



Case Study:

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT & LEADERSHIP



**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: Karolina Grabowska



MEET JODIE

COMMUNITY
Oxford County, ON



Jodie Konior is the Project Lead at CBYF Oxford County. She's held this position since January of 2022 but her path to Oxford County, and to community work in general, isn't a linear one.

Jodie began her studies at Western University, majoring in kinesiology. It took her until her fourth year to realize that she simply wasn't passionate about what she was learning. After a rapid fire round of consultations with friends, family, and colleagues, she decided to follow her heart and dove into the world of social work. Instead of returning to Western, Jodie enrolled in a one-year program at Lakehead University in Thunder Bay and took off.

"[I] had some really great opportunities doing my BSW. [The] first placement I did for that program was for [...] a supportive housing building for young mothers who were between the ages of 16 and 24 who had children under the age of six. [...] That really got me interested in the youth world and working with youth."

Jodie continued to pursue work that resonated with her, finding her second placement at a Children's Aid society in Hamilton, Ontario.

"...that was really fantastic, learning more about how development can lead to people having kids from young ages and getting involved with child welfare systems and the impact of the child welfare system on children and youth."

“ [Jodie] decided to follow her heart and dove into the world of social work.”



MEET JODIE

From here, Jodie went on to work as a psychotherapist for people living with addiction—be that substance abuse or gambling, and mental health challenges. During the pandemic, Jodie stepped up as a frontline social worker in an ICU in a major urban center, a regional trauma center, and a regional neurosurgery center. It's hard to see where she found the time to simultaneously complete coursework for her Master's of Social Work which she was in the midst of obtaining from the University of Waterloo. But this degree is ultimately what brought her to Oxford County, a region made up of eight municipalities in southern Ontario.

"During this time, I had a placement with [the] Social Planning Council of Oxford County [and I was] helping them with a wide variety of work. We were really focused on a housing and homelessness project at that time."

"...being involved with something like the Social Planning Council of Oxford, it really made me passionate about addressing things from the systems level and looking at 'what do we need to change in this whole system to make that impact?' And that's more sustainable, longer term, community wide impact versus impact on an individual level."

Jodie was part of the Reducing Poverty Together group, a local collaborative of a number of nonprofits and community organizations working to address a number of issues related to poverty.

"...we were able to identify a number of priority areas that the community really needed to focus on to help with reducing poverty. And one of those that came up during that session was education."

The Tamarack Institute supported the group, helping to guide them through the process of reprioritization. Around this time, CBYF was looking to expand. Having already become acquainted with the excellent work being done in Oxford County, Tamarack invited the community to join their network of changemakers—with Jodie at the helm.

“ [...] it really made me passionate about addressing things from the systems level and looking at ‘what do we need to change in this whole system to make that impact?’ And that's more sustainable, longer term, community wide impact [...].” **Jodie**

MEET JODIE

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 Jodie 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.

“...we've really seen a lot of shifts within our own team, with the people who we interact with, with recognizing the value of engaging with youth, and through empowering youth to be leaders and giving opportunities for them to speak.” **Jodie**

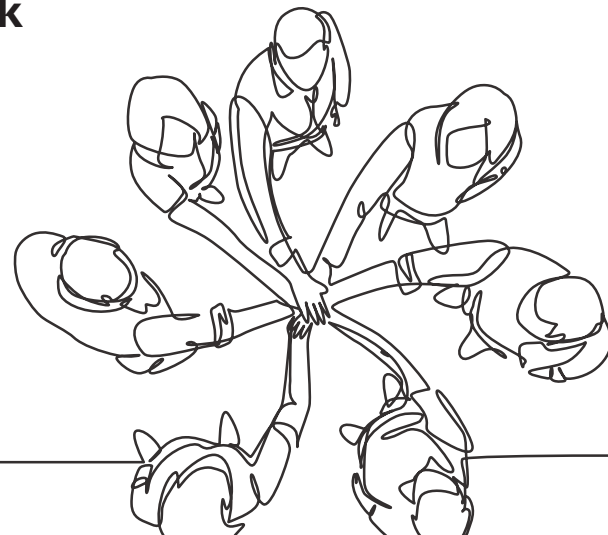
Data to highlight across the network of 20 CBYF communities

YOUTH REACHED

63,938 youth reached

2,567 youth joined a leadership table

2,025 youth hired to backbone staff team



MEET JODIE

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

"It's huge being able to offer our learning to other communities through those kinds of things. But also, being able to learn from the other communities." Jodie

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.



