackie Tang, Web Developer  
Jason Sjare, MBA, Treasurer  
Jenny Tang, Web Developer/Desktop Publisher

Joanna Medina, BA, Treasurer  
Kehinde Ekpudu  
Kevin Persaud, Web Developer/Desktop Publisher  
Laurianne Schell, Secretary  
Louise Ng, MSW, Director Community Engagement  
Marie Standing, Secretary  
Melika Mostowfi, Director Community Engagement  
Melissa Adrian  
Mia Ortiz, BA, Secretary  
Sarah Pocklington, Secretary  
Sherida Pinas  
Spencer Burton, Web Developer/Desktop Publisher  
Wanda Lindsay, Treasurer

## CONTACT INFORMATION

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