

2026 CONFERENCE

BEYOND

THE USUAL SUSPECTS



ACGC
ALBERTA COUNCIL FOR
GLOBAL COOPERATION



In partnership with
Canada

“Welcome to ACGC’s 2026 Conference, Beyond the Usual Suspects: New Partnerships for Innovative International Cooperation.

We gather at a time of significant change for our sector. The landscape of international cooperation is evolving, challenging us to rethink how we work, who we work with, and how we can build a more sustainable future together. This moment also presents an opportunity: to look beyond familiar partnerships, bring new voices to the table, and imagine new ways of advancing a more just and equitable world.

This year’s conference is an invitation for us all to connect across sectors and perspectives. There is much we can learn from thinking beyond our usual connections. By building relationships rooted in shared purpose and mutual benefit—not simply funding—we can create partnerships that are more resilient, innovative and lasting.

Over the course of the day, we hope you will be inspired to challenge assumptions, exchange ideas, discover new possibilities and, most importantly, connect with others who share a commitment to international cooperation. Together, we can strengthen our collective voice and create new pathways for collaboration in a changing world.

Thank you for being part of this community and for contributing your experience, ideas and vision. The future of international cooperation will be shaped by all of us — and by the new partnerships we choose to build together.”

Sandra Muchekeza,
ACGC Executive Director



This conference has been made possible thanks to the support of the Government of Canada through Global Affairs Canada. Thank you for supporting international cooperation in Alberta.



Logistics

In-Person

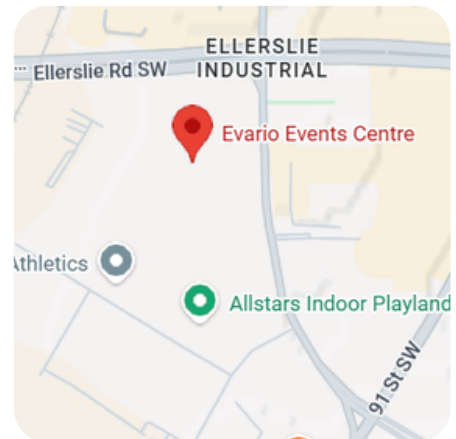
Venue: Evario Events Centre 950 Parsons Rd SW, Edmonton, AB T6X 0J4

Main Entrance: The Evario Events Centre shares a building with the Holiday Inn. The main entrance is located on the east side of the building, north of the Holiday Inn entrance.

Accessibility: The main entrance is at ground level and is wheel-chair accessible. The event space is at ground level. Women's and Men's washrooms are located on the ground floor and are each equipped with a large wheel-chair accessible stall.

Getting There: Unless previously arranged with ACGC, participants are responsible for making their own way to the conference venue. The venue is located along the 521 and 519 bus routes and ample free parking is available.

Dining: In-person attendees can enjoy lunch, as well as refreshments during the morning and afternoon health breaks.

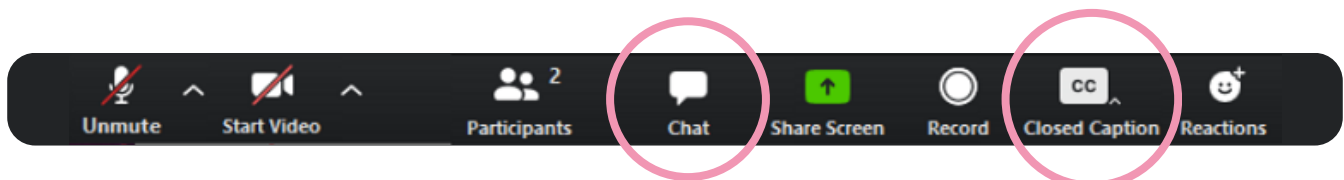


Online

Zoom Link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86515472368>

Livestream: view the conference agenda on the following page to review which sessions will be livestreamed. The livestreamed sessions will be recorded and shared with participants.

Accessibility: to enable captions, select the  button at the bottom of your window. For live support, please share a message in the Zoom chat.