Employment &
Mentorship



Accessible
Education



Identity & Social
Connections



Service Navigation and
Access to Supports



Youth Engagement
and Leadership



Holistic Health
& Wellbeing

MEET JODIE

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

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.



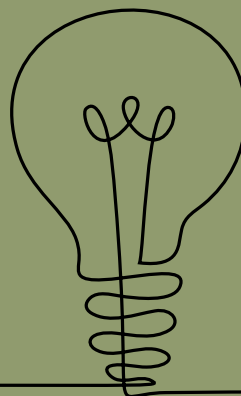
Spotlight on: Youth Engagement and Leadership

The concept of youth engagement has emerged in recent years as a broad-based approach and best practice to meet the needs of youth, including at-risk youth. The definition of “youth engagement” can be slippery but is generally understood to be a process that seeks to offer meaningful opportunities for youth to step into leadership roles while collaborating with adults who share power with them, fostering mutual accountability. Strength-based relationships and experiences are the main drivers of youth engagement. Shared decision-making ensures that an authentic youth voice is present every step of the way.

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 community 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, CBYF is contributing to the overall health and success of communities nationally. [Section 5](#) explores exciting examples of youth-led initiatives working to improve youth engagement and leadership across Canada, while developing new solutions where gaps exist.

JODIE MEETS CBYF



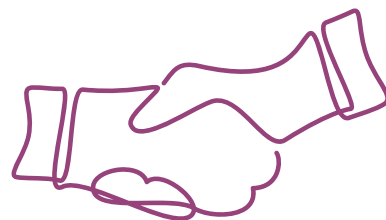
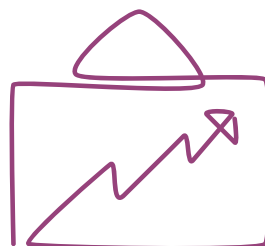
Working with CBYF, Jodie was able to expand the reach and depth of her work through increased access to resources and funding. But she was also wary of short-term programs that can end up harming their target audience by withdrawing when funding dries up. Jodie was interested in long-term sustainable change—as it turns out, so was CBYF.

“...it's hard to not be sustainable when you follow the collective impact process properly because when you [involve many] community partners going through the collective impact process [together], [with] great communication between everybody, [with] a backbone staff of people who are dedicated to [the work], and alignment of your data collection, all the aspects of collective impact... it's hard not to be sustainable.”

Oxford County faced a variety of complex and interlocking challenges, as all communities in the CBYF ecosystem did. Graduation rates were below the provincial average and according to the youth trying to access them, mental health supports were insufficient. Jodie noticed that a lot of the youth in Oxford County were leaving for school or work but weren't coming back **because they didn't feel the community belonged to them or valued them.**

“A huge part of [...] my vision when I came into this was really making sure that youth voice was at the center of everything that we were doing. And that the changes were expanding, not only the opportunity, but the appreciation and respect for youth voice. [...] A big part of what I wanted to see, in every system, was just more leadership opportunities for youth.”

To that end, CBYF Oxford decided to create a second table, in addition to their table of Community Allies (previously the Leadership Table), made up solely of youth: the Youth Innovators (previously the Youth Council). Changing the names was an intentional choice to avoid unintentional linguistic hierarchy. When the two tables are brought together to collaborate, they form the Partnership Table.





By bringing the concept of youth leadership into the very structure of CBYF Oxford's day-to-day operations, Jodie's team created an environment in which youth felt genuinely respected and heard. This ethos continued in their programming. The team ran a participatory grantmaking program to fund projects designed by youth with a goal of supporting youth outcomes within their local context. In initial meetings, the team intentionally ensured that a larger number of youth were present than adults.

"...youth spoke first and the adult allies around the table [spent time listening] to the conversation [and hearing about youth needs, strengths and assets]. They were then invited in to say, 'hey, these are the things that I would like to discuss' and brought up any additional points. And oftentimes it was, 'I have nothing more to add. You all covered all of my thoughts for it.'"

This project became the **Youth Engagement Grants (YEG)** which we discuss in detail in the next section. But YEG is only one of the myriad programs that CBYF Oxford County designed, ran, evaluated, and maintained in a mere twenty-two months. When asked about the secret to her success, Jodie is quick to share the accolades with the entire CBYF network.

