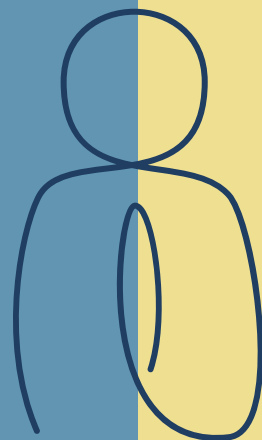




**Case Study:**

# IDENTITY AND SOCIAL CONNECTION



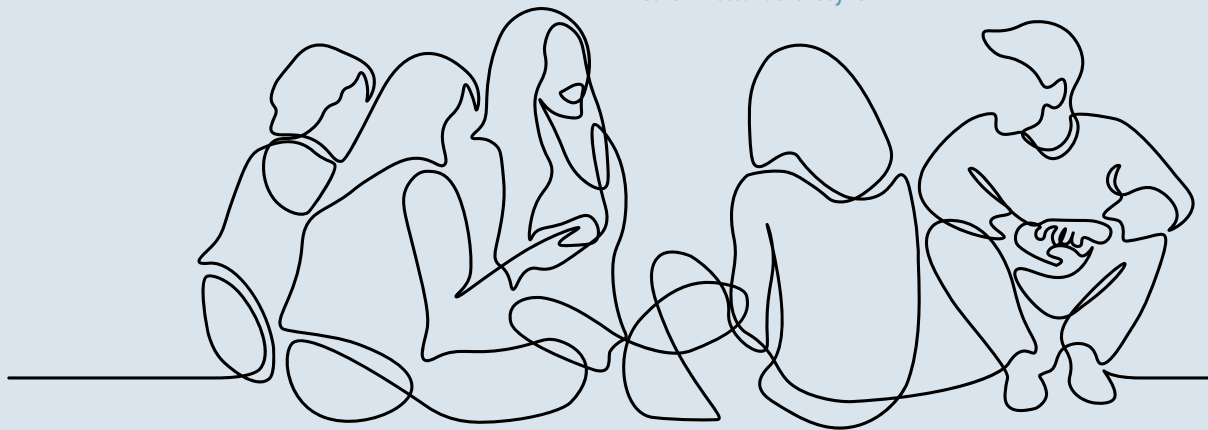
**COMMUNITIES  
BUILDING YOUTH  
FUTURES (CBYF)**

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This case study represents communities' actions and opinions as of March 2024

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Cover Photo: Rachel Coyne



# MEET NARLIE

COMMUNITY  
Yellowknife, NT



Narlie Dapilos was born and raised in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories. Both of Narlie's parents immigrated to Canada from the Philippines, but independently. It wasn't until they were both in Yellowknife that they connected.

*"Yellowknife [is] a very culturally diverse community. It's more culturally diverse than people think."*

Yellowknife sits on the shore of Great Slave Lake, above the 60th parallel and about 400 km south of the Arctic Circle, in the heart of the territory. The city faces unique challenges due to its geography such as a youth exodus—common to many of Canada's more isolated communities.

*"I think with any youth who grows up here, you want to leave, [because] you [grew] up here. And it is a reality. A lot of us talk about growing up here. People talk about, oh, I can't wait to go see other parts of the country or go somewhere else. [...] And then as I was going through it, [I realized] that sense of community and your connection [was missing], it's tough to replicate that in a place that you haven't grown up in. And so it's one of those things where [...] you don't really know what you got until it's gone."*

One's sense of identity is always shaped by place to some extent, but Narlie has never defined himself based solely on one aspect of his multi-faceted personality.

**“** [Yellowknife] faces unique challenges due to its geography such as a youth exodus—common to many of Canada's more isolated communities.”



# MEET NARLIE

*"I'm not just this one thing. [I think a message that I would love for more youth to understand] is not to let any career path really define who [they] are and what [they] do in the community. [...] And I think if they understand that, they can be more comfortable with who they are in the community. Because for example, yes, I do this job, but it doesn't define who I am outside of this job. I coach basketball, I am a local artist. I make music. I do all these different things—[and they are] still probably not in the definition of [...] what people would traditionally say, oh, the success is this one thing and then that's what your success is. But no, success can come from different avenues in one's life."*

“ In order to imagine the possibilities available for the future, and where they might lie, Narlie hopes that young people in Yellowknife allow themselves a capacious definition of who they are[...].”

The social connections we form are directly related to our sense of identity. In order to imagine the possibilities available for the future, and where they might lie, Narlie hopes that young people in Yellowknife allow themselves a capacious definition of who they are, who their community is, and what they can do to create the kind of environment they'd want to stay in.