Code of Conduct

We can't wait to see you at the conference! In the interest of creating a welcoming space for all, we've adopted the following Code of Conduct from Cooperation Canada. It is a reminder that we are committed to listening, learning, and providing space for all voices to be heard. Please join us in the following commitments:

- ▶ **Respect:** I commit to being respectful, candid, transparent, and fair to all participants regardless of language, race, national or ethnic origin, age, sex, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, ability, etc. throughout the conference.
- ▶ **Humility:** I commit to participating in the conference with a spirit of openness to learning, and a recognition that the broad diversity of participants includes experience and knowledge that is beyond my own, and through which I can grow.
- ▶ **Inclusion:** I commit to creating space for all in attendance to contribute and participate, to give prominence to the voices and stories of those who might otherwise be excluded, and to seek out the wisdom and reflection of those who may feel silenced.
- ▶ **Solidarity:** I commit to the broad goals of strengthening Canada's global leadership and recognize that all participants share those goals. In all conversations and forums, I will remember that we are on the same side and will seek to find common ground and inspiration.
- ▶ **Equity:** I commit to encouraging a retreat in which the varied experiences of participants are given equal weight.
- ▶ **Safety:** I commit to ensuring the physical, emotional, sexual, and spiritual safety of all participants, including by calling out harassment when it is witnessed and reporting incidents to retreat organizers or other authorities as appropriate.

September 18, 2026



Time	Session
8:00 – 9:00	Registration *
9:00 – 9:15	Opening Remarks Sandra Muchekeza
9:15 – 10:15	Workshop: Everybody at the Table: Partnerships beyond Funding Jim Delaney
10:15 – 10:50	Health Break and Member Fair * 
10:50 – 11:50	Panel: Beyond the Usual: New Tools for Development Ajay Aggarwal, Dr. Chúk Odenigbo, Tariq Bhanjee, Lindsey Machona
11:50 – 12:30	Fireside Chat: Exploring GAC: The Future of International Development Financing Megan Cain, Greg Sowak
12:45 – 13:45	ACGC AGM and Lunch 
13:45 – 14:30	Keynote: The Alchemy of Art: Weaving our Stories into a Tapestry of Song Roya Camille
14:30 – 15:00	Presentation: Beyond the Buzzwords: A Critical Discourse Analysis of the SDGs Prosper Komolafe, Uyai-Abasi Edem
15:00 – 15:15	Health Break * 
15:15 – 16:00	Workshop: Move Well and Help: Values-based Approaches to Artificial Intelligence Amanda Henry
16:00 – 16:15	Closing Remarks Aditya Chaudhuri

* Session will not be livestreamed.



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Sessions

9:00 - 9:15 | Opening Remarks

Speaker: Sandra Muchekeza [Alberta Council for Global Cooperation]

MC: Rumbi Zinyemba [Canadian Red Cross]



9:15 – 10:15 | Workshop: Everybody at the Table: Partnerships beyond Funding

Most economic partnerships in the international development sector are held together by a grant or funding arrangement, rather than by mutual interest. When the funding ends, so does the relationship. This session asks what it takes to build economic partnerships that are genuinely mutually beneficial: arrangements each party stays in because it serves them, not because someone is paying for the room. Participants will leave the session with the tools required to go beyond the usual suspects and make meaningful partnerships beyond traditional development actors.

Speaker: Jim Delaney [Global Development Policy and Practice Hub, University of Ottawa]



10:15 – 10:50 | Health Break and Member Fair



10:50 – 11:50 | Panel: Beyond the Usual: New Tools for Development

This panel will inspire participants to think about stepping beyond the international development sector to make new partnerships. Speakers will give tips and tools for how organizations can demonstrate and speak about their impact in creative ways to capture new audiences; how to access or unlock a wider range of funding vehicles; and how to make use of innovative technologies and communication tools.

Speakers: Ajay Aggarwal [Social Enterprise Fund], Dr. Chúk Odenigbo [Tamarack Institute], Tariq Bhanjee [FaciliChange]; Moderator: Lindsey Machona [Expand Hope]



11:50 – 12:30 | Fireside Chat: Exploring GAC: The Future of International Development Financing

As trade and economic diplomacy become increasingly prominent within Canada's international engagement, this session will offer an examination of the forces reshaping development policy and practice in Canada, and the opportunities available to Canadian organizations as they continue to innovate and adapt in their march towards fulfilling the SDGs.

