



Case Study:

EMPLOYMENT & MENTORSHIP



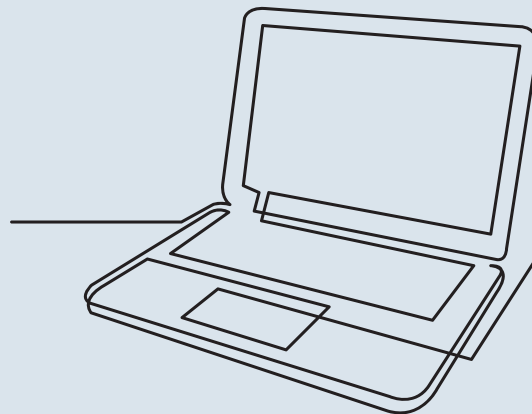
COMMUNITIES BUILDING YOUTH FUTURES (CBYF)

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This case study represents communities' actions and opinions as of March 2024. The opinions expressed here belong solely to the youth profiled and do not reflect the views of their employer / Municipality of the City of Grande Prairie.

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Cover Photo: Ketut Subiyanto



MEET BLUE

COMMUNITY
Grande Prairie, AB



Blue Vetsch is a young leader; at eighteen they are the Community Development Youth Coordinator for CBYF Grande Prairie. Blue has lived in Grande Prairie (GP) for 12 years and for many of those years, they struggled to find acceptance in their community. They attribute their ability to do the job, and feel comfortable in their own skin, to their mentor, J, the previous coordinator for CBYF.

"I can't speak for everyone, but my personal experience growing up here in GP has been really tough, there have been a lot of ups and downs—more downs than ups. [...] Being able to hook into CBYF when I did, well, it came at a valuable point in my life and for that I will forever be grateful. J is just an amazing person that really wanted to help youth—I wouldn't be where I am today without them."

"I don't want to have a negative outlook towards GP; there are a lot of amazing services and opportunities here. But there is still a lot of work to be done to make Grande Prairie a truly inclusive community, for youth and adults alike."

Blue shares generously about their journey towards community work and the new possibilities it has unlocked for them. Grande Prairie is located 465 km northwest of Edmonton and is surrounded by farmland on all sides. Although Grande Prairie has a sizable population of just over 63,000 residents, it's still a five hour drive should you need a service not offered in town. The city's economy revolves around oil and gas, agriculture, and forestry, making these the most accessible career paths.

“ [T]here is still a lot of work to be done to make Grande Prairie a truly inclusive community, for youth and adults alike.” **Blue**

MEET BLUE

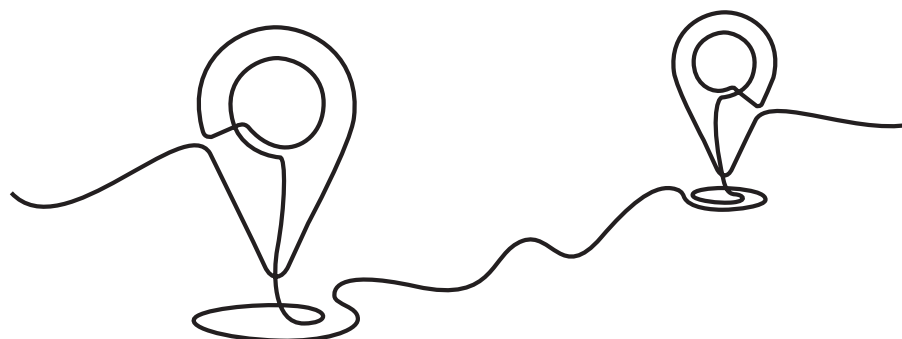
*"The trades are highly popular here; not only are they readily available through our programs here in Alberta, but by the time you get out of high school you can be a second year apprentice and that is massive [in terms of earning potential]. And so, you feel directed towards these industries, whether that is lumber or oil. Just **knowing** about a different industry or different kinds of work in your area can drastically change the way you look at your opportunities—and how you plan your life."*

Blue mentions that many young people feel they need to leave Grande Prairie in order to enter employment fields that are not related to primary resource extraction but rather oriented towards service or communications based work. Those that leave don't necessarily come back. This migration pattern is exactly the kind of mindset Blue and the CBYF Grande Prairie team are working to change, in part by showing youth the employment opportunities in their city—which position them to shape the city itself.

"Youth who are part of the next generation [are going to be the ones] to build a more inclusive and happier city. They are more valuable than anyone realizes. Their value is undervalued. [...] There are so many niche employment opportunities that could be developed. For instance, I don't want to have to go to High Level or Slave Lake just to, say, get tattooed or go to the chiropractor. [I'd love to see those businesses here.]"

"We want [youth] to stay and work to create an amazing supportive community so that the next couple of generations can look up to them and say, 'that's who I want to be' or 'that's who I want to follow'."

“ [...] many young people feel they need to leave Grande Prairie in order to enter employment fields that are not related to primary resource extraction but rather oriented towards service or communications based work.”



MEET BLUE

MEET CBYF

HIGHLIGHTED DATA FROM 20 CBYF COMMUNITIES BETWEEN 2020 AND 2024

Tamarack Institute's Communities Building Youth Futures (CBYF) is a 5-year initiative empowering youth like Blue to become leaders, innovators, and decision-makers. Funded by the Government of Canada, CBYF is more than a program; it's a movement that places **youth at the center** of local community change. With a focus on small, rural, and remote areas, CBYF uses **a place-based approach and the collective impact framework** to support youth in building a bright and prosperous future for themselves, their peers, and their community.

To nurture a pan-Canadian collective of change-makers, The Tamarack Institute fosters peer networks, annual gatherings, and accessible support resources throughout the CBYF network. These systems help communities connect both locally and nationally, cultivating ecosystems to support youth, sustain initiatives, and encourage lasting change. Organizational support has been crucial to the success of CBYF, as it has accelerated learning by leveraging the exchange of new solutions and practices.