*"So when we look at how much work we've done in less than two years and the impact we've had in our community...it's so huge. [...] **Collective impact** has had a huge impact locally. **This network is of such huge value and really allows us to have more effective utilization of our local resources** rather than having to start from scratch with everything. [For example,] in the process of piloting a youth social space, we were able to connect with other communities to learn from them when they've already done something like this—we don't have to start from zero. ...Instead of us having to create a policy manual from scratch, we were able to ask them, 'Hey, can you send us your policy manual?' And we can just build off of it according to our local laws."*

By listening to youth, to their community, and to other communities, CBYF Oxford was able to create a wealth of programming, radically changing the lives of hundreds of youth in their area.

“ Jodie noticed that a lot of the youth in Oxford County were leaving for school or work but weren't coming back because they didn't feel the community belonged to them or valued them.” **”**

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT GRANTS (YEG)

YEG was designed to fund projects that support youth in Oxford County using a participatory grant-making model to empower and center youth voice in determining needs and in building solutions. Giving decision-making power to the demographic impacted sounds logical enough but it is rarely the way funding decisions are made.

It was important to Jodie to focus on the process because, while many of the projects that received funding were incredibly impactful, she wanted the selection process itself to be part of that impact.

Going into the project, CBYF Oxford created a youth-friendly training on participatory grantmaking processes to build capacity in youth who were part of the planning team. This worked to ensure that everyone had the requisite baseline knowledge to contribute meaningfully.

QUICK STATS

29 youth designed and developed YEG



5 youth assessed and evaluated YEG impacts



452 youth participants



Photo: Max Fischer

MEET OXFORD COUNTY'S YOUTH ENGAGEMENT GRANTS

Potential grant recipients presented their ideas in an open forum in which youth spoke first. Each participant was given a summary chart providing information on each applicant and a resource that defined key terms that would come up frequently in discussion. These tools helped everyone to actively participate.

After a thorough open discussion and key questions, seventeen youth and community members voted on the proposition using the consensus based “**Fist to Five**” voting model.

When all was said and done, youth and the organizations involved selected six projects to receive funding in the areas of art, recreation, community connection, mentorship, Indigenous supports, and accessibility supports. In total, \$52,000 in funds was distributed to grantees. The team was mindful to select projects that did not have too much overlap in order to maximize the breadth and depth of impact. Many of the projects will continue to pay dividends to the community for years beyond their project timeline, such as new equipment purchased for a local high school weight-lifting program. CBYF Oxford County did not want to leave unsuccessful applicants in the lurch so they endeavored to connect them to existing organizations doing similar work.

Fist to Five



Lack of Consensus

Consensus

MEET OXFORD COUNTY'S YOUTH ENGAGEMENT GRANTS

AMONG THE PROJECTS FUNDED WERE:

- An alternative education program for youth who have been identified as being at risk of not graduating
- The first and only Indigenous youth program in the community
- A program helping youth with intellectual and/or cognitive disabilities to pass their written driving test
- A local drama program

YEG is an example of how youth-serving organizations can deepen their commitment to youth leadership by creating programs and processes that place power in youths' hands from beginning to end. Youth are subject matter experts attuned to their needs, and how those needs relate to their specific community, through lived experience.

Taking a place based approach requires asking “*how can we work together to make this community a better place?*” Rather than prescribing a set of standardized interventions or activities to increase graduation rates, CBYF Oxford County involved all levels of community actors, starting with the youth themselves, to develop solutions that are both culturally and geographically relevant.

After all, if improving local conditions and supporting youth's futures requires an adaptive and responsive approach, **no one is better positioned to drive that action than the people most affected and connected to that place.**

“ [...] youth and the organizations involved selected six projects to receive funding in the areas of art, recreation, community connection, mentorship, Indigenous supports, and accessibility supports. In total, **\$52,000 in funds was distributed.**”



MEET CBYF'S IMPACT ON

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT & LEADERSHIP



Across the country, CBYF communities were working on strengthening youth leadership and meaningfully engaging youth in a variety of initiatives. There are countless examples from the 20 communities whose activities relate to this priority theme because **placing youth at the center is the common thread that connects all CBYF initiatives.**

Below, we dive into just a few diverse examples of how communities are creatively working to elevate youth into positions of leadership, transforming their engagement from that of participant to that of director.



