

COMMUNITY IMPACT REPORT



A MESSAGE FROM PRUDENTIA INSTITUTE

At Prudentia Institute, we believe that when young people are trusted as researchers, partners, and leaders, they generate the knowledge needed to build stronger communities. Through the Student Research Lab, we create opportunities for youth to investigate the issues that matter most to them while developing the confidence, skills, and leadership to contribute meaningful solutions.

This Community Impact Report highlights the progress we made together over the past year (July 1, 2025, to June 30, 2026). From welcoming three new teams of youth researchers and launching our inaugural Research Advisory Council to advancing research on youth advocacy and activism and preparing for a new study on youth mental wellbeing, each milestone reflects our commitment to research that is collaborative, community-engaged, and youth-led.

None of this work would be possible without the dedication of our youth researchers, partners, volunteers, funders, Board of Directors, and community supporters. Together, we are cultivating a generation of young people whose voices, experiences, and ideas are helping shape more inclusive organizations, stronger communities, and a brighter future for all.

Our Signature Program: The Student Research Lab

"The Student Research lab is important because it gives youth an opportunity to learn about what it means to be a researcher, and then actually allows them to become an expert on a research topic themselves. With the hands-on experience we get in the Lab we were able to gain insight into what a career as a researcher would look like. Additionally, the collaborative setting encourages valuable mentorship opportunities for young people"
(Jayden Gates, Youth Researcher)

Over the past year, the Student Research Lab welcomed three teams of youth researchers. Two teams of high school students participated through our partnership with the Annapolis Valley Regional Centre for Education, and the first university team joined us in the Lab from Acadia University. Youth conducted interviews, analyzed qualitative data, and helped share findings with community partners through presentations, reports, and conference presentations. Youth developed confidence, critical thinking skills, and the ability to see themselves as researchers whose knowledge and perspectives can contribute to positive change in their communities.

Visit our website at www.prudentiainstitute.ca or contact us at info@prudentiainstitute.ca.
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Insights From The Student Research Lab

We believe the most meaningful youth research is conducted with young people, not on them. By positioning youth as researchers, partners, and knowledge creators, we are transforming both how research is conducted and how young people see themselves.

The Student Research Lab is Prudentia Institute's signature program, uniquely combining a **youth development program** with a **scholarly research lab**. Over the course of a 14-week experience, youth participate in a structured developmental journey where they are trained in qualitative research methods, research ethics, in-depth interviewing, data analysis, and knowledge mobilization before contributing as peer researchers to an approved research study.

The Fall team in the Student Research Lab from AVRCE. Pictured L-R: Laura Greencorn, Meadow Baker, Natalie Paradis, Waverly Leblanc, Amiah Pepler and Wyatt Bishop. The youth are coding and analyzing textual data from peer interviews on advocacy.



By positioning youth as researchers rather than simply research participants, the Student Research Lab advances rigorous, youth-led scholarship while empowering the next generation of researchers, changemakers, and community leaders. Youth experience what it means to create knowledge that can influence organizations, communities, and public policy.

Our Study On Youth Advocacy and Activism

"This study allows us to hear what youth really think and helps us better understand advocacy and activism. I'm very grateful to have been a part of this program, and I'm excited to see where my new skills apply in the future." (Wyatt Bishop, Youth Researcher)

This year, youth researchers in the Student Research Lab explored how young people become involved in advocacy and activism, and positive social change. Through interviews with youth from across Atlantic Canada, the team examined what inspires young people to take action on issues they care about, as well as the barriers that often stand in their way.

The study found that advocacy and activism are not simply individual choices, but developmental journeys shaped by supportive relationships, access to good information, opportunities to participate, and experiences of being heard. Youth also identified significant barriers, including aged-based exclusion, limited opportunities, and feeling that their voices were not valued. These findings are helping to inform educators, community organizations, and policymakers about how to better support meaningful youth participation and positive civic engagement.

Youth Leadership In Action

"From my perspective, the Student Research Lab offers a truly unique experience. The Student Research Lab gives students the opportunity to engage in meaningful research, often for the first time, while earning a high school credit, in an environment that is both rigorous and inclusive." (Andrew Seymour, Youth Pathways Consultant, AVRCE)



2025-2026 Youth Researchers



15 talented youth. 2 cohorts. 1 shared mission: advancing knowledge for positive change.



HIGH SCHOOL COHORT

Annapolis Valley Regional Centre for Education

- 1 Meadow Baker
- 2 Laura Greencorn
- 3 Wyatt Bishop
- 4 Amiah Pepler
- 5 Natalie Paradis
- 6 Waverley Leblanc
- 7 Skye Ansems
- 8 Jayden Gates
- 9 Serenity Croft
- 10 Isla Chiasson



AVRCE
Annapolis Valley
Regional Centre
for Education



UNIVERSITY COHORT

Acadia University

- 1 Vicky Martinez
- 2 Katie Hayden
- 3 Ella Christie
- 4 Ella Hickey
- 5 Bianca Helmig



ACADIA
UNIVERSITY

 10 High School Researchers

 5 University Researchers



Together, we are building knowledge, creating impact, and inspiring change.