“ I'm a clear example: I set out to accomplish my goals and I did. This initiative helped me because I had a really good community supporting me throughout my journey. I made it to where I wanted to go. And so, now it's about giving other youth that reassurance, by saying, ‘You can do this, you can make your own path as long as you have support.’ **Blue** ”

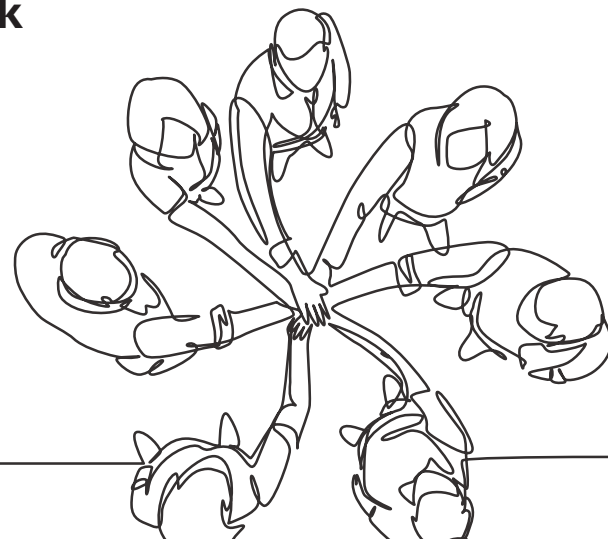
Data to highlight across the network of 20 CBYF communities

YOUTH REACHED

63,938 youth reached

2,567 youth joined a leadership table

2,025 youth hired to backbone staff team



MEET BLUE

MEET CBYF

HIGHLIGHTED DATA FROM 20 CBYF
COMMUNITIES BETWEEN 2020 AND 2024

TAMARACK'S COMMUNITY INVESTMENTS & SUPPORTS

1,000+ coaching calls & support sessions delivered

770 accessible tools, resources, and publications shared

130+ community of practice sessions hosted

5 national gatherings hosted, engaging the entire CBYF network



Photo Karolina Grabowska

Meet the CBYF Network

CBYF was designed to mentor youth on the road to success, empowering them to define the meaning of success and pave their own way towards it. 20 distinct regions across Canada are engaging in this crucial work, by leveraging the assets and expertise of the whole community to support youth futures.

While each community's initiatives and strategies may differ based on their specific context and youth needs, the goal of CBYF is universal: **to improve education outcomes and help youth successfully transition from education to employment to adulthood, and beyond.**

MEET CBYF HIGHLIGHTED DATA FROM 20 CBYF COMMUNITIES BETWEEN 2020 AND 2024

Meet CBYF's Cross Cutting Themes

By December 2020, through research and comprehensive community consultations, the CBYF network identified **six major themes** related to academic and employment success for youth. These themes reveal

the interconnected and often concealed factors that influence a youth's ability to engage fully in work and school.



You can explore each community's priorities by diving into their **Plans on a Page**. These plans detail the community's vision for change, core strategies to achieve

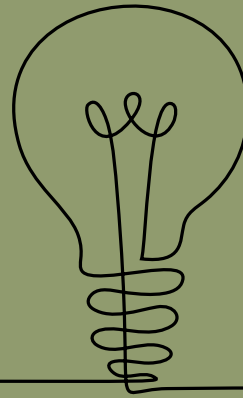
their goals, intended outcomes, and research that informed the plan.

Spotlight on: Employment and Mentorship CREATING AND CONNECTING YOUTH TO EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Meaningful employment is a key component of youth success—wherever they happen to be in Canada. However, finding sustainable employment that aligns with youths' values and capabilities as well as providing a wage that allows them to live well is easier said than done. Training, whether that is attending university or a trades program, can be expensive. The lack of accessible information may prevent job seekers from even knowing about employment opportunities in their area. For youth, writing an effective resume may be challenging due to a lack of experience or a lack of knowledge about this particular document and employer expectations. There may be additional largely unseen barriers such as discrimination or access to transportation. Mentorship can be a transformative experience that works to break down barriers through knowledge sharing, financial assistance, or hands-on training.

CBYF was designed to support youth on the road to success by providing peer and adult mentorship, uplifting youth voices in the community, and engaging local employers and leaders as champions of youth employment success. 20 distinct regions across Canada are engaging in this crucial work, leveraging the assets and expertise of the whole community to support youth futures. Using a collaborative and holistic approach driven by the Collective Impact framework, CBYF supports young people in re-engaging, or staying engaged, in their employment journey during a crucial period of development. The model underscores the need for and benefits of community-driven innovation; long-term change is made sustainable through adaptation and a commitment to remaining open to new ideas, and by aligning new ideas with what is already strong in a community.

BLUE MEETS CBYF



In 2019, Blue was a photographer for a credit course their school was offering. They were approached by one of the teachers from Peace Wapiti Academy, another local high school. Impressed by Blue's work, the teacher invited them to join CBYF Grande Prairie's Discord server. Once Blue was in, they connected with J and joined the Youth Action Society, originally under the direction of the John Howard Society.

"...I was also on the Leadership Table—at that point in time as a student volunteer. [CBYF] really just aligned with my views as I was looking at getting into the social work field. I was consciously looking ahead at my options and I thought, 'Okay, well, this is something that I can do to better my future. This is the place to be.'"

Blue came to CBYF with their career aspirations firmly in mind. For them, CBYF provided the structure and opportunity to explore their options. The network of support helped to foster the confidence necessary to try walking a less conventional path.