Speaker: Megan Cain [Global Affairs Canada]; Moderator: Greg Sowak [NorQuest International]



12:45 – 13:45 | ACGC AGM and Lunch



13:45 – 14:30 | Keynote: The Alchemy of Art: Weaving our Stories into a Tapestry of Song

Roya Camille will present an interdisciplinary performance-based keynote that weaves together storytelling, poetry, song, and dance aimed at inviting the audience into an experience about the state of the world today. Through her own family's story of migration due to war, Roya will explore themes related to global conflict and the impact on diasporan communities – exploring the questions: how can art help us navigate and understand these uncertain times? How can we collectively continue to generate hope in the midst of these crises? How can the arts help us envision new and different possibilities, and birth a collective vision of cooperation and peace?

Speaker: Roya Camille



14:30 – 15:00 | Presentation: Beyond the Buzzwords: A Critical Discourse Analysis of the Sustainable Development Goals

This session will explore how the language of global development shapes who is seen as a partner, who holds power, and which goals are considered possible. Drawing on a critical discourse analysis of the SDGs, participants will leave the session having considered whether new sources of capital are truly changing international cooperation or simply reproducing familiar power dynamics in new forms.

Speakers: Prosper Komolafe, Uyai-Abasi Edem



15:00 – 15:15 | Health Break



15:15 – 16:00 | Workshop: Move Well and Help: Values-based Approaches to Artificial Intelligence

Widespread public access to generative artificial intelligence has rapidly transformed the global dialogue on the role and risks of technology in society. This interactive session unpacks what generative AI is [and is not] and how to ensure a values-based approach to AI use. Together we will reflect on what AI incentivizes as well as the risks and opportunities AI is creating for mission-driven organizations. Participants will leave this conversation better equipped to develop responsible AI policy that communities can trust.

Speaker: Amanda Henry [Y Station Communications & Research]



16:00 - 16:15 | Closing Remarks

Speaker: Aditya Chaudhuri [Chair, ACGC Board of Directors]



Speakers (A-Z)

Ajay Aggarwal

Ajay Aggarwal is the Manager, Impact Investments at the Social Enterprise Fund. Ajay has over 6 years of investments and real estate experience including 3 years working at a public REIT and now works for the Social Enterprise Fund as a Manager of Impact Investments. He has his CFA designation and has graduated from the University of Alberta with a Bachelor of Commerce.

Amanda Henry

Amanda [she/her] is a strategist and advisor who has spent more than two decades supporting critical decision-making by public and non-profit organizations, including leading teams in the Alberta government and in the nonprofit and post-secondary sectors. She works with organizations to develop values-based approaches to AI: translating the risks of this fast-moving technology into best practices that mission-driven teams can actually use. That work is grounded in a career built on the importance of equity, inclusion, and good governance. Amanda has supported dozens of nonprofit and community organizations with strategic planning, governance training, and board development. In her time with the Alberta government, she contributed to high-profile initiatives such as the creation of Alberta's Anti-Racism Advisory Council and the Minister's Youth Council. At Y Station Communications & Research, Amanda helps impact-focused organizations align strategy, engagement, governance, and technology—with a particular focus on responsible AI use in the public and nonprofit sectors. She is a recipient of the Queen Elizabeth II Platinum Jubilee Medal for her contributions to public service in Alberta.

Dr. Chúk Odenigbo

Dr. Chúk Odenigbo [PhD] is the Consulting Director of Impact Evaluation at the Tamarack Institute Learning Centre. Proudly Franco-Albertan, Chúk is passionate about the ways in which the environment impacts human health and the role of justice in our understanding of how our societies function. This passion manifests itself in his work where he focuses on environmental and climate justice in his efforts to not only make green spaces accessible for everyone; but to fight environmental racism in all its forms and to popularise the understanding that you cannot create a society that is environmentally friendly if that same society is not just.

