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stronciu68 · May 27 · 5 min read

Meet the Winners of the 2025 Community-Based Research Excellence Awards

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The Community-Based Research Excellence Awards is an annual CBRCanada program that nationally recognizes outstanding individuals and partnerships that exemplify what it means to do community-based research well. Launched in 2021, this marks the fifth year of the Awards program, and we continue to be inspired by the caliber of nominees in both categories: **Excellence in Community-Campus Researcher Partnership** and **Emerging Community-Based Researcher**.

A heartfelt thank you to all 40 nominees this year for your incredible contributions.

CBRCanada is thrilled to introduce you to the **2025 Community-Based Research Excellence Award Winners!**

The 2025 Excellence in Community-Campus Research Partnership Award Winner is:

The National Overdose Response Service (NORS)

Grenfell Ministries & the University of Alberta

National Overdose Response Service (NORS) is a virtual supervised consumption service created to support individuals who use substances alone. Between 50-70% of overdose related deaths occur when someone consumes substance alone. The service works as follows: If someone is about to use drugs alone, they call or text NORS' hotline. They are connected to a person of lived experience, who notes their address and repeatedly texts or stays on the line with the caller as they use their substance. If at any moment the caller is unresponsive, 911 is dispatched to their home. The line has been active across Canada since 2020. It has been used over 20,000 times and helped over 170 individuals who overdosed with zero deaths or prolonged hospitalizations. The research about NORS has garnered over 24 peer-reviewed papers, articles in the Washington Post, Globe and Mail, and an upcoming segment on CBC's The National.

More information: [National Overdose Response Service](#)

The 2025 Emerging Community-Based Researcher Award Winner is:

Dr. Jennifer O'Neil

Assistant Professor, School of Rehabilitation Sciences, University of Ottawa

Dr. Jennifer O'Neil, a licensed physiotherapist and faculty member at the School of Rehabilitation Sciences, leads a community-based research program focused on improving health equity and access to rehabilitation services. Grounded in social justice and inclusivity, her work emphasizes delivering services in individuals' preferred languages. In response to francophone communities' needs, she co-developed *Marche vers le Futur*, a telehealth falls prevention program now implemented in five provinces, reaching over 180 older adults. Dr. O'Neil presented this work to the Senate Committee on Official Languages, advocating for equitable access to physiotherapy. Internationally, she co-led a CIHR-funded project in Uganda to identify rehabilitation research priorities with local NGOs and people with disabilities. Her research is deeply participatory—co-created with community members and centered on their lived experiences. Dr. O'Neil's work continues to advance inclusive rehabilitation practices through collaborative knowledge sharing, co-authored publications, and the co-development of interventions driven by community-identified needs.

More information: [Reachable Rehab Research Lab](#)

The CBRCanada Award Adjudication committee has nominated two Honorary Mentions for the 2025 Excellence in Community-Campus Research Partnerships Award:

Reclaiming Indigenous Birth

National Council of Indigenous Midwives, Pauktuutit Inuit Women's Association, Native Women's Association of Canada, Juniper Midwives & the University of Calgary, McMaster University, Western University

Through Indigenous midwife and Indigenous community leadership and engagement, this research examined the costs of obstetric evacuation and the social-cultural benefits of Indigenous midwifery. Through interdisciplinary, Indigenous and mixed methods research, this research compiled information on the costs of obstetric evacuation and perinatal health indicators, as well as supported three case studies, including the Inuit midwifery forum, midwife-patient digital stories and urban birth work support. This information aims to inform best practices on how to support Indigenous mothers, infants and communities.

[Learn more>](#)

Decisions for Affordable/Social Housing (DASH)

Alliance to End Homelessness Ottawa & the University of Ottawa

The Alliance to End Homelessness Ottawa (ATEHO) and University of Ottawa researchers formed a community-campus partnership to improve access to and use of system-level housing and homelessness data. Their project, Making IT Count: Decisions for Affordable/Social Housing (DASH) System, aims to develop a dashboard that integrates siloed housing data and allows stakeholders to visualize and query it. DASH will support evidence-based decision making for actions such as developing housing policies and planning new housing stock to meet community needs.

DASH exemplifies community-based research excellence through authentic collaboration and community-driven efforts. Both ATEHO and the university researchers are actively involved in all stages of DASH development, with overall direction guided by a community Advisory Group, and the ATEHO's Expert Steering Team, composed of individuals with lived experience of homelessness. DASH has the potential to enhance municipal and national stakeholder engagement in housing decision-making and serve as a model for data-driven, community-based solutions.

[Learn more>](#)

The CBRCanada Award Adjudication committee has nominated two Honorary Mentions for the 2025 Emerging Community-Based Researcher Award:

Sepehr Rassi

York University

Sepehr Rassi is a doctoral student in the School of Kinesiology and Health Science at York University and a dedicated member of the LaMarsh Centre for Child and Youth Research. His research centers on co-developing inclusive physical activity programs for autistic children, in partnership with Autism Ontario, Variety Village, and Abilities Centre. Sep co-created *Adapted Bingocize*, a fun, accessible program combining bingo with physical activity, tailored to meet community needs and implemented in real-world settings. He is currently piloting the program and evaluating its impact through mixed-methods research that includes the voices of children, families, and community leaders. Deeply committed to societal justice, Sep ensures his work supports the physical, mental, and social wellbeing of children with disabilities, who often face systemic barriers to participation. His long-term vision includes broad-scale implementation and adaptation of the program to serve diverse children across Canada, turning community-based research into lasting, equitable action.

[Learn more>](#)

Dr. Tanya Halsall

University of Ottawa

Dr. Tanya Halsall is an emerging researcher who has spent over two decades leading research that advances societal justice and health equity for young people in Canada. Her work is grounded in the social determinants of health and co-created with community partners to address real-world priorities across child and youth services, school settings, and online environments. Currently, Dr. Halsall leads national research on outdoor learning, Integrated Youth Services (IYS), and the Canadian implementation of the Icelandic Prevention Model (IPM) for youth substance use prevention. Her participatory methods engage youth, families, practitioners, and policymakers from project design through dissemination. Her work has influenced national policy, supported youth wellbeing, and enabled the scale-up of evidence-informed models like IYS and IPM. Most recently, she is spearheading research into online harms using the commercial determinants of health framework to co-develop policy reforms and protections for children and youth in digital spaces, with equity and justice at the core.

[Learn more>](#)

CONGRATULATIONS!

We extend our heartfelt congratulations to all of this year's winners, honourable mentions, and all the nominees! Your work is so important. It is a testament to the impact of community-based research in building a more just, inclusive, and positive future in Canada.

With gratitude,

The CBRCanada Team with the Adjudication Committee

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