"I was contemplating whether or not I [wanted] to go into trades. This volunteer opportunity popped up and [due to] the positive reinforcement I got from my peers and guardians who did social work, I decided to do it. I knew that this was an opportunity for me to grow, not only professionally and personally, but also to dabble; to see if this was something I wanted to pursue. [CBYF] has just confirmed my thoughts and opinions and I would a hundred percent say that it has helped set me on my path."

“ For [Blue], CBYF provided the structure and opportunity to explore their options. The network of support helped to foster the confidence necessary to try walking a less conventional path.”



For Blue, that path is located firmly in Grande Prairie. CBYF's place-based approach resonated with Blue, who wasn't interested in migrating across the province or across the country to find fulfillment.

*"I want to help **this** community; I want to help it grow and flourish. I want to be someone that other youth can look up to and say, 'If this person can do it with all of the things that they've gone through, so can I'."*

When Blue took over as coordinator, they were introduced to the team at The Tamarack Institute. As Blue was planning their first initiatives in a leadership role, they were blown away by the depth of support and encouragement they received, while still allowing them the latitude to create and run initiatives as they saw fit.

"Tamarack is a hundred percent putting in the work that they have to, in order to support youth. It's also apparent that they're open and honest. You have a line of contact to ask questions which shows that there is support here. They are available whenever you might need them throughout your collective impact journey."

“ As Blue was planning their first initiatives in a leadership role, they were blown away by the depth of support and encouragement they received, while still allowing them the latitude to create and run initiatives as they saw fit.” **”**

Photo Julia M Cameron



MEET

GRANDE PRAIRIE'S YOUTH EMPLOYER FORUM

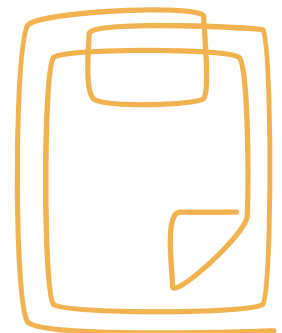
In November of 2022, CBYF Grande Prairie held their first Youth Employer Forum in partnership with a local college, Northwestern Polytechnic, and the Chamber of Commerce. The Employment Action Team had noticed that many youth spoke of barriers to their desired form of employment due to a misperception of youth employment in general.

The forum was a chance for youth to speak directly to employers about barriers they faced. Often, youth find themselves working minimum wage jobs, however, this is not a living wage in Grande Prairie where the average cost of living is \$3,431/month for a single person who rents¹. It is often assumed that youth have financial support from their families but this is not always the case.

To illustrate this point, youth designed and developed 'The Door Project.' In order to leave the forum, employers would need to pass through a large door covered in messages and artwork by youth expressing or representing an employment barrier. Employers were also offered a contract agreement, written by the Employment Action Team, in which they agreed to remedy or work towards solutions that address something represented on the door.

As a result of discussions at the Youth Employer Forum, Mariah Braun, the owner of M3M Marketing signed her contract in which she committed to paying every employee, including youth interns, at the very least a minimum living wage of \$19.49 which is \$4.50 higher than the current provincial minimum.

“Often, youth find themselves working minimum wage jobs, however, this is not a living wage in Grande Prairie where the average cost of living is \$3,431/month for a single person who rents¹.”



¹ According to the Alberta Living Wage Network's 2022 reporting.

MEET GRANDE PRAIRIE'S YOUTH EMPLOYER FORUM

The discussions at the event were meant to be a starting point for greater collaboration between youth and employers—and to challenge perspectives on both sides. In order to ensure these discussions stayed productive, youth who would be meeting with employers were required to attend a capacity building workshop before the event. Youth were thus prepared to speak confidently and respectfully about their experiences and hopes for youth employment.

By all accounts, the event was a success with both sides listening and learning from each other. Breaking down youth employment barriers and improving workplaces for youth is in everyone's best interest as the average age of Grande Prairie is about 35 years old—**making it one of the youngest cities in Canada.**

“The discussions at the event were meant to be a starting point for greater collaboration between youth and employers—and to challenge perspectives on both sides.”

Photo: Fauxels



MEET CBYF'S IMPACT ON

EMPLOYMENT & MENTORSHIP



CBYF helped to create jobs by directly hiring youth to the backbone teams, but the program also succeeded in improving youth employment outcomes through other avenues. Many communities incorporated employment assistance into events that were more centrally focused on social connection, for instance. In Chilliwack, British Columbia, for example, the Summer Reconnect Festival included a job fair alongside fun festival activities. Whereas in Laval, Quebec, the team worked with Antoine-de-Saint-Exupéry School to support “Café-Coopérative” which was a mini-cafe in the school where students could “work” both to gain experience and to improve team-building skills.

Below, we dive into just a few of the initiatives that CBYF communities ran to support employment and mentorship across Canada.



Photo: Fauxels



Trades Training CHATHAM-KENT, ONTARIO

"For me, the word 'mentorship' conjures the stereotypical image of a successful person providing wisdom and knowledge to a student that wants to learn that wisdom. In reality, mentorship is anything but this... To us, mentorship is the building of mutually beneficial relationships that are rooted in sharing, reciprocation, affection, and co-construction of goals." Phillip Mock, Program Coordinator, CBYF Chatham-Kent

In **Chatham-Kent**, funding from the CBYF Community Innovation Fund helped launch a series of employment initiatives, culminating in the creation of **Not Just a Handyman** (NJAH) a company created for and by youth.

NJAH was the result of CBYF Chatham-Kent's long-term focus on employment and mentorship throughout their involvement with the wider CBYF network. Early on in 2021, the team ran an **Employment Bootcamp** to better prepare youth aged 14-29 for employment opportunities when they arise.

