



COMMUNITIES BUILDING
YOUTH FUTURES

Summative Report



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INTRODUCTION



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Communities Building Youth Futures (CBYF) initiatives were carried out on the traditional lands of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities across Turtle Island. We acknowledge the ongoing oppression of Indigenous people and commit to addressing these inequities in the work we do.

Funding for this report and the larger CBYF initiative comes from the Government of Canada’s Supports for Student Learning Program. The opinions and interpretations in this publication are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the Government of Canada.

ABOUT TAMARACK
INSTITUTE FOR COMMUNITY
ENGAGEMENT & 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 lands colonially known as Canada. The goal of CBYF is to develop and align 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.

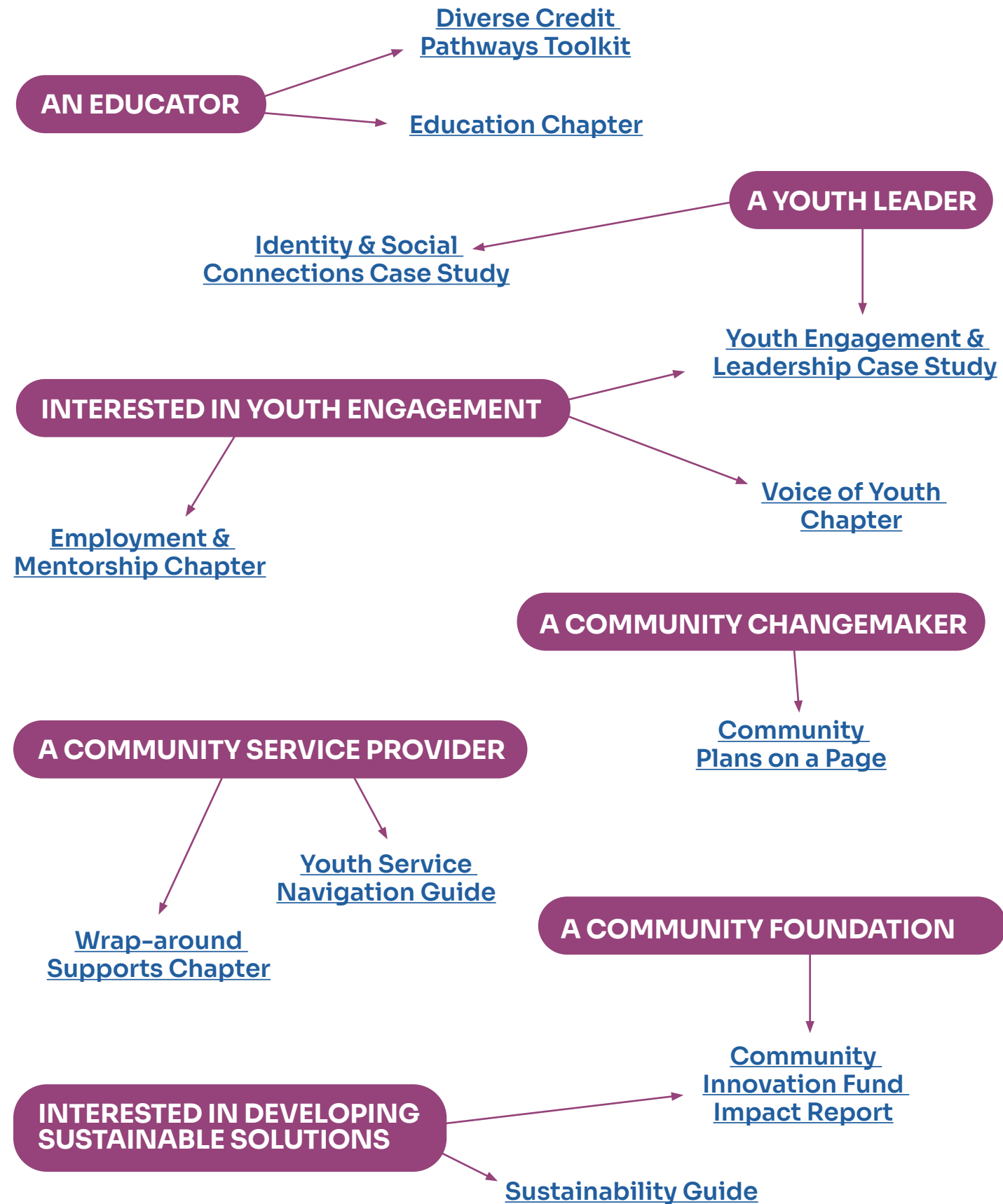
CONTENTS OF THE REPORT

This Summative Evaluation Report gathers case studies, journey maps, impact research, reports, and other project outputs developed during the first 5 years of the Communities Building Youth Futures (CBYF) initiative. The goal of the report is to document key milestones of the CBYF Initiative, highlight the impacts achieved for youth and communities, and share knowledge and insights about supporting youth success generated by the 20 communities.

NAVIGATING THE REPORT

This report contains information that could be helpful to a wide range of youth and their allies from educators and youth leaders to service providers and funders. To help you navigate the report, the graphic on the following page outlines some possible identities and goals along with the chapters or links that are most relevant to them. You are also welcome to use the table of contents or read through the report in whatever way is most accessible to you.