*"[My community work] is rooted in.. [building upon what youth] like and are interested in. Let's foster that and let's see where we go from there. [...] If we can foster what you like, whatever that is, you can show people that they can make [a] living out of that."*

Yellowknife, NWT  
Photo: Lotus Raphael



# MEET NARLIE

## 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 Narlie 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.

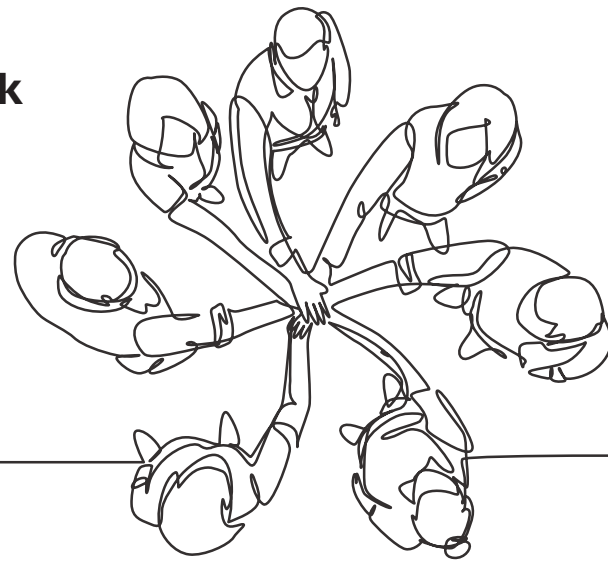
## Data to highlight across the network of 20 CBYF communities

### YOUTH REACHED

**63,938** youth reached

**2,567** youth joined a leadership table

**2,025** youth hired to backbone staff team



### 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

# MEET NARLIE

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

“ [I’m] able to educate, not only the community, but also the different partners on the same terminology, with these expansive kinds of resources [from Tamarack], on what collective impact’s all about.” **Narlie**

### 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’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.



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

### Spotlight on: Identity and Social Connection FOSTERING PEER NETWORKS AND A SENSE OF SELF

To the untrained adult eye, it can seem like youth are always “hanging out.” But sociality at this age is important. Positive peer influences and access to pro-social spaces have wide ranging effects including a decrease in youth criminality, according to the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services<sup>1</sup>. The focus of this priority area is to support spaces and opportunities that allow youth to build connections and a sense of belonging within their community. This includes addressing the stigma and discrimination youth navigate based on their identity and the lack of physical and social spaces designed to engage youth.

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. By using a transformative and holistic approach driven by the Collective Impact framework, CBYF supports young people in re-engaging, or staying engaged, in their learning 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. By investing in the well-being and resilience of youth populations and increasing access to education, CBYF is contributing to the overall health and success of communities nationally. **Section 5** of this document explores exciting examples of youth-led initiatives working to improve identity and social connection across Canada, while developing new solutions where gaps exist..

<sup>1</sup> Source: <https://huronshores.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Crime-Prevention-in-Ontario-A-Framework-for-Action-Booklet-1.pdf>



# NARLIE MEETS CBYF



Narlie pursued his education in Edmonton, eventually earning a Master's degree in public health, focusing on health promotion which necessitates a lot of community work. When he saw that CBYF was hiring, his interest was piqued; the position offered the chance to bring what he's learned back home.

*"A lot of the principles of collective impact was stuff that was [...] embedded in my education. So I felt that a lot of the stuff that I could do, I could bring to the position of Project Coordinator, for the initiative in the community. So that's how I got involved."*

*"I always want to see people get to whatever their dream was. Through my experiences with volunteering and seeing the lack of equality in terms of youth being able to pursue what they want to pursue, there are a lot of barriers around that. Being a part of a potential change to address that, is what drew me to the position as well. [...] Reflecting on my own journey, I was able to go and pursue something that I was highly interested in, [but to even imagine this as a real possibility is], not a thing that most people, most youth in our community, have an opportunity for. "*

Narlie was grateful for the opportunities and education he received which motivated his desire to give back to his community—to help more youth get to where they want to go. CBYF's place-based approach resonated with Narlie's hopes to work with and for his own community.

*"...As a university student, [...] initially the plan was just to get educated, get into the thing that I wanted to do. But as the education went on, it was more like, okay, I'd love to be able to do this, but back home. Or I'd love to bring this back home. "*

“ CBYF's place-based approach resonated with Narlie's hopes to work with and for his own community.”





Narlie credits his own ability to explore his interests to self-knowledge and his support network—his family, friends, and sense of connection to place. He wanted everyone to be able to use that kind of self-knowledge to shape their future.

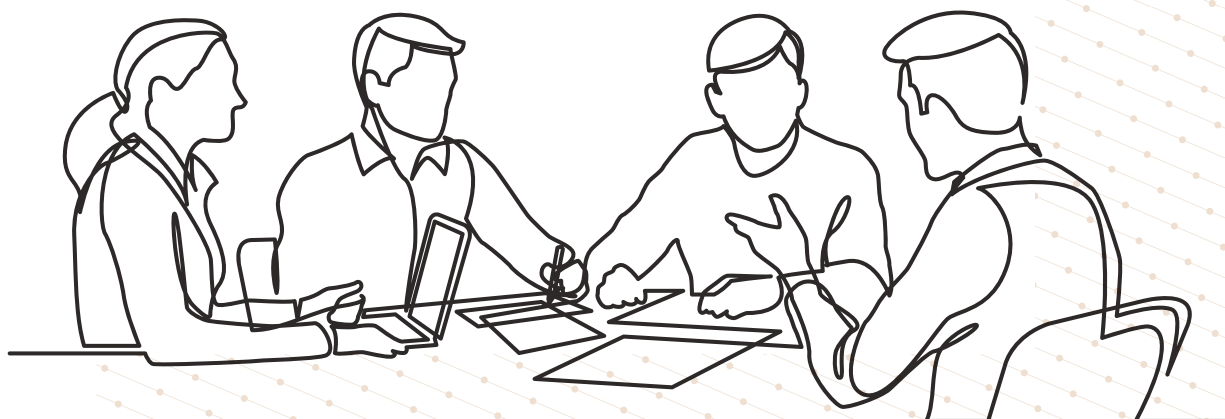
*"...In order for [youth] to really understand where they want to get to, they have to know where they are and where they come from. [...] They have to understand that piece."*

In order to help youth get there, Narlie recognizes that this requires cooperation between diverse stakeholders that include non-profit organizations, who are better poised to do the work on the ground, and governmental bodies who can provide infrastructural support and instigate systemic changes.