The program incorporated literacy assessments and other essential skills training to address barriers to employment for youth struggling in mainstream education pathways. It also incorporated financial literacy and personal budgeting workshops as well as hands-on learning opportunities to reinforce lessons learned in class. The idea was



not only to improve youth resumes, but to ensure that youth were prepped for long-term success once they landed the job. Of the twelve youth participants, all were employed within three weeks of the program. This was only the beginning.

Around the same time the following year, CBYF Chatham-Kent launched a paid **Trades Training** initiative for youth aged 15-30 that taught introductory tool use and safety skills to increase employability and to stoke interest in the trades as a viable career. The team partnered with a local construction company to provide direct to employment opportunities for project participants. Unfortunately, this aspect did not go as planned. The employers expressed misogynistic beliefs and only offered employment to the older Caucasian males in the initiative. Those hired returned to training within two-days; the work environments they encountered were not safe spaces.

The experience was a bit of a shock but, happily, led directly to the co-development, in partnership with youth from the training program, of Not Just a Handyman. NJAH is youth-led and forms partnerships with local businesses and trades people to act as mentors to youth; it is also a business in its own right, helping youth gain real-world experience.

The CBYF Chatham-Kent team proved demonstrably that they are a transformative force for young people hoping to enter the trades. The provincial government certainly thought so as they granted the team an additional **\$215,000** to continue their work. **The Ambition Project** started in June 2023 and has since trained **75 young tradespeople—66% of whom found full-time above minimum wage employment.** The remaining 33% all found employment too—just not full-time.

Results



62 youth trained



76% were employed or promoted



100+ hours of continued skill training through St. Clair College



JOB FAIRS

Job fairs can be an incredible way to explore employment options in your community; but, they need to be organized with care in order to be effective and inspiring for attendees.

By diving into job fair strategies used in CBYF communities, and communicating what works and what doesn't, these events become more effective with each iteration.



MONCTON, NEW BRUNSWICK

"I attended one of CBYF's job fairs and it really helped me with my resume and interview skills. I received guidance on how to properly go about my job seeking process. At the time, I was working at [a grocery chain], but now I'm an admin assistant for a political party member." **Youth Participant, Moncton NB**

CBYF Moncton worked hard to organize more effective job fairs for high schoolers. Like CBYF Chatham-Kent, employment opportunities for youth were always a major focal point of the team's efforts. In Moncton, youth employment rates are relatively high; however, the numbers are misleading as New Brunswick faces a relatively low rate of post-secondary enrollment



and thus youth are more likely to be working. Only 31% of New Brunswickers aged 20-24 were enrolled in school in 2022, for instance. This creates issues for high school aged students as many of the jobs traditionally held by high schoolers are held by youth in their early 20s.

CBYF Moncton thus focused on youth job fairs specifically directed towards high schoolers. In May of 2022, CBYF Moncton held their first Youth Job Fair to great success. **By zeroing in on "on the spot hires" the team was able to draw a large crowd of 82 youth attendees—25% walked away from the event with jobs.**



CORNER BROOK, NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

In Corner Brook, the team expanded the traditional conception of a job fair to include volunteering opportunities and rebranded the event as a **“Future Fair.”** The subtle distinction shifts focus away from wage work and towards thinking about a career. At times, youth may not be economically able to choose a volunteering position over a job that brings them some income. However, the overall emphasis on futurity helps youth conceptualize how

each job in one’s life can be viewed as a skill building opportunity. Employment is income, of course; but, employment is also about personal development.

Corner Brook took an innovative approach to their Future Fairs and allocated funding for transportation to the event—which vastly improved the turnout as **250+ youth attended each fair.**



DIGBY, NOVA SCOTIA

Digby is a town dominated by two industries: fishing and tourism. As such, most employment available for young people is in one of these two industries. There are other

opportunities available; however, these typically require a university education or at least a high school diploma. Unfortunately, one of Digby’s greatest challenges in terms





of community development is its persistently high drop-out rate—33% of residents aged 15+ do not possess a high school diploma.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Digby held a weeks-long virtual **Employment Symposium** in partnership with SchoolsPlus and Nova Scotia Works. Each week, an online event was held in which a panel of professionals would speak about their work and what kind of education or experience led them to where they are now. The team increased community engagement by collaborating with key stakeholders, providing valuable learning opportunities, and offering career and educational guidance all while maintaining an interactive format. This approach fosters a sense of community ownership and active involvement in addressing employment-related challenges and opportunities.

"I think that [collective impact] is really important. I think that it shows a way of working together. It's something that I really appreciate; including community partners, partners that work within the school system, employment, community members and youth. It creates this space where we can all come together and talk about these complex issues that our community is facing. I think that

Tamarack does a really great job of setting up that framework." **Morgan Dunn, CBYF Digby Youth Coordinator**

Similar to **Corner Brook**, Digby held a **My Future Fair** but without an added emphasis on volunteering. Digby's Future Fair shared some elements in common with **Grande Prairie's Youth Employment Forum** as the event included a Q & A panel made up of both youth and employers. The idea was to hear from both sides of the equation—youth spoke about barriers to employment they faced and vocalized their desires when it comes to employment while on the flipside employers shared their expectations when it comes to young employees. The idea was to create a neutral space where the hierarchical relationship between employee and employer was dissolved, to foster genuine dialogue.

Unlike the job fairs discussed so far, Digby added a "speed dating" element to the event. Students from three local high schools talked to different employers for 20 minutes each to discuss careers in whatever field the employer works in.



Photo:
Cottonbro Studio



PORTAGE LA PRAIRIE, MANITOBA

In Portage La Prairie, the Education and Employment Action team kicked off their first major event in 2022 with the **Portage Job Fair and Conference** which aimed to be the largest job fair in the community since the COVID-19 pandemic. The team was able to

attract 25 employers to register and offered 12 workshops to attendees. **With over 400 participants, 300 of them youth**, the event was a roaring success. The team received overwhelmingly positive feedback from youth who filled out their post-event survey.