I AM...



CBYF COMMUNITIES COHORT 1

Chatham-Kent, ON

Territory of the Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee peoples; Three Fires Confederacy

Chilliwack, BC

Ts'elxwéyeqw, Unceded Land of the Ts'elxwéyeqw Nation

Corner Brook, NL

Ktaqmkuk and Traditional lands of the Mi'kmaq and Beothuk peoples

Digby, NS

Wabanaki Confederacy, Mi'kma'ki Territory

Grande Prairie, AB

Treaty 8 Territory, signed by the Nêhiyaw (Cree), Tsattine (Beaver), Dene, and Métis people

Kahnawà:ke, QC

Kanien'kehá:ka (People of the Flint) traditional territory

Laval, QC Unceded Land of the Haudenosaunee
Prince Albert, SK Kistahpinanihk, Treaty 6
Sudbury, ON Traditional and ancestral lands of the Atikameksheng Anishnawbek

Portage la Prairie, MB Ishkodenamigong, Bdayeta Opta Watokshu, Treaty 1 Territory
Saint-Léonard, QC Tio:tiake/Mooniyang
Yellowknife, NT Weledeh, Treaty 11

CBYF COMMUNITIES COHORT 2

Alberni-Clayoquot, BC Nuu- chah-nulth, Hupačasath Territory
Moncton, NB Wabanaki Confederacy Mi’kma’ki Territory
Oxford County, ON Territory of the Anishinaabe, Haudenosaunee, and Attawandaron peoples
Regina, SK Oskana Ka-Asastēki, Treaty 4

Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, ON Deshkan Zibiing
Nunavut Inuit Nunangat (Inuit homeland)
Prince Edward County, ON Territory of the Wendake-Nionwentsïo, Haudenos-aunee, and Anishinaabe peoples
Yukon Kwanlin Dün & traditional territory of Southern Tutchone, Tagish, Tlingit nations

IMPACT DATA
 COMMUNITIES BUILDING YOUTH FUTURES

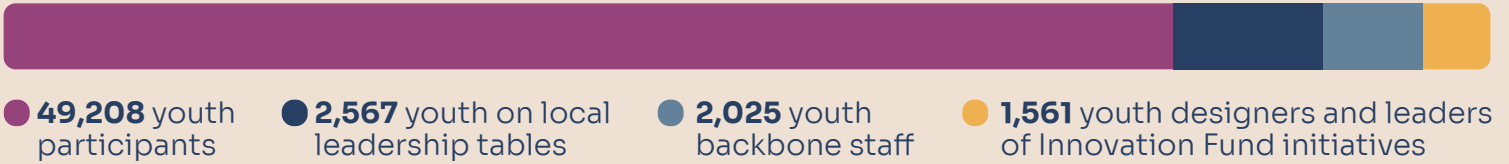


Tamarack’s Inputs

- 58 Community Innovation Fund projects supported
- 1,000+ coaching calls & support sessions
- 130+ CoP sessions
- A National Collaborative to champion communities
- 5 National Gatherings
- 129 Reports and Articles
- 26 Webinars
- 20 Case studies