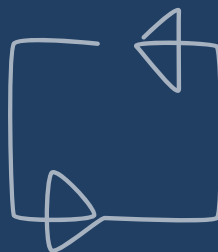
*"Through CBYF, we brought on board all these different community partners to buy into the idea of collective impact. When everyone contributes a piece to that puzzle with the same goal and intention, then we can start to see big impacts."*

From this commitment to authentic collaboration, came **Yellowknife's Innovation Project: Hazhǫ Eḻex̱è Łets'e̱zhe**—which translates to **"we are all connected"** in **Wìlìhìdeh Yatì**. The project provides youth with hands-on activities on the land, exploring culture and arts to promote wellness, leadership, and employability skills. All activities were coordinated through a close partnership with **The Tree of Peace Friendship Centre**.

**“** In order for [youth] to really understand where they want to get to, they have to know where they are and where they come from.” **Narlie**



# MEET WE ARE ALL CONNECTED



The Hazhō Ełexē Łets'èèzhe Project empowers youth to take the lead in collective action planning, decision-making, and community innovation, all while fostering connections between youth, Elders, and traditional teachings. Embracing a strength-based and mentorship-focused approach, youth are guided to explore and reflect on career paths that resonate with their genuine gifts and strengths. This is grounded in the recognition of multiple intelligences and the understanding that everyone possesses gifts to contribute.

## Approach

### 1) DEEPEN YOUTH LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

A Youth Committee was developed allowing members to take full ownership and control over all workshops, events, and project planning. Collectively, they designed and launched dozens of low-barrier, community

wide activities such as medicine walks, camp-fire chats, and Voyageur canoe trips. Through this experience, youth shared their voice and stepped into leadership roles, while exploring their personal and cultural identities.

### 2) CONNECT YOUTH WITH HOLISTIC MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING RESOURCES

Hazhō Ełexē Łets'èèzhe curated a selection of accessible, zero-cost activities with different commitment levels, allowing youth in Yellowknife to participate in land-based and cultural events alongside a supportive network of peers and Elders. Participants paddled out on Great Slave Lake in voyageur canoes, an activity of working together. Christina Moore, project coordinator and the Indigenous Youth Worker at the Tree of Peace

Friendship Centre shared that “when you’re all in the same boat, paddling together, you work towards the group vision of getting to the desired destination, while building relationship and community connections along the way.” The program’s intergenerational approach provided youth with the platform to engage in collaborative learning, reflect on intergenerational trauma, and foster awareness of shared connections.

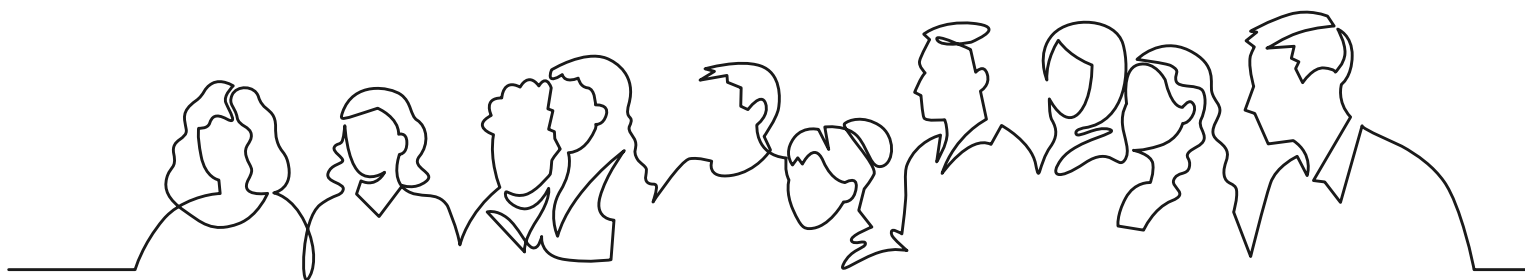
## 3) SUPPORT EXPLORATION OF EDUCATION & EMPLOYMENT PATHWAYS

By emphasizing accessible and informal gatherings, Hazhq Ełexè Łets'eèzhe enabled youth to explore the connections between their personal and cultural identities, as well as their values, skills, and talents. Gathering outdoors, youth were guided to reflect on questions posed by Justice Murray Sinclair 1) *Where do I come from?* 2) *Where am I going?* 3) *Why am I*

*here?* 4) *Who am I?* Coordinators also adapted a booklet from a partnering organization so that, once youth leave the glow of the fireside, they would have something tangible to take with them. The Skills Recognition Booklet is a resource for youth to help them reflect and explore their identity.