Photo: Tim Mossholder





INCREASING COMPETENCIES & BUILDING CAPACITY



Discover Your Path REGINA, SASKATCHEWAN

In Regina, the CBYF team chose to focus on youth employment and adult readiness as a major pillar of their work. However, when Clarice Tuckanow, a Youth Engagement Coordinator, spoke to urban Indigenous youth in focus groups, she found that youth were struggling to focus on educational and employment opportunities in large part because they were often in survival mode; Regina is home to the second highest Indigenous child poverty rate in Canada.

Clarice realized that first and foremost, these youth need safe spaces. Second, they need inclusive programming that holds up a mirror to themselves to show them that they are capable, valuable, and worthy of care. Clarice worked hard to advocate for youth-centric programming and was even able to recruit the mayor of Regina to the Leadership Table—looking towards long term change that looped in government stakeholders.

Once youth in Regina started to see themselves as valuable members of the community, Clarice shifted gears. She wanted youth to imagine a career for themselves, to envision a positive future, and take the steps necessary to get there.

It was in this spirit that “**Discovering Your Path**,” a workshop series, was born. Each week for six weeks, local presenters were invited to share tools, resources, and raise general awareness about opportunities available in Regina. Part of the initiative was to teach and to help with resumes and cover letters—a whole genre with its own internal logic. By partnering with WorkPrep, a local employment organization, CBYF Regina had access to state of the art technology including VR headsets that simulated job interviews. The practice interviews were recorded so youth could rewind and work on specific aspects of their delivery.

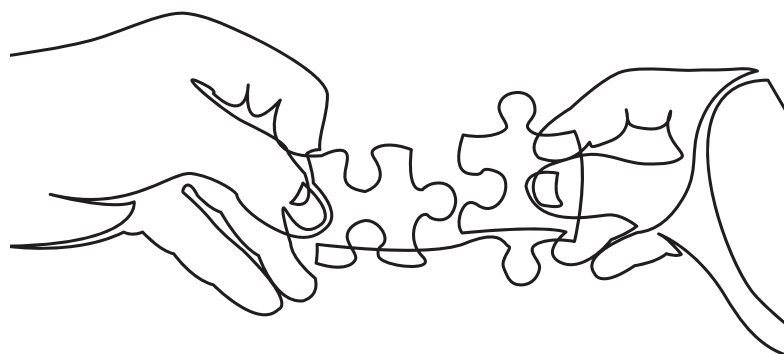


Mentorship with VBN Sports CHILLIWACK, BRITISH COLUMBIA

Chilliwack kicked off a whole series of events around skateboarding with the **Labour of Love Skate Session in 2021**. VBN Sports provided their services to film the event and created a short video for promotional purposes on social media at a discounted price. But this was not just a donation in kind—VBN Sports wanted to get involved in the work.

The company started a mentorship program for youth who were interested in media communications, teaching them how to edit video, conduct interviews, and operate technical equipment. The youth excelled, and the mentorship program evolved into an employment program. Wayne Bjorge, the owner of VBN, paid youth \$20/hr to work the cameras for local events with additional training provided should the youth be interested in learning more.

Mark Gagnon was one of the youth who took advantage of the opportunity. Over the course of a year, Mark not only applied himself to learning how to do the job well, but began building up a portfolio of his video work. For Mark, what began as a casual interest and fun extracurricular activity quickly became a career path as he decided to pursue videography full time. Mark started to freelance as a photographer and videographer, **eventually starting his own business**.



IMPACTS ON YOUTH

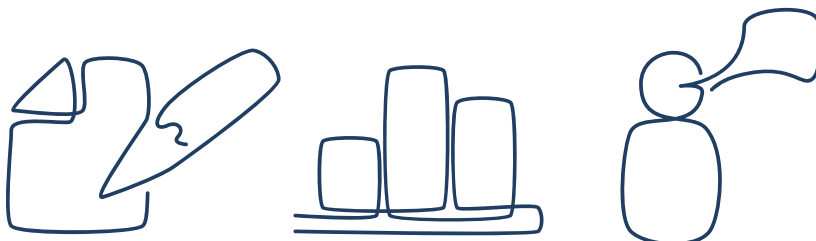
Even when communities did not run initiatives directly targeting employment, such as resume writing workshops, many programs nonetheless touched on mentorship and employment indirectly by working on skills such as leadership or confidence building.

Blue is a fierce advocate for the power of community based on their own experience. Being involved with CBYF helped them to grow as an individual. Mentorship was a big part of Blue's development but being held by a whole community made the real difference.

"CBYF has majorly impacted my leadership and public speaking skills. [I learned to] value my own opinion and value what [I] have to bring [to the table], not only personally and professionally, but also in a communal sense. What your background is and what you may have experienced, is relevant. I was able to share what I went through in the past and everyone was very understanding. CBYF has very much positively benefited my life and, again, I don't think I would be here if it wasn't for CBYF." **Blue**

Across Canada, CBYF's radical community collaborations and youth-for-youth programming **reached 63K+ young people**. In late 2023, Tamarack launched a listening campaign to assess how CBYF projects impacted these participants to improve access to important services like mental health care, school, housing, and food. Through surveys and relational meetings, youth had the chance to share their experience and contribute ideas for future cohorts.

“Mentorship was a big part of Blue's development but being held by a whole community made the real difference.”



CBYF'S IMPACTS ON YOUTH

This is what they had to say :²

"CBYF gave me the opportunity to build more connections in my community. Connections are so powerful in our community as it's small and word of mouth goes far. I was able to find a job helping with CBYF's marketing and social media team. I am grateful for the opportunities that have come with being part of the community."