Chúk has worked in a variety of industries, including oil and gas, fashion retail, and academia. He is interested in the multidisciplinary nature of our existence and in exploring new solutions that respond to recurring problems. Chúk was ranked amongst the top 30 Sustainability Leaders under 30 by Corporate Knights, the top 30 Change-Making Albertans under 30 by the Alberta Council for Global Cooperation, the top 10 young Franco-Albertan leaders by Radio-Canada and the top 25 environmentalists under 25 in Canada by the Starfish for three years. Chúk was awarded the Eugène C.-Trottier award for his contribution in making his community more visible and more welcoming for all, and was named the 43rd Ashley Fellow at Trent University; the youngest person and first Black person to receive both of these distinctions. In 2025, Chúk was one of 100 people selected by the Governor General to receive the King Charles III Coronation Medal at a ceremony at Rideau Hall.

Speakers (A-Z)

Aditya Chaudhuri

Aditya [Adi] Chaudhuri is an engineer, artist, and global citizen passionate about making tomorrow sustainable and better. For over a decade, he has worked and volunteered in the international cooperation sector, spanning government, civil society, advocacy, and nonprofit leadership. Adi's career includes major digital transformations across federal and provincial governments, leading the Calgary Professional Chapter of Engineers Without Borders, and serving on the board of the Alberta Council for Global Cooperation since 2020. Since 2016, Adi's advocacy has influenced Canada's foreign policy to address poverty alleviation through gender equality and climate justice. In 2019, he was recognized as an Alberta Top 30 Under 30.

Ajay Aggarwal

Ajay Aggarwal is the Manager, Impact Investments at the Social Enterprise Fund. Ajay has over 6 years of investments and real estate experience including 3 years working at a public REIT and now works for the Social Enterprise Fund as a Manager of Impact Investments. He has his CFA designation and has graduated from the University of Alberta with a Bachelor of Commerce.

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Greg Sowak

Greg is a seasoned post-secondary administrator and English language instructor with more than 20 years experience in international education. Greg has worked on a variety of initiatives with learners, colleagues, and officials from a broad range of countries including China, Japan, Vietnam, The Philippines, Mexico, Kenya, UAE, Colombia, Brazil, Qatar, Iran, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia. Greg joined the ACGC Board in 2022 and is currently serving his second term as board member.

Greg began his career in 1995 at the University of Alberta and MacEwan, where he specialized in teaching Academic English and TOEFL Preparation. He moved into program administration in 1998, serving as Co-chair of the MacEwan English Language Institute. After administrative positions at both NAIT and UAlberta, Greg began his current role as International Project Officer at NorQuest International, NorQuest College Edmonton, in 2019.

In his current work, Greg has the great privilege of serving as technical lead on a Young Africa Works project dedicated to implementing an RPL system in Kenyan Technical Institutions. He also oversees a federally funded [Global skills Opportunity] student mobility program and is beginning a new project in Kenya dedicated to enhancing teaching/learning at Kenyan Technical Trade Institutions on the Northern coast. Greg is an SDG advocate who relates most closely to SDGs 1, 3, and 4: No Poverty; Good Health & Well Being; Quality Education.

Jim Delaney

Jim Delaney is Executive Director of the Global Development Policy and Practice Hub at the University of Ottawa and principal consultant at Jim Delaney Consulting. He joined the University of Ottawa in 2026 following more than a decade with World University Service of Canada, where he served as Director of Technical Services. Jim teaches in experiential learning, adaptive management, organizational learning and systems thinking. Jim has published on community economic development, cross-sector collaboration and policy engagement, and has consulted for the World Bank, the International Fund for Agricultural Development, the Asian Development Bank among others.

Lindsey Machona

Lindsey Machona is the Executive Director of Expand Hope (EH), a Canadian non-profit organization building infrastructure within marginalized communities in Guatemala. For 8 years, Lindsey has led EH with strategic acumen, growing the organization to 23 schools built and thousands of lives impacted. She has proven instrumental in leveraging local and international partnerships to accelerate EH's initiatives, fostering relationships with local governments, international NGOs, corporate partners, and community leaders. Her work has required navigating complex international relations across diverse cultural contexts, demonstrating strong diplomacy and cross-cultural fluency.