IMPACTS FOR YOUTH

63,938 youth engaged total



IMPACTS FOR COMMUNITIES

325 new pilot projects designed

770 new tools and practices developed

1,561 youth developed or implemented 58 innovation projects

522 trainings held for youth and community members

6,258 local leaders engaged – including 3,551 local employers

2,379 youth-serving organizations engaged

IMPACTS ON SYSTEMS

1,784 government representatives engaged

20 local education systems and 4,704 education representatives engaged

New Funding Flows

Chatham-Kent leveraged almost \$1 million in additional provincial funding to support youth transitions from high school to work in the trades.

Portage la Prairie secured a \$250,000 grant from the Rideau Foundation to maintain and expand the Roving Campus.

Sudbury received over \$140,000 in additional funding and in-kind contributions to support youth employment readiness and leadership skills.

Digby was awarded \$40,000 from the Catherine Donnelly Foundation to support the Black Youth Changemakers program in addition to \$118,500 in other funding.

Chilliwack’s Beyond the Bell initiative has reached indefinite sustainability thanks to financial support from the municipal government and the school board. In addition, they have received over \$300,000 in outside funding.

The City of **Grand Prairie** became CBYF’s new fiscal sponsor and provided an additional \$3,000 in funding as well as thousands of dollars in in-kind support.

The **Alberni-Clayoquot** Region leveraged CBYF capacity-building to support their successful grant application for a \$1.5 million 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.

Oxford County successfully leveraged almost \$200,000 in additional funding during their time with CBYF.

Changes in Organizational Practice and Public Policy

Portage la Prairie’s Roving Campus (RC) initiative has been fully integrated into the local school system, not only reaching sustainability but expanding to the CBYF community of Digby, where it also found success. The RC has supported 100 young people to graduate high school and transition into employment in Portage La Prairie. This would not be possible without the initiative.

Yukon youth collaborated on the historic Territorial Youth Strategy, which outlines young peoples’ most pressing concerns and the systems changes they want to see happening in the territory. The youth lead said of the initiative, “this is a huge achievement that will initiate change for youth for generations to come. We have already seen the strategy being used to direct funds and decision making which will only continue to grow with groups signing on and an implementation plan being created next”.

Laval’s unique leadership table approach engaged 60 community organizations and over 5,900 young people to reshape the service navigation and education prospects of Laval youth.

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.

Alberni-Clayoquot youth spoke on the needs and priorities of young people at a gathering of 100+ health workers. 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 such as coaches, teachers, guidance counselors, and librarians. These workshops included strategies for engaging and serving youth who have experienced trauma.

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.

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. Corner Brook’s tutoring program is the only free and widely accessible tutoring program in the region

Yukon convened a 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.

Chilliwack’s team lead wrote, “many of the youth [volunteers] have told us they are considering youth work, although they were not considering it before they worked with us”.

Prince Edward County’s Greater Than County Youth Collective has attracted significant partnerships with municipal government, education leaders, and other community partners. Their unique ‘hackathon’ approach and youth-led steering committee engaged over 3,300 youth from the community.

JOURNEY TO OUTCOMES



IDEA GENERATION

Communities Building Youth Futures (CBYF) found its roots during a two-session consultation with youth leaders and with leaders from youth serving programs, philanthropic organizations, and education and government. Together, these change-makers explored how young people's education and employment success could be better supported through a holistic approach that engaged the whole community and centred the voices of youth.

ENGAGING COMMUNITIES

In 2019, the Supports for Student Learning (SSL) Branch of Employment and Social Development Canada engaged the Tamarack Institute to weave the ideas and designs from the consultation sessions into a national strategy. This was the beginning of the Communities Building Youth Futures initiative. In the first phase of CBYF, 12 communities from across Canada were engaged. Data revealed that many young people in these small, rural, remote communities and Indigenous Nations were facing systemic barriers to complete high school and fewer were on track toward training or employment. While youth-focused supports existed in each of the communities, these resources were fragmented or inaccessible to youth.