 Youth-led

 Research-driven

 Community-focused

 Change in action

"The Student Research Lab helped me grow not just as a student, but as someone eager to keep learning and contributing to academia. It gave me the confidence to speak my mind and the opportunity to build meaningful friendships with fellow youth researchers." (Victoria Martinez, Youth Researcher)



Recognition And Impact

This year, the Student Research Lab's research received recognition for both its quality and its impact. Our research presentation on youth advocacy and activism was shortlisted among the top five presentations at the Association for Nonprofit and Social Economy Research (ANSER) Conference, highlighting the significance of our youth-led research approach within the nonprofit and social economy sector.

In addition, our article, **Understanding Youth Empowerment: A Youth Participatory Action Research Approach**, was recognized as the most downloaded article of the year, reflecting growing national and international interest in youth-engaged research and the innovative work being undertaken through the Student Research Lab.

Over the past year, the Student Research Lab has continued to expand its impact through knowledge mobilization, scholarly dissemination, and community engagement. Lab members shared their research at three academic conferences, including the *Atlantic Schools of Business Conference*, the *Association for Nonprofit and Social Economy Research Conference*, and the *Standing Conference on Organizational Symbolism*.

Additionally, the team facilitated community workshops and presentations with SHAD Canada and Nova Scotia's Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, while also being featured in an Acadia University news story, "**Empowered Voices: Youth Leading the Way at Student Research Lab**", highlighting the Lab's innovative youth-led research model.

The Lab also produced three community-facing knowledge mobilization resources, including research reports on Youth Advocacy and Youth Employment, as well as a Youth Advocacy fact sheet, all freely available through the Institute's [website](#). Scholarly outputs included three publications: the journal article ***Towards Agentic Youth Engagement: A Youth Participatory Action Research Study*** and two book chapters, ***Youth-Driven Innovation, Engagement and Empowerment*** and ***Gender, Empowerment and Social Innovation***. Looking ahead, the Lab has four major scholarly works currently in development: a journal article examining youth underemployment through young people's narratives, a youth-informed Theory of Change for advocacy and activism, the forthcoming book ***Empowering Canadian Youth as Co-Researchers: Practical Case Studies for Applied Youth Research***, and a book chapter exploring Learning Labs. Together, these outputs demonstrate the Student Research Lab's commitment to generating impactful research while ensuring that knowledge reaches academic, professional, and community audiences alike.

2025–2026 Impact		
	Youth Researchers	15
	Youth Interviews	32
	Research Studies	1
	Community Reports	3
	Conference Presentations	3
	Publications	3
	Works in Progress	4
	High School Cohorts	2
	University Cohort	1
	Research Advisory Council Members	16

Looking Ahead: Youth Mental Health

In the coming year, the Student Research Lab will launch a new youth-led research study exploring **everyday mental wellbeing among young people in Nova Scotia**. Rather than focusing solely on mental illness or access to services, the study will examine the social, relational, digital, educational, and community conditions that shape how young people experience mental wellbeing in their daily lives.

The research will be conducted using the Student Research Lab's **Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) model**, with youth serving as peer researchers who help design the study, conduct interviews, analyze findings, and share recommendations with community partners.

By centring youth perspectives, this research aims to generate practical insights that complement existing mental health data while informing more responsive programs, policies, and supports. We look forward to working alongside young people, educators, community organizations, and health partners to better understand what helps youth thrive and how communities can create the conditions for positive mental wellbeing.



Introducing The New Research Advisory Council

The launch of the Student Research Lab's inaugural Research Advisory Council marks an important milestone in the growth of both the Lab and Prudentia Institute. Bringing together volunteer leaders from higher education, government, community organizations, and industry, the Council provides strategic guidance to ensure our youth-engaged research remains relevant, rigorous, and responsive to the issues that matter most to young people.

As trusted advisors, Council members help identify emerging research priorities, strengthen strategic partnerships, expand knowledge mobilization, and maximize the real-world impact of our work. Their collective expertise bridges youth perspectives with leaders across multiple sectors, helping ensure that research generated by young people informs meaningful conversations, influences policy and practice, and contributes to stronger, more inclusive communities.

Through thoughtful stewardship and a shared commitment to youth voice, the Research Advisory Council helps position the Student Research Lab for long-term impact while ensuring our work continues to be guided by the needs, experiences, and aspirations of young people.