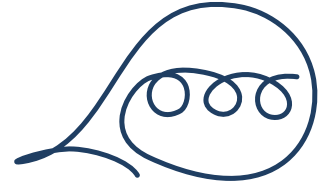
"CBYF helped me secure my first job!"

"Through CBYF I got access to jobs and mentorship. I learned a lot from people who are older than me. It helped me have more experience and to think differently about my career...I always wanted to help people, but didn't know where to start. But with CBYF, I learned about many ways to help people."

"It has helped me gain job experience, which then allows me to better transition to being more self-sufficient."

CBYF initiatives demonstrably prove that placing youth at the center of the work works. Focusing on youth employment opportunities and creating thoughtful mentorship programs that seek to address root causes for youth unemployment and underemployment, is to recenter **meaningful employment** rather than work that is not generative in the sense it does not aid one's long-term goals or work towards a career.

Prolonged unemployment during early career years has been shown to lead to lower lifetime earnings for individuals³. However, accepting work that does not develop skills relevant to one's field of study or ultimate career goals can create a negative feedback loop. Canadian economists were well aware of the potential "long-term scarring"⁴ on youth job prospects due to the COVID-19 pandemic, making initiatives like CBYF all the more crucial in this historical moment. The efforts of CBYF members has been nothing short of transformative for youth, as youth themselves reported.



“Canadian economists were well aware of the potential “long-term scarring⁴” on youth job prospects due to the COVID-19 pandemic, making initiatives like CBYF all the more crucial in this historical moment.”

² All quotes presented here are the result of dozens of consultation sessions with youth as well as survey responses. Quotes are intentionally left anonymous to preserve youth's privacy.

³ Mroz, Thomas A., and Timothy H. Savage. "The Long-Term Effects of Youth Unemployment." The Journal of Human Resources, vol. 41, no. 2, 2006, pp. 259–93. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40057276>.

⁴ Paas-Lang, Christian. "Youth job prospects face 'long-term scarring' from pandemic, says employment minister." CBC News. 22 May 2021.

CBYF'S IMPACTS ON YOUTH

"I am originally from outside of Corner Brook but I moved to St. John's to do Criminology, and in the midst of that COVID came and changed everything. I ended up moving back here and I kind of felt lost, and that's when I found CBYF which completely turned my life around. I never initially knew exactly what path I had wanted to take but I now am passionate about working with youth and the community in general."

"employment wise, CBYF has been very impactful...I've got tons of experience in so many different areas [...] because it's such a unique position; being a part of a backbone, of a collective, not just like one organization, you just get so many opportunities to meet so many people and make connections. Being able to sit down with the premier of the Yukon is not something I ever thought I would be doing in my life."

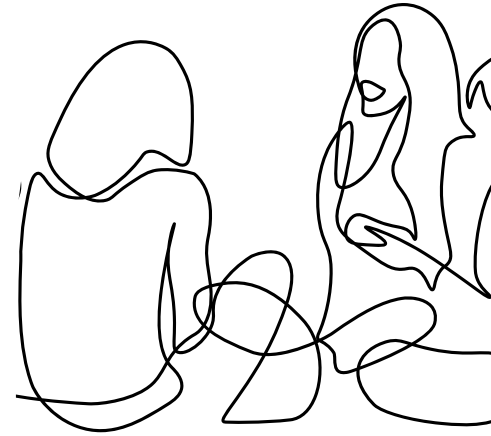
"Through CBYF I got a sustainable job, and was able to work in a place that's good for my mental health. I now have hope that moving forward, kids can have a safe space to hang out. Getting paid to make documentaries and work with kids is a blessing."

"Right now, I run an afterschool program called 'Math Club' to get kids more interested to explore the world of math. This program has helped me to gain experience with working in a classroom and with kids."

"CBYF has impacted me for sure... the program is the reason I have the job I have now and it gave me the opportunity to get hands on skills and find footing in the trades."

By finding innovative ways to reach youth and connect them to each other, CBYF is creating youth networks both within and across communities that have the potential to reshape employment outcomes. Fostering the connection youth have to their own identity and to their employment is a key pillar of CBYF's work and lays the foundation for meaningful community engagement in the future.

"CBYF completely transformed my resume.. I went from working in retail after university with no plans, to finding a career I enjoy."



“ [...] being a part of a backbone, of a collective [...] you just get so many opportunities to meet so many people and make connections. Being able to sit down with the premier of the Yukon is not something I ever thought I would be doing in my life.” **Youth Participant**

MEET

CBYF'S IMPACTS ON YOUTH FUTURES

“Systems change does take a heck of a long time. However, because CBYF is now directly linked with the City of Grande Prairie, when [the work] is connected to something like a municipality, you really think about how deeply we can change systems. A perfect example of this is the fact that my supervisor also coordinates the Youth Advisory Council (YAC) for our municipality. They [were able to get] the bylaw for YAC amended. [Previously], there were only ten spots [for youth] and now there are eighteen—almost doubling the opportunities.” **Blue**

Blue is clear on the fact that systems change can take generations. But having experienced the transformative power of mentorship and meaningful opportunities, their vision of the future is full of optimism. Just knowing that they have started initiatives that truly impact the lives of those around them is a solace.

Each CBYF community is unique; improving outcomes associated with employment and mentorship looks different depending on the concerns of the community. Whether a community focused on job fairs, volunteering opportunities, awareness campaigns, or mentorship programs, depended entirely on the specific geographic and cultural contours of that community.

And yet, all 20 CBYF communities rose to this challenge and, due to their unwavering commitment to youth-led collective impact, **youth involved in CBYF have drastically shifted their outlook on the future**, along with a reevaluation of the resources and paths available to them.



“Blue is clear on the fact that systems change can take generations. But having experienced the transformative power of mentorship and meaningful opportunities, their vision of the future is full of optimism.”