### Impact

- Valuing individuals as essential sources of inspiration, knowledge, and support, Hazhq Ełexè Łets'eèzhe prioritized youth's voices and contributions, while removing barriers to engagement. Youth committee members reported gaining skills in event planning, program evaluation, and outreach. All participants received an honoraria for their contribution, and reported they left the experience feeling “empowered” and “motivated.”
- Engaging in outdoor campfires, facilitated by youth for youth, to contemplate Sinclair's four questions, supported youth in uncovering meaningful career paths. One participant shared the aspiration to pursue a counseling career after reflecting on the joy of listening to and supporting peers. Another communicated to CBYF coordinators his goal to become a pilot, leading him to apply and secure a job at the airport as a vital first step.
- The success and popularity of Hazhq Ełexè Łets'eèzhe among local partners inspired CBYF Yellowknife to expand the initiative into a permanent community collective with the shared objective of *supporting our community to support our youth*. The network is devising strategies for financial sustainability beyond 2024 and actively collaborating to better connect youth to existing supports and resources.



# MEET WE ARE ALL CONNECTED

## Results



**8** youth committee members were compensated to fully lead, plan, implement, and evaluate the project



**197** youth reached through innovative, youth-led activities and workshops



**20+** community partners representing diverse sectors form a collective under the shared agreement to collaborate, eliminate silos, and connect youth to programs and support

Photo: Tegan Mierle



MEET CBYF'S

# IMPACT ON IDENTITY AND SOCIAL CONNECTION

CBYF was launched in 2020; by all accounts, this was a particularly difficult year for social connection. The COVID-19 pandemic posed huge challenges but CBYF members found creative ways to continue to bring their communities together despite the historic moment.

In **Corner Brook, Newfoundland** CBYF members collaborated with the Community Youth Network to assemble and distribute Game Night kits for youth and their families that included snacks and information on available resources for youth. In **Laval, Quebec** the team granted \$73,000 in financial assistance to youth serving organizations or projects seeking to maintain youth motivation in school during the pandemic. Twenty-two projects were financed including online music lessons and online dance classes. In **Grande Prairie, Alberta** youth engaged in building connections with their culture and they connected with each other and CBYF via a Discord Server—spurring other communities such as **Chilliwack, British Columbia** and **Yellowknife, Northwest Territories** to start their own servers.

Although we all did our best to maintain a level of social connection during the pandemic, those years were particularly challenging for young people for whom in-person social interaction is vital. But as vaccines became available, and our knowledge of the virus expanded, CBYF communities stepped up and redoubled their efforts to foster connection.

In **Sudbury, Ontario** Future North hosted a belated Prom event for highschoolers whose traditional celebration had been indefinitely deferred. In **Prince Albert, Saskatchewan** CBYF supported events spanning from pop-up BBQs and Indigenous Peoples' Day, to Moccasin Making and Creative Writing workshops. In **Saint-Léonard, Quebec** the team organized a field trip to the FabLab Onaki, transforming the team's research goals into a fun activity for youth.





# CBYF'S IMPACT ON IDENTITY AND SOCIAL CONNECTION

In the **West Coast of the Alberni-Clayoquot region, British Columbia** CBYF youth organized a community pride march drawing a large and diverse crowd. In **Prince Edward County** the Youth Engagement Team and the Youth Advisory Committee worked together to host a Youth Pride Event featuring workshops and live performances. In **Kahnawà:ke**,

a 2SLGBTQ+ movie night was hosted on the beach via an outdoor projector. The event sparked demands from youth for more pride related programming and CBYF members worked to support the first pride parade in Kahnawà:ke. In all three communities, these pride events were the first of their kind.



