

# YOUTH ENGAGEMENT & LEADERSHIP

An Overview from the CIF Impact Report

## COMMUNITIES BUILDING YOUTH FUTURES (CBYF)

Tamarack Institute's Communities Building Youth Futures (CBYF) is a five-year initiative funded by the Government of Canada's Supports for Student Learning Program\* that operates in 20 rural, remote, and/or Indigenous communities across the country. The goal of CBYF is to develop community-wide strategies to support youth (aged 15 – 30) to graduate high school and successfully transition to post-secondary, training or employment. Each CBYF community receives core funding and capacity building support from Tamarack to develop and implement their local action plan.

## COMMUNITY INNOVATION FUND (CIF)

CBYF communities are eligible to apply annually for one-year Community Innovation Fund (CIF) grants. These grants enable local CBYF initiatives to achieve “quick wins” on pressing issues while balancing the deep work of addressing the priorities of their community's youth. After the first year of implementing CBYF in communities, six domains emerged to address barriers to academic and employment success faced by youth. The six themes have been structured into six overviews, focusing specifically on the impacts of 40 CIF grants distributed between 2020 and 2023. All overviews will be updated to include data from the final year as it becomes available.

## YOUTH ENGAGEMENT & LEADERSHIP

CBYF leadership teams acknowledge that youth are the ultimate subject matter experts. Youth have strong opinions on what initiatives and services they want and are much more likely to participate when their feedback is genuinely respected. Leadership opportunities in a CIF project often served as a stepping stone for youth, helping them gain relevant job experience and encouraging them to take up further leadership positions.

## COMMUNITY-IDENTIFIED CHALLENGES

- Youth feel disengaged, disconnected, and disenfranchised in their communities.
- There are gaps or barriers in accessing youth-friendly spaces, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Youth don't feel their leadership is utilized or their voices are listened to by the community.

**While 40 initiatives addressed youth engagement and leadership, the projects on the following page focused most specifically on this theme.**

## INITIATIVES ADDRESSING YOUTH ENGAGEMENT & LEADERSHIP

### Youth Pathways to Leadership

*Whitehorse, YK*

The Yukon team reached out to rural communities in Yukon to support youth leadership and build community capacity. As a result, 75 young people directly influenced the creation of the Yukon Territorial Youth Strategy in 2022.

### Digby Area Youth Space

*Digby, NS*

Youth leaders provided fun and educational online programming for other young people during the pandemic restrictions while teaching about budgeting, job-searching, mental health care, etc.

### Youth Action Society

*Grande Prairie, AB*

Youth leaders designed micro-grants to support education or employment for local young people.

### Pihtikwe: Beyond the Doorstep

*Prince Albert, SK*

Youth in Prince Albert reported that they didn't know what services were available to them and weren't sure how to access them. To remedy the problem, youth reached out to local services and created a video documentary that included information about each service and how to access them.

## COMMUNITY IMPACTS OF THE CIF PROJECTS

- 1** **5,746 youth** had opportunities to practice their leadership skills while making meaningful impacts on their communities through CIF initiatives.
- 2** **1,292 youth** were engaged in CIF projects as designers and developers.
- 3** **75 youth** in rural Yukon had the opportunity to directly influence the territory's Youth Strategy by sharing their experiences and feedback.
- 4** **Almost 60% of CIF project leaders** who engaged with local systems wrote about how the experience profoundly increased youth leaders' confidence and understanding of their own capacity.
- 5** CIF projects supported **over 2,700 youth** to engage with local leaders, politicians, business owners, and other community members, greatly increasing their capacities for leadership and community engagement.
- 6** The Covid-19 pandemic made engaging vulnerable youth populations even more difficult. Despite these significantly challenging conditions, youth leaders in Digby were able to bring together **60 young people** for fun and informative social time online.
- 7** Youth leaders in Sudbury and Prince Albert shared how significantly their projects increased not only their access to services but their confidence in interacting with service providers and other community leaders. One young person from Prince Albert shared, "my confidence has increased hugely... I'd just call people, even though I was a bit anxious. I'm very proud of myself".

*\*The opinions and interpretations in this publication are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the Government of Canada.*