Photo: Yan Krukau



Youth Connection Grants

CORNER BROOK, NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

Similar to YEG, the Youth Connection Grants initiative in Corner Brook sought to support youth designed and youth-led projects. CBYF Corner Brook was able to run this initiative twice, once in 2021 and again in 2023.

In 2021, the team distributed five small amounts of up to \$300 directly to youth and youth serving organizations. By giving recipients latitude to use the funds for their project without direct oversight, CBYF Corner Brook hoped to create relationships of trust and respect between their organization and others while improving their community at the same time. For the most part, this is exactly what happened.

However, in 2023, the team was able to reiterate upon their initial idea taking forward important learnings. Back in 2021, the team found it was hard to ensure recipients remained accountable to their proposed project after the money had been dispensed. It's difficult to evaluate the ultimate success or failure of a given project if a recipient stops replying to your emails.

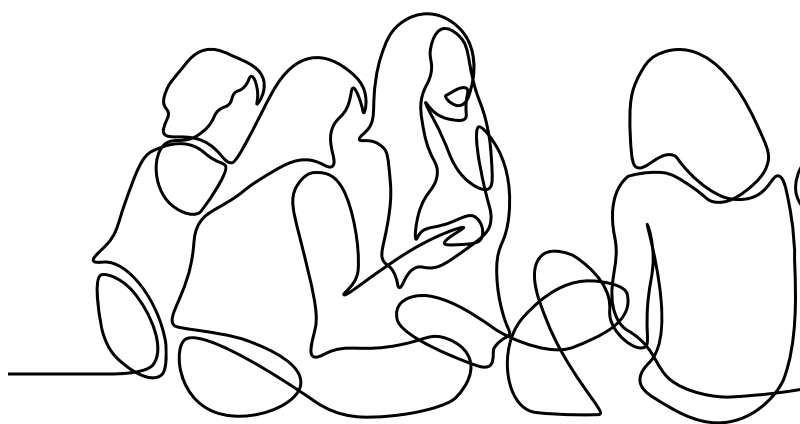
This time, the team decided to work in partnership with the five highschools in their region. The grants, this time up to \$1000, would now be an opportunity for grade twelve students to create a legacy project that would continue to benefit the school after they had



moved on. One school created a youth safe-space, another used the funds to create a mural, and yet another beautified the school's landscape by planting flowers and plants they had grown indoors until they were a healthy enough size to survive outdoors.

By modifying the initiative in such a way, CBYF Corner Brook demonstrated a commitment to continuous learning and did an honest reappraisal of their initial program. By providing youth with the same opportunity for leadership, but structured within an environment they are already working within, CBYF Corner Brook was able to not only solicit more accountability but also expand their reach in terms of the number of youth involved and the number of youth who would benefit from these projects.

As CBYF Corner Brook found out, engaging youth in meaningful ways is never a one-size-fits-all endeavor. While some youth respond well to a more hands-off approach, stepping up to the challenge and surprising themselves along the way, others benefit from more structured engagement strategies.



Corner Brook, Newfoundland

Photo: Marcus Urbenz





Youth-Led Project & Youth Engagement Experts SUDBURY, ONTARIO

Future North (FKA CBYF Sudbury), hit the ground running when it comes to youth leadership. The team has had remarkable success engaging youth since they joined the CBYF network in 2020. Almost immediately, the team put together a Youth Expert Panel whose mandate was to provide ideas on how to support youth within the community and to provide constructive feedback on proposals. Their first milestone project was similar to the projects we've heard about so far.

In its first iteration, two youths were the recipients of \$5,000 as part of a “youth internship project.” The idea for which had originally come from Philip Mock, program coordinator of CBYF Chatham-Kent, who shared insights

via a Community of Practice call—a space held on a monthly basis for the sharing of experiences and ideas.

The two highschool students pitched the creation of a “technology hub” that would support youth who are without access to adequate technology. To make their dream a reality, the youth did extensive research by conducting focus groups and by designing, distributing, collecting, and analyzing the data collected via surveys. Their impressive research was later presented to both the City of Greater Sudbury and the Ontario Telemedicine Network in the hope of gaining institutional buy-in.



Impressed by what these two youths were able to put together, Future North wanted to build off of this idea and keep up their momentum. Later that same year, the team partnered with Pathways to Education to support the implementation of a new “Youth-Led Project” (rather than “internship” as this language more firmly positions the youth as leaders). The “Culture of the North” research project was selected; the project sought to determine the degree to which multicultural education was being taught within highschool classrooms in the District of Sudbury and Manitoulin, and its impact on students who identify as Black, Indigenous and People of Colour (BIPOC).