In response, Tamarack supported all 12 CBYF communities to use the principles and tools of collective impact, which encourages leaders from across sectors, experiences, and generations to come together around a shared goal – in this case, post-secondary enrollment or meaningful employment for youth ages 16–25. This allowed for a flexible, place-based approach that leveraged the unique culture, needs and priorities of each community. In each community, a local youth-serving organization (and, in some

cases, a municipality) became the partnership's "backbone," enabling partners to develop trust, build shared accountability to their goal, and incorporate youth as decision-makers, experts, and consultants. With ongoing coaching and support from Tamarack, communities began to build relationships and construct broad networks that linked adult allies, educators, social services, regional and provincial/territorial leaders, and many others. Leadership teams engaged community members who had never supported youth before, providing capacity-building sessions to support the entire community as they took on new mentorship roles.

TAMARACK'S ROLE IN CBYF

Tamarack Institute was heavily involved in supporting CBYF communities– both individually and collectively– as they used the principles and tools of collective impact to develop and implement their local strategies. Tamarack provided coaching sessions, resources, new research, networking, and connections with other communities for knowledge-sharing and support. Over the last five years, Tamarack staff have provided over 1,000 coaching calls and support sessions, and over 130 Community of Practice (CoP) sessions to facilitate peer learning and support across the 20 communities.

Tamarack also established a CBYF National Collaborative to bring together young people, business, philanthropy, and government organizations to provide advice to the local work and leverage opportunities for policy and system level impact. The National Collaborative was instrumental in offering support and suggestions to the communities and to the CBYF network as a whole. The National Collaborative also undertook research that was informed by the work of local CBYF communities and helped to inform strategies for the entire CBYF network.

Between 2020 and 2024, Tamarack hosted 5 national gatherings across Canada to bring together youth leaders and adult allies from all CBYF communities for collaboration, connection, healing, learning, and network-wide action.

CBYF DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The initial goal of CBYF was to engage 5,000 young people in the effort. And then the COVID pandemic hit.

Despite having to quickly pivot to online engagement, the local collaborations thrived and were able to respond quickly to meet the needs of youth. The teams, with coaching support provided by the Tamarack Institute, built their community-based plans. Using technology, they assembled local partnership tables engaging youth, government, non-profit, business and education leaders. Surprisingly, the COVID pandemic had the effect of spurring momentum because the local collaborative tables, who had established trusted relationships with youth in their communities, were highly effective at creatively responding to young people to offer support in navigating new educational barriers and retaining social connections with each other.

WELCOMING COHORT TWO

Within eight months, each community had developed comprehensive, multi-sector action plans and were beginning to move their collective work forward. Staff were hired and the first round of community innovation projects were developed and funded. Two years into the CBYF initiative, 8 additional communities were invited to join. These communities were able to learn quickly and were mentored by their CBYF colleagues. Despite a shorter timeline, the cohort two communities were able to quickly scale their plans, bringing together key collaborative partners and young people. They also benefited from the coaching, and technical and financial resources already in place to support CBYF communities as well as the insights and experiences of cohort one communities.

THE IMPACT

Over the 5 years of CBYF, the community-based impact is significant. Youth and a diversity of sector leaders worked together to develop new ways to navigate fragmented community systems. Cohesion within and between communities grew – despite a COVID pandemic – as they diagnosed complex issues and developed creative, youth-centred solutions. Across 20 small, rural, remote communities and Indigenous Nations, more than 70,000 young people found a welcoming home and a reason to belong. 63,938 young people participated in educational training, employment opportunities, youth surveys, community innovation projects, or received direct coaching and community supports. A further 2,000 youth were employed across the CBYF network, and over 1,500 youth held leadership roles that enabled them to build their resumes and gain academic and community skills and connections.

The 58 community innovation projects, designed by young people and their community partners, provided a range of direct supports to youth including computers and funds to apply to post-secondary education and training, and innovative education and career exploration opportunities. The creativity and diversity of these projects offered an array of promising new solutions to support youth success and, thanks to the Community of Practice infrastructure provided by Tamarack, could be adapted and implemented in other CBYF communities.