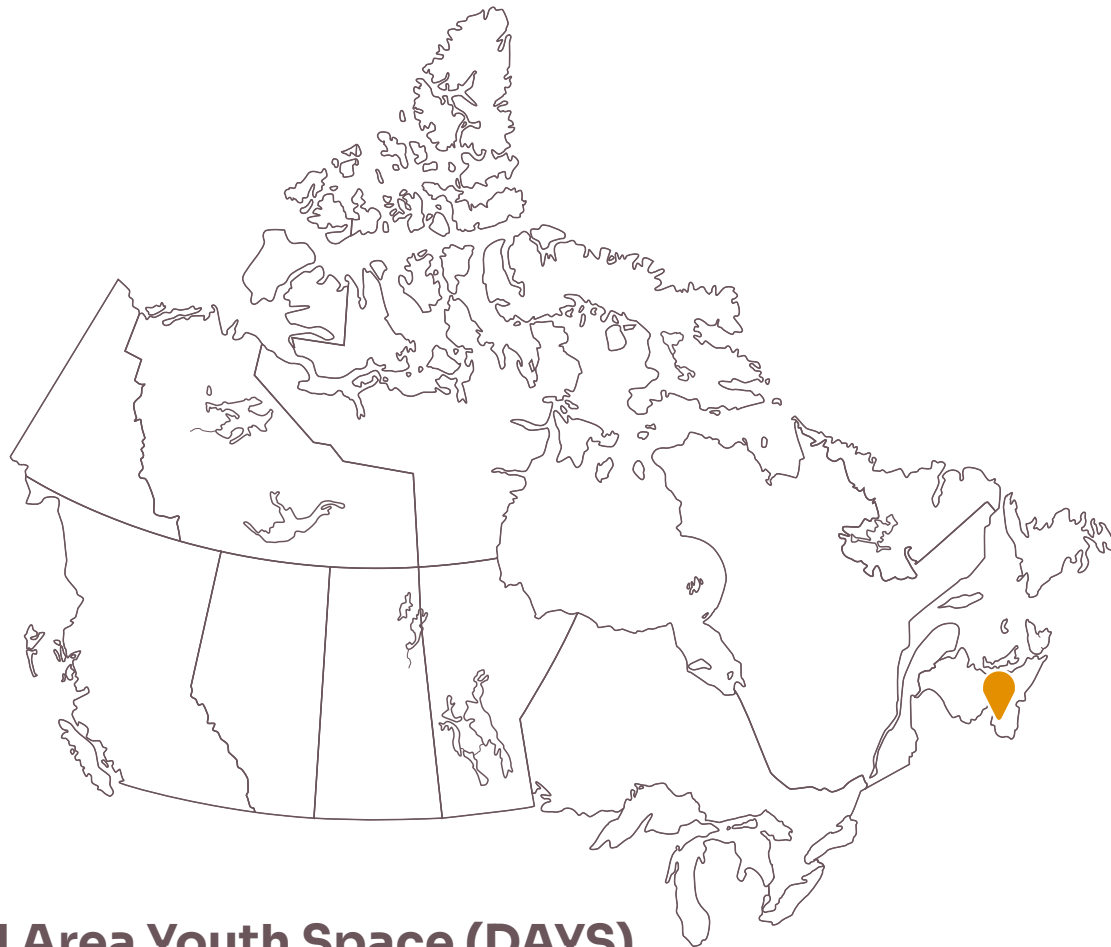
Photo:  
Cottonbro Studio

## YOUTH SPACES

A common strategy amongst communities was to create youth-centric spaces that would hold drop-in hours as well as host specific, planned events. Below we dive into a few.



## CBYF'S IMPACT ON IDENTITY AND SOCIAL CONNECTION



### Digby and Area Youth Space (DAYS)

#### DIGBY, NOVA SCOTIA

*"We tell our children this town has nothing to offer, when we should be asking them, 'What can you offer this town?'"*

The quote above is inscribed on a mural painted in DAYS by Bee Stanton, a Digby youth. The phrase summarizes a feeling dominant in Digby area youth: that there is, literally, no space in the community to contribute. Indeed, there had been no youth center in Digby for at least two decades.

DAYS is a youth-led initiative—youth identified the need for such a space to begin with and set about helping the CBYF staff manage the space. Soon, the Youth Connections Team had taken over the leadership of DAYS.

Popularity quickly grew and the team was able to use the insights they were gaining from youth directly to reach out to and forge partnerships with youth serving organizations in the region. To name but a few, The Digby Area Learning Association partnered with CBYF to deliver a literacy program at DAYS, Digby and Area Mental Health used the space to provide a wellness clinic for teens, and Nova Scotia Works held workshops on budgeting, taxes, and relationship building.

# CBYF'S IMPACT ON IDENTITY AND SOCIAL CONNECTION

## Quick Stats



**60** youth participated in events and workshops held at DAYS



**11** youth were involved in planning and managing the project



Youth came to the space from **14 different school settings**

Digby, Nova Scotia

Photo: Luc James Nguyen



## CBYF'S IMPACT ON IDENTITY AND SOCIAL CONNECTION



### After School Hangout (ASH) CHILLIWACK, BRITISH COLUMBIA

The incredible success of what is today known as Juvenile Skate began as a one day event—the Labour of Love Skateboard Session 2021. In collaboration with The Truth Skate & Snowboard Shop, CBYF Chilliwack ran a massively successful youth skateboarding event whose sponsors included the City of Chilliwack and 23 local and national businesses.

The event brought together 53 like-minded individuals who wanted to keep the momentum going. The Community Connections Action Team and the Youth Space Research Team were formed at the event and youth hit the ground running.

The decision was made to offer a monthly pop-up event called After School Hangout. It was an immediate sensation—**75 youth attended the first event** which provided access to an indoor skatepark, a math tutor, health professionals, community service providers and systems navigators, and free food. New partnerships abounded and collaboration was strengthened across sectors and disciplines, resulting in a stronger and more holistic approach to addressing complex social issues.

The City of Chilliwack took note and provided an in-kind donation: space in a central location. The program was able to run on a weekly

## CBYF'S IMPACT ON IDENTITY AND SOCIAL CONNECTION

basis from 2:30–6PM every Wednesday. In addition to providing healthy activities and a safe space, a math tutor is always available as well as 25-minute resume workshops. The team took a zero-barrier approach, meaning youth were not required to register or sign waivers—this allowed the team to build numbers and relationships, especially with traditionally hard-to-reach youth.

As institutions got involved, the need for formalities was apparent and registration is now required. CBYF members kept checking in with youth to ensure the space continued to serve their needs. As time went on, the mandate of ASH expanded to include addressing food insecurity and the decision was made to allow youth to change the name to Juvenile Skate.

By focusing on skateboarding, CBYF Chilliwack was able to genuinely engage a huge number of youth and combine recreation with skills building, educational support, and adult readiness. Many youth ran events in the space including pride events, mental health workshops, a Hot-Dog Cafe, and a punk show. VBN Sports offered paid internships to 5 youth and members of the social media team were hired by the Chilliwack Pride Society to take photos for their events.