The project resulted in [an impressive twenty-four page PDF report](#) that makes the case for increased cultural education in schools as **67.8% of student respondents** stated that racism had affected their education to some degree while **40% of teacher respondents** stated that their school does little to help students speak out against racism.

Findings from the project recommended and informed the development of Equity Action Teams, which focused on increasing youth-led multicultural education opportunities, within two high schools. The project was renewed for a second phase, currently ongoing.

Throughout, and because of, these projects, Future North was learning what works when it comes to youth engagement. In the fall of 2021, they published a [Youth Engagement Toolkit](#) that highlights some frameworks and best practices for youth-serving agencies.

Future North’s demonstrable successes with youth engagement led the City of Greater Sudbury to contract the organization to create a report that engages youth on the question of what they would like to see from municipal recreational programming. Compass, a local youth mental health agency, followed the city’s lead and hired the team to conduct youth engagement research to inform the creation of their Youth Wellness Hub.

Photo: Alexis Brown





From Local to Global Leaders

KAHNAWÀ:KE MOHAWK TERRITORY

Being or acting as a leader can take many forms. Leadership does not have to happen on a grand scale in order for it to count—but sometimes it does happen on a larger scale. In 2021, four youth in Kahnawà:ke who were leaders in their local community found out what it's like to translate their leadership skills to the international stage.

With the help of CBYF, Kanien'kehá:ka youths traveled to Glasgow, Scotland to participate in the 26th United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26). Sending youth to COP26 reinforces the idea that those most affected by a problem—in the case of climate change, disproportionately younger

generations—should be the ones actively involved in solutions. Their participation in the conference complements efforts in the community to advocate for climate action and to engage youth in meaningful ways.

COP26 is a conference that deals primarily with assessing the impact and effectiveness of various initiatives around the globe which is accomplished through dialogue and the exchange of ideas. The youth who attended had the opportunity to speak directly with global leaders, engaging systems actors and while showcasing their leadership and communications skills.



Carlee Loft, the youth engagement coordinator for Kahnawà:ke Collective Impact, attended COP25 in Madrid in 2019 but she was the only Indigenous youth in the delegation. Addressing the efficacy of these conferences, Carlee frames the event in terms of potentiality:

"It's a way to learn from each other how we on a community level are addressing the climate crisis and how we can work together to be even stronger."

She spearheaded the initiative in 2020, with support from Indigenous Climate Action, the Climate Reality Project, and YMCA Quebec, as she felt that more Kahnawà:ke youth would benefit from such an experience. As one of the youth delegates, Ohontsakéhte Montour, told the CBC:

"If you understand our language and culture, the land is so important. The Earth is so important. There's a clear connection between climate change and who we are."



Photo: Markus Spiske



IMPACTS ON YOUTH

Spotlight on the impact of youth-led innovation

1,002

Youth engaged in designing, delivering, and evaluating innovative programs, initiatives, and services targeted at increasing employment and education outcomes for their peers.

AS A RESULT OF YOUTH-LED INITIATIVES;

61



Direct partnerships established with high schools, school boards, and post-secondary institutions. **These partnerships led to:**

- **Educators receiving free, youth-led & designed workshops** on creating safe spaces for students
- **The distribution of free, user-friendly toolkits and resources** designed by youth on best practices for engaging and retaining young people as students and employees.
- **A reduced burden** on school administrators, counselors, and teachers supporting underserved, at-risk, and neurodivergent youth through targeted programming and outreach.

1,493



Youth empowered through direct employment and compensation for leading CBYF initiatives, or as a backbone staff member.

55+



Youth achieved professional accreditation training and upskilling credentials.

50+



Youth achieved graduation and post-secondary enrollment through earned educational credits.

450



Free rides granted to youth to support their school and work commitments.

210



Free laptops distributed to support youth's employment and educational objectives.

350



Youth benefited from direct support in the form of meal vouchers, grocery credits, and food baskets.