Across each of the 20 communities, a fragmented system of services has been woven together to support young people. Around community tables, young people's voices, concerns, and ambitions were central. This informed the collaboration work at the local level, informed the national agenda, and generated opportunities for in-depth research. This included research that highlighted the gap between employer expectations and youth in the world of work. Research into diverse credit pathways explored opportunities to develop alternative education and employment pathways so educators and education systems could better respond to the diverse needs of youth.

System navigation tools have more seamlessly woven together services to support young people. Communities have received thousands of dollars in funding from outside philanthropists to continue their impactful work, and strong and sustainable connections with local school board and government officials have been established.

CBYF’s impacts will not end with the completion of the collaboration with ESDC. All 20 communities have broadly engaged youth and their allies and significantly increased communities’ capacity to collaboratively support youth, and – at the time of this reports’ publication – all 20 continue to work with Tamarack and the other CBYF communities toward post-secondary enrollment and education for all young people. Communities have more youth on community leadership tables and more youth voice in decision-making which has resulted in more effective and impactful youth supports. In 5 short years, the future for young people in these 20 communities across Canada is brighter and more connected. We are grateful to the 70,091 young people who joined this journey, shared their ideas, and collectively built better futures for themselves and their communities.

BUILDING COMMUNITY NETWORKS: A CASE STUDY

CBYF community collaboration in Laval, Quebec

Unlike other CBYF communities, which tend to be small and rural, Laval is the second largest city-centre in the province of Quebec. It has 20,000 high school-aged youth and a multitude of youth-serving organizations, service providers, and other initiatives. However, community leaders at the Regroupement Lavallois pour la réussite éducative (RLPRE), or the Laval Educational Success Alliance identified a lack of connection and collaboration between these organizations. This was leading to confusion about how to refer youth for appropriate services, difficulty engaging youth, and accidental duplication of initiatives between different organizations.

As one of the initial 12 CBYF communities, Laval began to develop their plan on a page outlining their goals for the upcoming years in 2020. With coaching from Tamarack Institute, the Laval team engaged 15 other youth-serving organizations to join a collaborative leadership group designed to strengthen networks among service providers, youth allies, and other initiatives. Together, CBYF Laval shared resources, developed youth-led education and employment initiatives, and increased accessibility of youth-focused services in Laval. Outside of the leadership table, CBYF Laval was able to reach 60 other youth-serving organizations, and almost 6,000 youth participants over the last 5 years.

Outputs

- 5,906 youth engaged as project participants
- 508 new partnerships, networks, and working groups established
- 44 pilot projects aimed at improving youth education and employment outcomes
- 9 young people now sit on a youth advisory board tasked with providing youth voice and leadership in new community initiatives

Outcomes

- Greater transparency and access for youth accessing services in Laval
- Greater connection and knowledge between service providers
- Less duplication between initiatives and better use of funds
- More accessible service navigation and referral supports for youth
- Better youth representation and youth voice on local leadership tables
- More sustainable funding flows
- Deeper connections with local education and government leaders

PLANS ON A PAGE

One of the first goals of each community upon joining the CBYF network is to engage their community and use that input to formulate a youth-led plan on a page, which outlines the priorities and approaches that the community will adopt to support the success of its young people. These plans on a page help communities to build and work together on a common agenda, one of the five core conditions of collective impact work. To explore each community’s plan on a page, please click the links below.

Alberni-Clayoquot	Chatham-Kent	Chilliwack
Chippewas of the Thames First Nation	Corner Brook	Digby
Grande Prairie	Kahnawà:ke	Laval
Moncton	Oxford County	Portage La Prairie
Prince Albert	Prince Edward County	Regina
Saint-Léonard	Sudbury	Yellowknife
Yukon	CBYF	