Megan Cain

Megan Cain is Director General, International Assistance Operations and Partnerships at Global Affairs Canada, where she leads efforts to strengthen the delivery of Canada's international assistance programming and partnerships. With extensive experience across international development policy, operations, global health, and partnerships, she has held a range of executive and management positions within Global Affairs Canada and the former Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). Throughout her career, she has worked with governments, multilateral organizations, civil society, and other partners to advance Canada's international development objectives and improve outcomes for vulnerable populations around the world.

Prosper Komolafe

Prosper Komolafe is a BSc. student in Exercise and Health Physiology at the University of Calgary and a 2026 Top 30 Under 30 recipient recognized by the Alberta Council for Global Cooperation. As an undergraduate researcher, he is passionate about advancing health and community well-being through evidence-based practice. He is also the Co-founder and Co-president of HE4L, leading initiatives centred on health education and community impact. In addition to his academic and leadership roles, he serves as a certified Emergency Medical Responder, demonstrating a strong commitment to frontline care and public safety.

Roya Camille

Roya Camille is a Northern Canadian singer-songwriter and music educator. She merges pop, folk, and Middle Eastern influences into a warm, soulful sound. With a voice both sweet and sultry, she invites listeners on a journey under the midnight sun — from the Arctic aurora to prairie skies.

In October 2025, Roya released her debut single No More War, an anthemic call for peace in a turbulent world. No More War has received CBC Radio One play, and won Best Music Video at the Toronto Women Film Festival, introducing Roya as a compelling, genre-bending new voice. In 2026-27, she will release four singles leading into her debut album “Breath and Being”, produced by JUNO-nominated Enoch Attey. This record is a collection of deeply personal songs about life, love, and loss, tracing her journey through womanhood. Blending acoustic guitars, folk rhythms, and jazz-infused melodies, Roya’s work is poetic, grounded, and emotionally resonant.

Roya has performed at notable venues including the Calgary Folk Club, Yardbird Suite, the King Eddy, and the Starlite Room. Recently featured on CBC’s Provincial Playlist, she was showcased as one of three emerging Albertan singer-songwriters. Roya is also a recipient of the MusiCounts Fred Sherratt Award.

Rumbi Zinyemba

Rumbi Zinyemba has worked in the social impact sector, specializing in international development, peace and conflict and disaster and emergency community programming for over 10 years for organizations in Canada, Zimbabwe and Zambia. She has expertise in conference facilitation and development, monitoring and evaluation and grant management.

Tariq Bhanjee

Tariq Bhanjee brings over 25 years of experience in designing and managing international development programs across more than 40 countries. A specialist in resource mobilization and strategic planning, Tariq has successfully authored 70+ proposals supporting global health and development initiatives worth over \$650M. Currently, he advises local and international non-profits on navigating complex, shrinking funding environments through fund development and innovations. Tariq's extensive field background is anchored by an M.Sc. in Planning and a Master of Public Health, offering a unique intersectional lens that balances rigorous socio-economic analysis with a deep commitment to social impact. Driven by moral ambition and trained in participatory development and results-based management, he focuses on bridging the gap between innovative funding frameworks and actionable, sustainable community impact. Tariq brings a critical perspective based on human-centered principles of listening, sharing, learning, and growing. Tariq is the Principal Consultant at FaciliChange, where for 15 years has offered consulting services for clients in the private, non-profit and government sectors to clarify strategies, optimize processes and generate resources for social impact.

Uyai-Abasi Edem

Uyai-Abasi Edem is a fourth-year International Relations student at the University of Calgary with interests in global governance and sustainable development. She has experience in policy research and advocacy through roles with a Member of Parliament's Youth Council, her university's Women in Politics Club, and a youth-led organization, The Global Call. Her work focuses on advancing inclusive policies and amplifying marginalized voices through research, community engagement, and dialogue. Through her academic pursuit and community engagement, Uyai-Abasi is committed to strengthening meaningful youth participation in decision-making and global development.