CBYF'S IMPACTS ON YOUTH

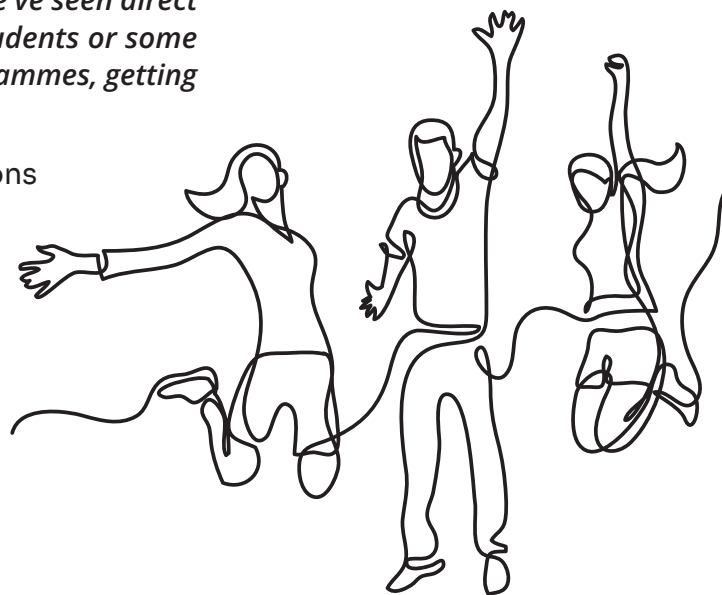
Jodie is clear that her team owes its successes in Oxford County to youth themselves. Youth were consulted not just at the beginning of the project, but every step of the way. Jodie wanted to make sure that her team contributed something to the community that made a real impact in the lives of youth. But how can we know if we're creating an impact when many effects won't be clear for years to come? Easy, **ask youth directly.**

"We actually just did a focus group back in August, I believe, with our Youth Innovators to ask them what impact their involvement with CBYF had on them. ...From their own reflections, they've identified that they gained a variety of different soft skills in communication, learning about how to run meetings, learning about the importance of reading emails, learning how to review things."

"But also what we see a lot and what we heard a lot from them was the impact [that] just having a space where what they are saying needs to happen actually happens. And they talked about feeling like they belong in their community and that they're respected in their community again, [...] that going through this and building effective positive relationships with adults in their community made them feel like they could trust adults more and have people who they can talk to to say, 'hey, I think this is how we can improve this thing'. Also, we've seen direct impact in terms of involvement with our work helping students or some of our youth get into university programmes, college programmes, getting scholarships, getting awards." Jodie

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.

“ Across Canada, CBYF's radical community collaborations and youth-for-youth programming **reached 63K+ young people.**”



CBYF'S IMPACTS ON YOUTH

This is what they had to say :¹

DO YOU THINK YOUTH-LED PROJECTS ARE A WAY TO DRIVE POSITIVE COMMUNITY CHANGE?

"The youth of the community are the literal future of that community. If the community wants positive change, working within the community is the way to go. The confidence and pride coming from a youth-led project is vital to the success of that project. The youth know support will be there, always. Only the youth know what they want from the future and just need help in making that happen."

"Yes. Because if it is being run by youth the chances are more youth will become involved. Once one youth does it friends will join and word will get out."

"I believe that youth have so many ideas and they aren't ever allowed [to act on them]. With this project and many others, youth finally are able to find their ground and their voice."

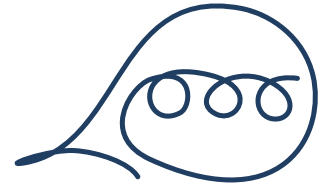
"I think they are and need to be. There is no one else providing youth led projects and creating a way for the future of youth."

"Yes! I think youth led projects can be more inspiring to people in the community and inspire them to change or to lead projects as well."

"Yes. Many issues that face community members start in their youth, so working with youth is a better way to address the root of issues."

"Yes. Youth are our future and we need to help them prepare for future roles. Funding youth-led projects gives youth the necessary experience to drive change and be involved in their community."

"Absolutely, the youth in our community are the game changers, the catalysts' to implement positive change and address the barriers by creating capacity within themselves, we have amazing young leaders who are learning and being mentored for community impact positions within our organization."



“ Only the youth know what they want from the future and just need help in making that happen.”

Youth Participant

¹ 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.

CBYF'S IMPACTS ON YOUTH

CBYF initiatives demonstrably prove that placing youth at the center of the work—works. When community workers listen to youth and incorporate their ideas, youth are more likely to engage—not only accessing the programs organizations are offering, but actually working to shape the future of those programs. **62% of youth survey respondents agreed that the project empowered them to be a part of community decisions and ensured their voice was heard.** And their continued involvement in the community goes beyond CBYF, **as 59% of youth survey respondents agreed that their involvement with the initiative led them to participate in other community activities outside the project's scope.** Correspondingly, youth found that greater involvement leads to more work being done, creating a positive feedback loop.