This project established a safe and encouraging environment for young people to co-create and learn alongside local leaders and mentors, strengthening their sense of belonging, connection, and engagement. Through this project CBYF Chilliwack began working with schools directly to advise on and help establish skateboarding clubs in school.

Photo: Olia Danilevich





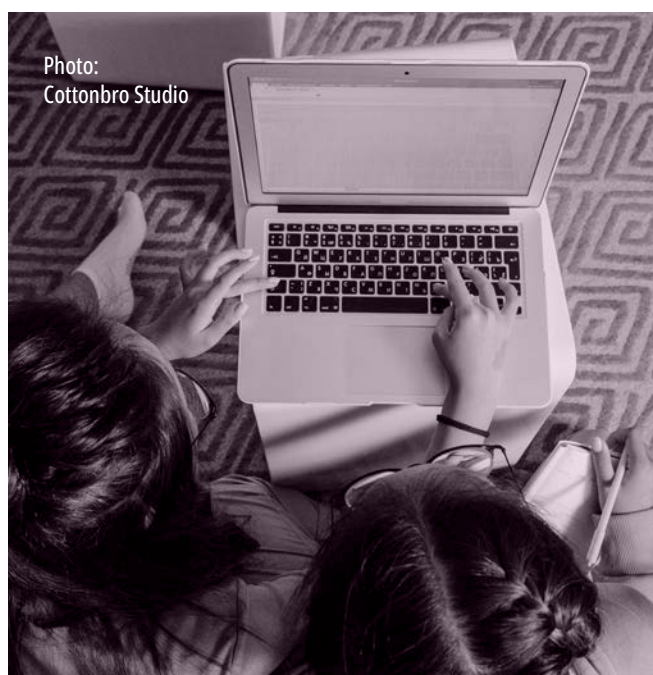
# CBYF'S IMPACT ON IDENTITY AND SOCIAL CONNECTION



## Youth Hub CHATHAM-KENT, ONTARIO

In Chatham-Kent one of the first ideas brought forward by a youth was for an “Educational Hub.” This evolved into the 530 on Victoria, a youth hub where “youth can define their future for themselves”. CBYF Chatham-Kent partnered with multiple organizations who work with youth, inviting them to access the space.

The emphasis at Chatham-Kent’s hub was on education—access to computers, internet, a work space, and food was provided.



# CBYF'S IMPACT ON IDENTITY AND SOCIAL CONNECTION

## IDENTITY INITIATIVES

As CBYF members found out, providing safe spaces for youth to socialize where they know they are welcome, and supported, is significant. But social events can also be opportunities for learning about and taking pride in one's identity.

The CBYF team from **Chippewas of the Thames First Nation (\*COTTFN)** understood this forcefully. Dozens of cultural and language-based social events for youth in the community were organized and all of them emphasized connecting or re-connecting with one's cultural heritage. Aiming to increase knowledge of Anishinaabemowin, a monthly language series was started—nominally for youth aged 15–30 but the team welcomed whole families as well. To decrease the formality inherent in language acquisition, Anishinaabemowin Dankamigziwin, a bi-weekly language games night, was launched. The ongoing series offered a space to learn and practice the language in a relaxed environment while having fun. Refreshments and prizes were on offer as added incentives to attend. Part of the advantage of a games night, is to encourage youth to use their Anishinaabemowin in everyday scenarios—when speaking to their friends, not just their Elders.

*"Language is really huge for me. It's pretty much who I am. Language is my passion! With the language journey, there's not many spaces at all to have language learning happen outside of school, especially on the reservation. So to create a community of language revitalization—that's a main goal for me in this work."* **Red Cedar Woman, (Sydney Kechego) CBYF Lead Coordinator**

The community focussed on identity initiatives but also sought to make them social occasions where everyone was introduced and welcomed. To name a few, CBYF \*COTTFN hosted a Quill Workshop, Canoeing Nights, a Tobacco Pouch making workshop, Protecting Our Inner Fire workshop series, Mzinigan Wijiwiwe (Book Club), and two Round Dances. Particularly impactful, says Sydney, was the screening of *Missing Matoaka*, a film that tells the true story of so-called 'Pocahontas'. The screening was a moment of reckoning as many had not heard the true story. Over 10 films have been made about 'Pocahontas' and all have participated in furthering the harmful "Indian Princess" stereotype.

*"Relearning our history, reclaiming our identity, and revisiting that [story] that was a cool perspective for everyone there."* **Red Cedar Woman, (Sydney Kechego) CBYF Lead Coordinator**



# IMPACTS ON YOUTH

Narlie envisioned Hazhᑦ El̥ex̥è Łets'eèzhe not just as a series of events but rather as an ongoing project that acts as a network for youth and organizations in addition to hosting events. Through this project, many youth organizations came to learn about one another and the various supports offered in the community.

*"Everything is all about collaboration, working together and really focusing art-space methods to really bring everyone together." Narlie*

A network that is stronger than the sum of its parts is really what the entire CBYF initiative is all about. Through a recognition that we all need social and professional connections in order to succeed and unlock the potentiality of our identity, CBYF communities, like Yellowknife, are creating and fostering bonds between people and place which is how all community work starts.