Welcome To Our New Council Members

RESEARCH ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERS

**Dr. Ellen Shaffner**

Assistant Professor,
Mount Saint Vincent
University

**Jennifer Murphy**

Director of National
Program Initiatives,
SHAD Canada

**Kathy Greeno**

Director Career Pathways,
Nova Scotia, Department
of Education & Early
Childhood Development

**Dr. Kerry A. Watson**

Professor, Accounting
and Management,
Fanshawe College

**Dr. Maria Matthews**

Chair, Business
Administration,
Tourism and Hospitality
Management, MSVU

**Dr. Mary Beth Doucette**

Associate Professor &
Purdy Crawford Chair,
Cape Breton University

**Dr. Michelle Thomason**

Director, Safety Branch,
Department of Labour,
Skills and Immigration

**Professor Jennifer Guy**

Assistant Professor,
Mount Saint Vincent
University

**Vic Hawyard,**

Resource Navigator,
YWCA Halifax

**Dr. Nina Winham**

Principal,
New Climate
Strategies

**Noel Baldwin**

Executive Director,
Future Skills Centre

**Shannon Harding**

President & CEO,
JA Nova Scotia

**Sherry Costa-Lorenz**

Executive Director,
Nova Scotia League
for Equal Opportunities

**Teresa Marques**

President and CEO,
Rideau Hall
Foundation

**Timothy Crooks**

Executive Director,
Phoenix

**Heather MacDonald**

Chief Development
Officer, YMCA Halifax

Recognizing Our Financial And Community Partners

The work of Prudentia Institute is made possible through the generosity, collaboration, and shared commitment of our financial supporters and community partners. Their investment in youth development, youth-led research, and community engagement enables us to create meaningful opportunities for young people while generating knowledge that informs policy, practice, and positive social change. These partnerships help ensure that youth voices are heard, valued, and translated into meaningful action.

We gratefully acknowledge the financial support of the **River Philip Foundation**, the **Harrison McCain Foundation**, and the **Acadia University Research Fund** during the 2025–2026 fiscal year. Their investment has been instrumental in advancing our research, supporting youth researchers, and expanding the reach and impact of the Student Research Lab.

We also extend our sincere appreciation to our community partners, including the **Annapolis Valley Regional Centre for Education**, the **Nova Scotia Department of Education and Early Childhood Development**, and **Launchbox Acadia**. Through their collaboration, expertise, and ongoing support, we are able to provide meaningful youth-led research experiences that foster confidence, skills, leadership, and personal growth while strengthening the connections between research, education, and community.

Our Board of Directors

Prudentia Institute is fortunate to be guided by an exceptional Board of Directors whose leadership, expertise, and commitment continue to strengthen our mission. Drawing on diverse experience across academia, government, business, law, community organizations, and the non-profit sector, our Board provides thoughtful strategic oversight that helps position the Institute for long-term impact and sustainability.



Their generosity of time, wise counsel, and shared belief in the potential of young people have been instrumental in advancing our research, partnerships, and programs. We are deeply grateful for their continued leadership and unwavering support as we work together to create more opportunities for youth.

Join Us In Shaping the Future

The impact highlighted throughout this report has been made possible through the generosity of individuals, foundations, and community partners who believe in the power of youth-led research. As we look ahead, we invite you to join us in writing the next chapter of the Student Research Lab.

Your financial support will help us launch our upcoming youth mental wellbeing study, provide transformative research experiences for the next generation of youth researchers, and expand the Student Research Lab reach and impact, creating new opportunities for young people to develop as researchers, leaders, and changemakers.

Each contribution is an investment in youth empowerment, evidence-informed decision-making, and stronger communities. Together, we can ensure that more young people have the opportunity to ask meaningful questions, generate new knowledge, and help shape the policies, programs, and communities of tomorrow.

Every year, more young people discover that they have the knowledge, skills, and capacity to generate research and evidence that can shape organizations, strengthen communities, and inspire positive social change. With your support, we can ensure that these opportunities continue to grow, empowering the next generation of researchers, leaders, and changemakers.

To learn more about supporting the Student Research Lab or to [make a donation](https://www.prudentiainstitute.ca), please visit www.prudentiainstitute.ca. Together, we can build a future that is truly youth-led.



Our Mission:

To support the inclusive development and empowerment of youth through research and knowledge mobilization.





Our Values:

We believe in empowering youth and building strong communities through self-belief, autonomy, personal power, independence, relationships, interdependence, empathy, compassion, and inclusion.

**SELF-BELIEF****AUTONOMY****PERSONAL POWER****INDEPENDENCE****RELATIONSHIPS**

**INTERDEPENDENCE****EMPATHY****COMPASSION****INCLUSION**



Our Vision:

To increase employment, financial independence, community engagement, labour attachment, and equality of opportunities for youth.

**EMPLOYMENT****FINANCIAL INDEPENDENCE****COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT****LABOUR ATTACHMENT****EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITIES**

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