"[There is] more awareness around community issues [and] more work being done by service organizations in the community."

By finding innovative ways to reach youth and provide opportunities for them to lead, CBYF is taking the first steps towards having youth direct their own futures. Breaking down information asymmetries between youth and the resources out there for them was a key pillar of CBYF's work and lays the foundation for meaningful community engagement in the future.

"CBYF helped me learn about opportunities for leadership and how to show it in the university."

"It has been such a valuable leadership opportunity that has opened countless doors for me over the past three years. I think that I am now seen as a leader of youth in my community by the community at large."

“ When community workers listen to youth and incorporate their ideas, youth are more likely to engage—not only accessing the programs organizations are offering, but actually working to shape the future of those programs.”

MEET

CBYF'S IMPACTS ON YOUTH FUTURES

Each CBYF community is unique; what “youth engagement and leadership” means for each is entirely different. Despite their differences, across the country, youth are promoting ideas, vocalizing their goals, engaging in political discussions, forming community groups, reclaiming or creating identities and connecting with one another as changemakers.

CBYF communities work to support youth by providing structure, guidance, and unwavering commitment to youth-led collective impact. Thanks to this collaboration, youth have drastically shifted their outlook on the future, along with a reevaluation of the resources and paths available to them.

*"I found that [connecting with] **Vision Us** helped me find my voice and direction—specifically in the direction of the community. One day Alex and I wound up driving all around Chatham-Kent looking at different community initiatives—e.g. library exchanges, outdoor workout spaces, etc. [It] made me consider my future career in Chatham and coming back one day, so that was really special!"*

"My perspective shifted for the better. In the past, [I] felt my voice wasn't heard, decisions were made without [my] input. [It's] empowering to be able to be in a space where I'm listened to, and I'm able to listen to others."

"I felt motivated being in the group, planning events, sharing new ideas."

"CBYF has empowered me as a youth to take charge and create a vision for my future. The structure of CBYF as a collective, has given youth access to community leaders who aren't just interested in holding onto power. they are specifically invested in creating change and who are focused on the youth as being the future."

“ In the past, [I] felt my voice wasn't heard, decisions were made without [my] input. [It's] empowering to be able to be in a space where I'm listened to, and I'm able to listen to others."

Youth Participant

CBYF'S IMPACT ON YOUTH FUTURES

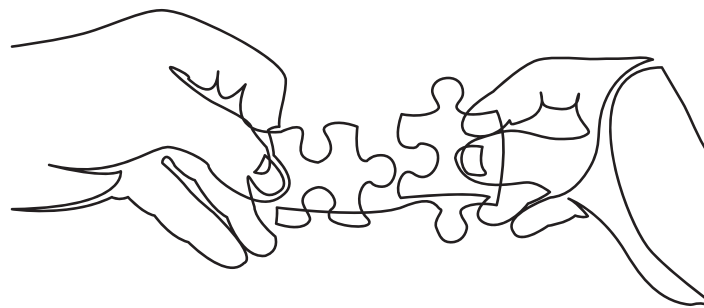
"CBYF shaped my perspective of the immediate and long term future. I've always been interested in trades and terrified of a desk job as someone who can't sit still. I didn't know how to pursue it in high school and graduate. Still a bit unsure but I know a bit more. We learned about welding and carpentry, now about roofing and all kinds of stuff and it's given me a glimpse of what I can pursue beyond a handyman. Gives me something to look forward to in the future."

*"I think being able to see the ups and downs of being able to get youth to come out to these events, and to see how the events are run and what impact it's had on the community has **really charged my drive and ambition** to really be able to put together a program to help specifically for us, youth who have intergenerational trauma or parents who are diagnosed with PTSD, or PTSD themselves."*

*"We've hosted a Future Fair for the past 2 years, focused on all aspects of the future (education, employment, volunteering). Junior High, High School, and Post Graduates—I've been involved in organizing which has been a **leadership experience**."*

"[People] can't ignore it when the collective of people who care is bigger. They can't ignore it when everyone's saying the same thing, then they have to be a part of the conversation. But in order for that to happen, we actually have to open ourselves up and be willing to learn and teach each other. There's a lot of silos, not only in cities, but across the country. Everybody thinks that they're in this alone, and CBYF has definitely shown me that we're not, we just have to make the effort to work together. And what Tamarack has done successfully over and over again is show us exactly how to do that."