Across Canada, CBYF's radical community collaborations and youth-for-youth programming reached **49K+ 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.

## This is what they had to say :<sup>2</sup>

*"...participating in the different events that I've attended, it [...] gives you a sense of belonging and also you are learning things that have been forgotten. And it's just when events keep happening like this [...] you get to look forward to it. And it's exciting because you get to do new things that you don't have money for [but] you have the access you need to do it."*

<sup>2</sup> 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.

“ A network that is stronger than the sum of its parts is really what the entire CBYF initiative is all about.”



# CBYF'S IMPACTS ON YOUTH

*"This was missing before: spaces for and by youth, learning things that are not necessarily taught at school, or differently."*

CBYF initiatives demonstrably prove that placing youth at the center of the work—works. Focusing on youth mental health and creating thoughtful programming that seeks to address root causes rather than outcomes, communicates to youth that they are being taken seriously and are worthy of consideration.

**This is not to say that youth mental health does not have a tangible impact on educational outcomes. 21% of youth surveyed indicated that struggles with mental health was their #1 barrier preventing them from success in traditional schooling.** Prosocial, safe spaces contribute to youth resiliency; **safe spaces promote health-related quality of life in Canadian youth** and reduce psychosomatic health complaints<sup>3</sup>. Creating inclusive, prosocial programming that emphasizes a diversity of identities quite literally creates healthier communities. Of course, through lived experience and a background in health promotion, Narlie Dapilos already knew that.

*"In Yellowknife, [there were] not a lot of activities or groups youth can join and spend time with. CBYF has introduced accessible, safe, interactive programs specifically for youth—[I hope for] more of these in the future."*

*"When it came to my future, I was always focused on what I wanted to study, what career, to keep myself stable. CBYF changed that perspective by helping me become more focused on the social aspect, working on communications, staying in this field, helping someone who needs help, wanting to make people feel happy, and starting a chain reaction to impact other people."*

*"Personally, [as the] only hijabi youth in a mostly white town, [it's] very isolating. [But with the "Hope" Campaign], being able to see myself and those that look like me on a billboard...it has the potential to impact others, with increased visibility of PoC."*

**“** CBYF initiatives demonstrably prove that placing youth at the center of the work—works. When service providers listen to youth and incorporate their ideas, youth are more likely to engage with those services [...].”

<sup>3</sup> Ramey, Heather & Lawford, Heather & Berardini, Yana & Mahdy, Sharif & Khanna, Nishad & Ross, Madeleine & Hugo, Tonia. (2023). Safer spaces in youth development programs and health in Canadian youth. Health Promotion International. 38. 10.1093/heapro/daad166.

# CBYF'S IMPACTS ON YOUTH

*"More youth [are] coming together to participate in different opportunities."*

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 policy objectives. Fostering the connection youth have, to their own identity and to each other, is a key pillar of CBYF's work and lays the foundation for meaningful community engagement in the future.

*"Events [created by local CBYF teams] are really important to connect us together, to create a space where we feel safe, seen and heard, and to help create spaces for us to exist as ourselves."*

“Prosocial, safe spaces contribute to youth resiliency; safe spaces promote health-related quality of life in Canadian youth [...].”



Photo:  
Cottonbro Studio

MEET

# CBYF'S IMPACTS ON YOUTH FUTURES

Each CBYF community is unique; what “identity and social connection” means for each is entirely different. Whether a community is focused on generalized pro-social events or is more focused on identity work, depends entirely on the specific geographic, cultural, needs of youth from that community. The effects of prolonged periods of relative isolation and social distancing—measures that were necessary in the COVID-19 pandemic are still being tracked and studied by Statistics Canada. What we do know is that early findings were indicative of a negative trend. In early April of 2020, only 40% of youth aged 15–24 reported “very good” mental health, which, compared to 62% in 2018, was the largest drop in any age category<sup>4</sup>. From 2016 to 2021/2022, youth “hopefulness” decreased by 15 percentage points nationally.

In light of national trends, The Tamarack Institute’s findings from speaking to youth involved with CBYF are particularly salient and encouraging. Despite their differences, in communities across the country youth were in need of more support in one way or another.

<sup>4</sup> Source: <https://www.statcan.gc.ca/o1/en/plus/907-youth-mental-health-spotlight-again-pandemic-drags>

“ 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.”

**Youth Participant**

“ CBYF helped me become way more confident and a lot more social...it’s helped me connect with my town a lot more.”

**Youth Participant**

“ After CBYF, I now think of things more positively, I now believe in myself to achieve my goals.”

**Youth Participant**

“ This program has broadened my horizon and [has] given me skills to help me work with people in my community.”

**Youth Participant**



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The same Canadian Social Survey data found that **78% of people who have a strong sense of belonging to their local community always or often had a hopeful view of the future**<sup>5</sup>. 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.

Having youth navigate their social world with ease 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.

<sup>5</sup> Source: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/220517/dq220517d-eng.htm>



Photo: Anna Shvets

“ I no longer wish to “escape” Prince Albert. [CBYF is] fostering [a] sense of belonging, nurturing my community pride to empower other members.”

**Youth Participant**

“ With the pride parade and the round dances CBYF [is] helping to change the narrative that Indigenous people in Canada are given [...] The more change is made, the more the narrative changes as well.”

