

IDENTITY & SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

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.

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Young people need to feel like valued and respected members of a community to realize their potential in education and employment. Opportunities for social connection and cultural identity are so important for youth because supportive adult allies and peer mentors can increase youth confidence and help them prepare for new challenges in the future.

COMMUNITY-IDENTIFIED CHALLENGES

- Many Indigenous youth lack cultural connection or access to supportive elders.
- Youth lack confidence that comes with a strong community of adult and peer mentors.
- Youth experience stigma and discrimination based on their identities that affects their sense of belonging in community spaces.

While 17 initiatives addressed identity and social connections, the projects on the following page focused most specifically on this theme.

INITIATIVES ADDRESSING IDENTITY & SOCIAL CONNECTION

After School Hangout

Chilliwack BC

This intensive project taught youth hands-on employment skills while running a professional kitchen. The initiative also connected youth with mentorship and internship opportunities with local businesses.

Youth Accessing Digital Devices

Prince Albert, SK

This project connects youth with a woodshop, a digital lab, and an arts space to help them develop their small businesses. Youth were paired with mentors and business leaders to help them succeed in their entrepreneurial efforts.

Kanien'kehá:ka Traditional Food Cooking Program

Kahnawà:ke, QC

The PIC is a makerspace designed to help youth entrepreneurs start new small businesses and connect with local employers and mentors.

Hazhò Èłexè Łets'èèzhe

Yellowknife, NT

This program serves as an innovation incubator, allowing youth the chance to try out different interests and career options.

COMMUNITY IMPACTS OF THE CIF PROJECTS

- 1,380 youth** received opportunities for greater connection with adult allies and local services because of their involvement with CIF initiatives.
- 8 projects'** final reports specifically mentioned that CIF initiatives represented the greatest or only connection youth had to their Indigenous identities.
- Leaders of the Chilliwack After School Hangout watched the over **70 youth participants** gain mentors, learn social-emotional skills, and gain confidence over the course of the year, leading to 29 youth being employed or engaged as project leaders.
- Youth involved in the Hazhò Èłexè Łets'èèzhe initiative shared how much they missed social connection and connection to nature after a year of Covid-19 pandemic restrictions. CIF leaders shared the profoundly positive effects the program had on mental health for the **197 youth participants**.
- 18 CIF projects** provided Indigenous cultural teachings and mentorship from elders for over 220 Indigenous youth.
- The Kanien'kehá:ka Traditional Food Program provided a channel for **215 youth** to connect with their identities in powerful ways, which had an immediate effect on them. Leaders wrote, "students with behavioural issues were actually some of the most involved and attentive participants in the cooking classes".