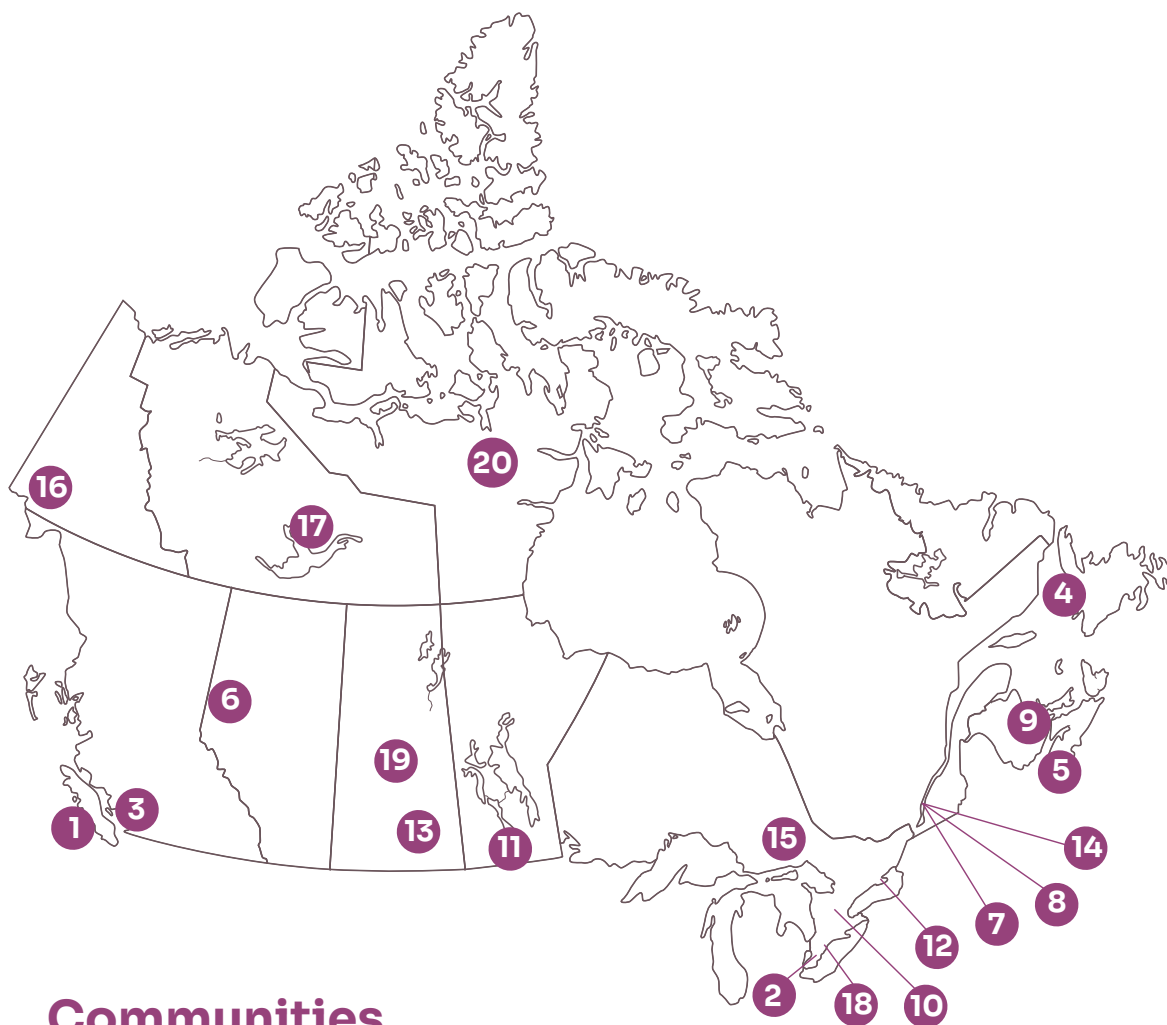
Having youth navigate support systems with ease is the long-term goal but creating systemic change is a long process. Four years into CBYF, communities have created long term partnerships, attended major annual events, acquired outside funding and support, and inspired the beginnings of a paradigm shift in rural Canada.



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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+ 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

- **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".²

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.

² 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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