ACCESSIBLE EDUCATION



Youth in rural communities often lack clear pathways from high school to post-secondary education, training programs, or employment. This can be compounded by other barriers including poverty, lack of adult support, and poor mental or physical health. Some youth involved in CBYF initiatives reported experiencing racism and stigma when attending school, and others felt that teachers were too busy to fully address their needs. In response, CBYF communities took a holistic, whole of community approach to support youth educational achievement, highlighting that learning comes from many places in and outside conventional school environments. To address the diverse education needs of youth, CBYF communities:

- Developed alternative learning opportunities both with and alongside the formal education system.
- Connected Indigenous youth with local Elders for culturally significant learning and mentorship opportunities.
- Established safer ‘third spaces’ for youth to find peer and ally support to study and finish homework after school.
- Designed free youth-run tutoring services.
- Connected youth with existing service providers, mentors, organizations, and scholarships to create more coordinated and accessible ‘webs of support’ in the transition from classroom to career.

ACCESSIBLE EDUCATION CASE STUDY

The following Accessible Education Case Study takes an in-depth look at how communities- with the help of Tamarack Institute- addressed the

theme of accessible education. The case study includes:

- **Interviews with youth leaders** about their experiences with CBYF
- Detailed descriptions of communities’ **initiatives related to education**
- Youth descriptions of how CBYF has **improved educational accessibility** and education outcomes for them
- **Key learnings and take-aways** that resulted from the successes of CBYF education-focused initiatives

[Read the Case Study](#)

DIVERSE CREDIT PATHWAYS TOOLKIT

Tamarack Institute, with input from CBYF’s National Collaborative, created a diverse credit pathways toolkit for adult allies of youth learners, such as teachers, school administrators, and caregivers. The toolkit includes:

- **A description of diverse credit pathways** and how they reduce barriers to educational achievement
- **All diverse credit options** for youth in CBYF communities
- **How to create** new alternative credit offerings

[Explore the Toolkit](#)

EMPLOYMENT & MENTORSHIP



To succeed in a chosen career, youth need a series of expanding opportunities that allow them to safely explore potential areas of interest and incrementally increase their capacity for success. These opportunities not only help young people to practice their job skills, they also help youth develop confidence in their own abilities. This makes young people more likely to invest in higher education or training programs in the future. CBYF’s whole-of-community approach ensures that while community members and youth leaders design employment supports at the local level, they also simultaneously connect with leaders in the education system and government to shift policy, change funding flows, recommend changes in practice and advocate for other systems changes that reduce education barriers for youth. This approach maximizes the long-term impact of this work. To support young people’s employment success on the personal, community, and systems-level, CBYF communities:

- Helped youth gain necessary identity documents, resumes, and references to gain meaningful employment.
- Engaged youth on leadership tables to connect with local education and government leaders.
- Engaged in the complex work of shifting community attitudes
- Created new culturally significant training programs by and for Indigenous youth.
- Designed makerspaces for youth hoping to develop small businesses.

- Connected youth with local business owners and career mentors for support and job opportunities.
- Instituted microgrants to support youth employment and youth-run businesses.
- Offered part-time employment to local youth as project leaders and designers.
- Developed instructional courses on applying to jobs, budgeting, filing taxes, etc.

The following Employment & Mentorship Case Study details the way each community used innovative youth-led approaches to supporting the employment success of young people. The case study includes:

- **Stories from CBYF youth leaders and participants** about how CBYF initiatives improved their employment outcomes
- **Featured CBYF initiatives** and events related to employment and mentorship
- **Highlighted successes and impacts** for young employees and mentors
- **Key learnings and take-aways** from the many unique pilot projects and tools created by CBYF communities

[Read the Case Study](#)

WRAP AROUND SUPPORTS



In 2020, Tamarack staff met with leaders in each community to discuss some of the most pressing issues facing local youth. The challenges and concerns shared by the local communities could all be clustered into six broad themes. The first two, Accessible Education and Employment & Mentorship, focus more specifically on supporting youth as they graduate high school and transition to post-secondary education, training, or employment. The remaining four themes focused on an array of wrap-around supports to address the complex needs youth faced in their everyday lives that created barriers to success in education, employment, and life. The themes are Service Navigation & Access to Supports, Holistic Health & Wellbeing, Identity & Social Connection, and Youth Engagement & Leadership.