**Youth Participant**

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

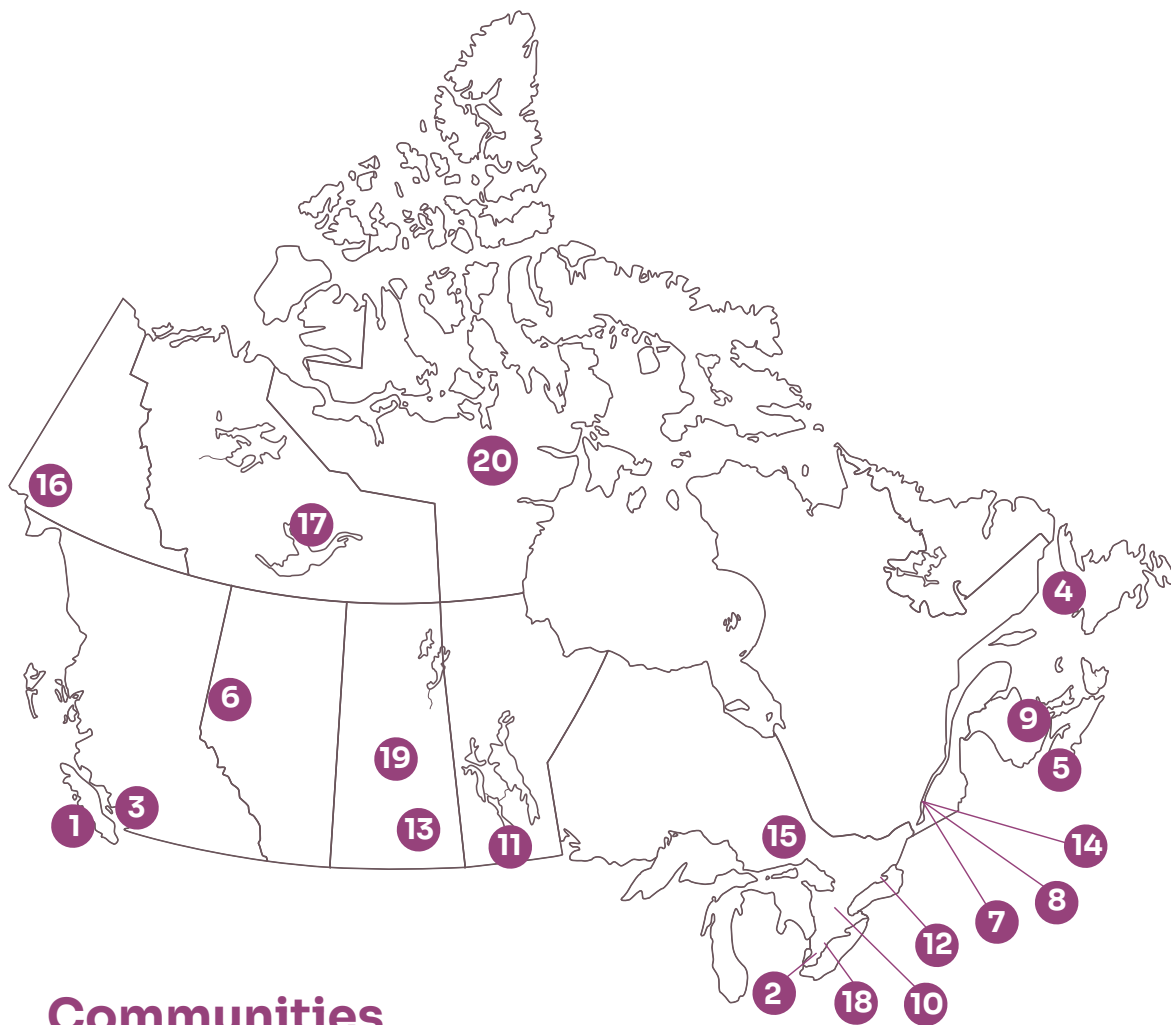
**Youth Participant**

“ Through working with CBYF, and learning about engaging youth, how to run events, and the impact it’s had on the community has really changed my drive, and ambition to create my own program, specifically for us, youth with PTSD and intergenerational trauma.”

**Youth Participant**

# 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

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- **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+ orgs, 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

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- **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

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- **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.



Photo: Sincerely Media

## IMPACT SPOTLIGHT

### NEW FUNDING FLOWS

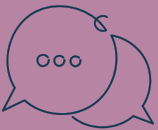
- **Portage** secured a \$250,000 grant from the Rideau Foundation to maintain and expand the Roving Campus.
- **Digby** was awarded \$40,000 from the Catherine Donnelly Foundation to support the Black Youth Changemakers program.
- **Chilliwack secured an additional \$20,000** from RBC for the expansion 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".<sup>6</sup>

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.

6 Kania, J., & Kramer, M. (2011, Winter). Collective impact. Stanford Social Innovation Review. [https://ssir.org/articles/entry/collective\\_impact](https://ssir.org/articles/entry/collective_impact)





# COMMUNITIES BUILDING YOUTH FUTURES

[tamarackcommunity.ca](https://tamarackcommunity.ca)  
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Tamarack Institute



Tamarack Institute for Community Engagement



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Photo: Julia M Cameron