CBYF'S IMPACT ON YOUTH FUTURES

"For me personally, CBYF had the biggest impact on what I plan on doing in the future. It helped cement the fact that I want to work in youth outreach."

*"I was a news intern, helping CBYF in April 2022. We used to hold focus groups. Today I'm an interventionist with children with behavior issues. I'm open minded now, which made me realize there's a lot of stuff people are going through. **The experience gained through the CBYF program has helped me in the work I'm doing now.**"*

"My involvement in CBYF has shaped my education. I'm currently pursuing a career in youth counseling. Hearing from youth has helped me because I really connected with them, and was able to help."

"I got the opportunity to do a peer support course and it made me realize I want to help people, and go into a career of helping people, like therapy."

*"I never thought about a career in fisheries or in natural resources. Through CBYF I took a snorkel harvest course, and **I was exposed to new opportunities I didn't think were possible.**"*

"My perspective is more hopeful. [I now] understand that change is incremental and each small interaction can have a ripple effect that can lead to huge positive changes down the road."

"It helped me enhance my knowledge in the health field. It gave me an opportunity to give more time and thought into what I wanted to pursue in the future."

*"**It made me realize what I want in my life.**"*

*"**I never believed in my future or how I was supposed to solve big problems, but after CBYF I feel better about the future—I feel like I can do things I didn't think I could do before. I want to help other youth feel that too, I want them to know they can impact and change the future.**"*

“ The experience gained through the CBYF program has helped me in the work I'm doing now."

Youth Participant

“ I never believed in my future or how I was supposed to solve big problems, but after CBYF I feel better about the future—I feel like I can do things I didn't think I could do before." **Youth Participant**

CBYF'S IMPACT ON YOUTH FUTURES

"I was able to add that I had this experience on my resume and it helped me land a job in the field that I was meant to work in."

"I received support from the CBYF Leadership Table to help me find a job and encouraged me that I was on the right track. When I landed it, I was so excited and the team was just as excited for me."

Helping youth to gain experience to gain hands-on skills, and eventually to obtain sustainable and meaningful employment is the long-term goal but **creating systemic change is a long process**. Four years into CBYF, communities have created long term partnerships, attended major annual events, acquired outside funding and support, and inspired the beginnings of a paradigm shift in rural Canada.

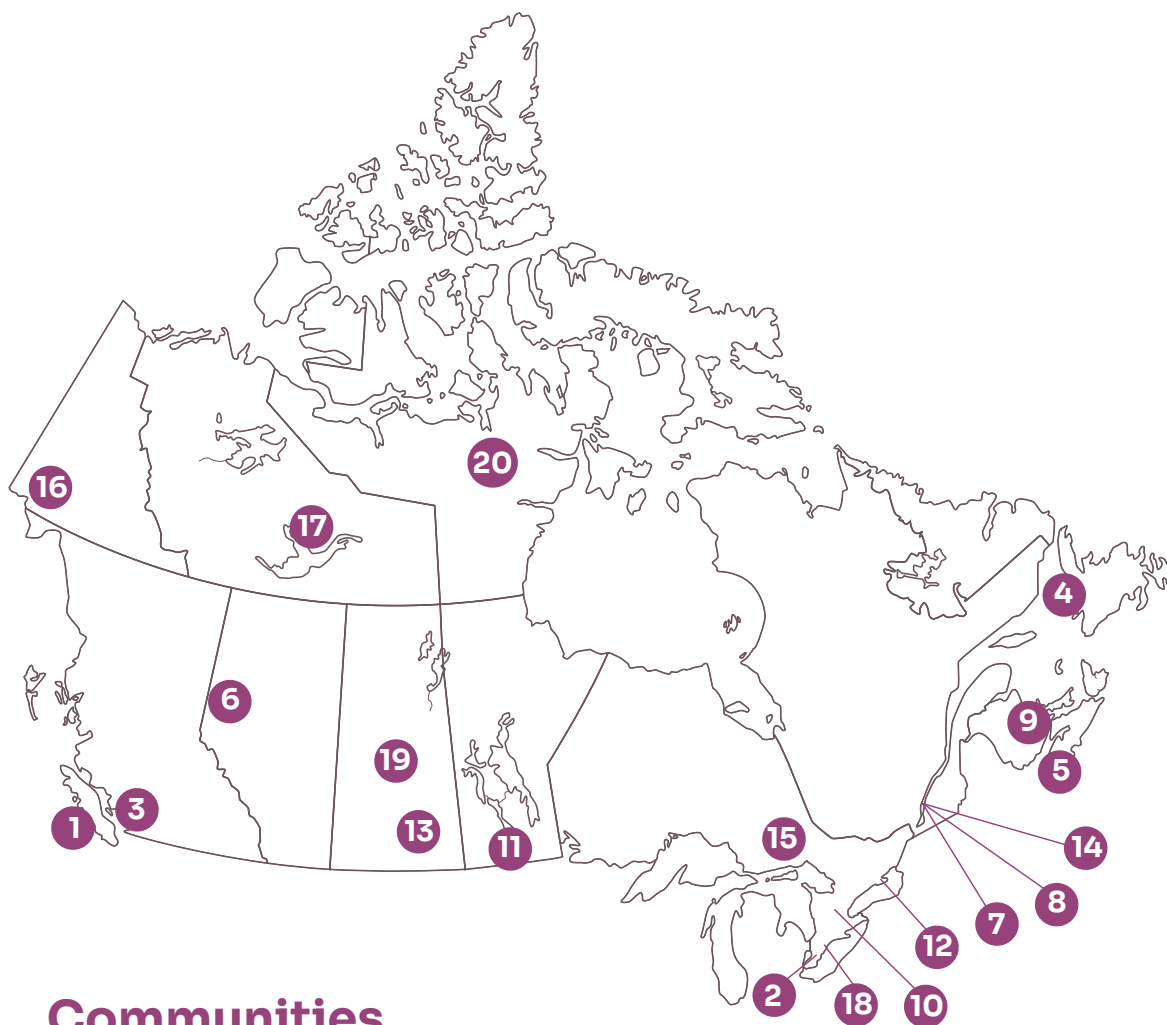
“ Helping youth to gain experience to gain hands-on skills, and eventually to obtain sustainable and meaningful employment is the long-term goal but creating systemic change is a long process.”

Photo: Kelsey K



CBYF'S IMPACT ON YOUTH FUTURES

IMPACT SPOTLIGHT



Communities

- | | | |
|----------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Alberni-Clayoquot | 9. Moncton | 16. Whitehorse, Yukon |
| 2. Chatham-Kent | 10. Oxford County | 17. Yellowknife |
| 3. Chilliwack | 11. Portage La Prairie | 18. Chippewas of the Thames |
| 4. Corner Brook | 12. Prince Edward County | 19. Prince Albert |
| 5. Digby | 13. Regina | 20. Nunavut |
| 6. Grande Prairie | 14. Saint-Léonard | |
| 7. Kahnawà:ke | 15. Sudbury | |
| 8. Laval | | |

IMPACT SPOTLIGHT

Evidence of systems-level impact generated by CBYF include:

GREATER ALIGNMENT BETWEEN EXISTING PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

- **Chatham-Kent** presented to 500 teachers on how to connect youth to opportunities in the trades, and held a meeting with school board representatives who were interested in bringing this information into classrooms.
- **Laval** created connection, alignment, and a common vision amongst local service providers for how to best serve youth. Now the community organizes a bi-yearly event that connects over 150+ organizations, united around youth engagement.
- **Port Alberni** partnered with WorkBC to develop employment counseling workshops to secondary students offered. Workshops were open to all community members, and could be used as optional credits for students approaching graduation.
- **Yellowknife** created a Community Youth Network, made up of 20 members representing both the private and public sectors. The collective is dedicated to breaking down cross-sector silos, and connecting youth to diverse programs and supports.

CHANGES IN ORGANIZATIONAL AND/OR PUBLIC POLICY

- **Digby** held a meeting with the Director of Community Transportation for Nova Scotia's Public Works to share youth-focused data, and a report on the state of rural transportation.
- **Sudbury** provided \$5,000 to youth to create a local tech hub, supporting those without access to technology. The youth team presented a report on their research and project proposal to the City of Greater Sudbury and Ontario Telemedicine Network, to engage the municipality and expand access to the service.
- **Yukon** organized a high-impact meeting with 11 Yukon Government deputy ministers, pitching and showcasing the work of CBYF. The ministers committed to exploring methods of integrating youth-led decision making into political processes.

CBYF'S IMPACT ON YOUTH FUTURES

IMPACT SPOTLIGHT

- **Chippewas of the Thames First Nation** met with elected Band Council members to discuss creating a new stand alone youth department. The developing department will be youth-led, and focused on engaging the youth perspective to support the growth and resilience of the community.

CHANGES IN ORGANIZATIONAL PRACTICE

- **Prince Albert** partnered with local high schools to offer alternative credit options for students to explore local cultural history, and supported teachers to facilitate reconciliation-related projects.
- **Yukon** youth delivered Mental Health & Wellness Kits to high schools through partnering with the Department of Education, and led a training program to educators on how to create inclusive and welcoming spaces.
- **Alberni-Clayoquot** youth spoke at a gathering of 100+ health workers on the needs and priorities of their peers in the region. Their advocacy resulted in Island Health reinstating a nurse previously withdrawn from the public school, a direct result of the youth's persuasive presentation.
- **Oxford County** offered free mental health workshops for community members who work with young people, including coaches, teachers, guidance counselors, and librarians, including how to engage and serve youth who have experienced trauma.
- **Corner Brook** increased the capacity and reach of local youth service providers by providing 7 free trainings for staff teams. Workshops focused on youth-engagement best practices, and how to retain youth as volunteers and employees.



IMPACT SPOTLIGHT

NEW FUNDING FLOWS

- **Portage** secured a \$250,000 grant from the Rideau Foundation to maintain and expand the Roving Campus.
- **Digby** was awarded \$40,000 from the Catherine Donnelly Foundation to support the Black Youth Changemakers program.
- **Chilliwack secured an additional \$20,000** from RBC for the expansion of ASH.
- **The City of Grande Prairie** became CBYF's new fiscal sponsor, and provides an additional \$3,000 in funding.
- **The Alberni-Clayoquot Region** leveraged CBYF capacity-building to support their successful grant application for a [regional Foundry](#).
- **Prince Albert** received \$20,000 in funding from the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association (CPRA) to provide access to physical activity for underfunded communities.

All of the projects explored benefitted from the knowledge sharing that The Tamarack Institute facilitated, allowing communities to go beyond the constituencies with whom they regularly work to reframe their efforts and magnify their reach. Kania and Kramer (2011) write, "...collective impact is not merely a matter of encouraging more collaboration or public private partnerships. It requires a systemic approach to social impact that focuses on the relationships between organizations and the process toward shared objectives".⁵

Relationship building takes time because brokering real trust is no small task. However, trust between youth and youth serving organizations is the bedrock of real change; although we may only be beginning to see the roots of change, statements from youth, like those above, are an inspiring reason to keep pushing to increase equitable access to high-quality programming.

⁵ Kania, J., & Kramer, M. (2011, Winter). Collective impact. Stanford Social Innovation Review. https://ssir.org/articles/entry/collective_impact



COMMUNITIES BUILDING YOUTH FUTURES

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