The Community Innovation Fund (CIF) projects implemented by local CBYF communities are mostly carried out in rural areas, which can lack the infrastructure of supports that exist in larger cities. Youth across almost every community reported struggling to access food, housing, or other basic supports, and spoke openly about how unprepared they felt for life after high school. Covid-19 pandemic restrictions confounded this issue, impacting young peoples' mental health and their capacity to succeed in education and employment. Many Indigenous youth disclosed facing stigma when attending school or accessing local services as a significant barrier and many spoke about the lack of strong adult mentors and Elders in their lives. Other young people experienced natural disasters such as severe flooding, the deaths of friends and family members, and medical issues while involved with CIF initiatives.

Consistently, we found that when youth were able to access basic needs such as food and housing, and psychological needs such as social

connection and adult mentorship, they were better able to focus on educational achievement. The following case studies illustrate the ways building holistic webs of support not only helped young people overcome barriers to education, but also enabled them to succeed as valued leaders who made positive contributions in their communities.

The following case studies share how CBYF communities provided youth with wrap-around supports. The case studies include:

- **Narration and storytelling** by CBYF youth leaders and participants
- **Impacts of CBYF's holistic approach** on young people's education and employment success
- In-depth **descriptions of community initiatives** related to wrap-around supports
- **Key learnings and take-aways** on the theme of holistic support for youth with barriers to success in education and employment

Holistic Health
& Wellbeing

Service Navigation &
Access to Supports

Youth Engagement
& Leadership

Identity & Social
Connection

Read the Guide

YOUTH SERVICE NAVIGATION GUIDE

Navigating the web of available social services can be challenging for many young people, and the Tamarack Institute has identified this as a reality for many young people across this country.

Our mission is to empower communities, youth organizations, municipalities, governments, young individuals, and everyone in between with effective strategies tailored to their needs, addressing specific and common barriers.

Tamarack co-produced this guide with CBYF communities to increase awareness and understanding of common barriers youth experience when accessing services and offer youth-friendly strategies that communities have developed to successfully address them.

This guide reflects the wisdom of Tamarack's Communities Building Youth Futures team, the communities we work with, and insights that were generously shared by folks with lived experience. We recognize that one-size-fits-all solutions don't work in the dynamic tapestry of diversity in Turtle Island (Canada) but hope that this resource can inspire and accelerate others and serve as a compass in finding ways to ensure that youth are successful in easily accessing the services they need wherever they live.

KEY LEARNINGS FROM THE GUIDE

- Always ask, "Who are we not hearing from?" Don't recreate biases in the system.
- Focus on your unique community and don't recreate the wheel - take an asset-based community development approach and use every community asset and resource you have.
- Providers have a tendency to hold onto data. Set up agreements early for how numbers will be counted.
- The coordinator role is key and it's also the hardest position to secure funding for. Build relationships with funders and use in-kind resources for service provision.
- Peer mentors are a game changer - compensate and train them well.
- The timing of services and programming is so important. It must be what youth want.

VOICE OF YOUTH



COMMUNITY INNOVATION FUND



INCLUDING YOUTH VOICE

CBYF is dedicated to supporting youth in small, rural, and remote communities and Indigenous Nations to graduate high school and transition to higher education, training, or employment. To authentically support youth on this journey, CBYF communities must first build and sustain trust with the youth they engage. This can only be achieved if youth feel that their contributions are valued, and their needs are met. Youth are the experts on their lives, barriers, and successes. They must therefore be active participants in the creation of their futures. For our communities to forge more abundant futures, youth expertise and dreams must take centre stage.

Youth are capable of catalyzing innovation in the spaces they occupy. By listening to youth voices, organizations are nourished by their fresh ideas, creative solutions, unconventional approaches, and culture of continuous growth. When youth are engaged, they develop leadership skills, connect with networks of support, and gain greater understanding of how to advance community and systems change. Keeping youth at the centre of decision-making fosters future young trailblazers who have the agency, capacity, and experience to incite change within and beyond their communities.

CBYF'S APPROACH

The CBYF model is rooted in the idea that youth voice is never an afterthought but rather must be embedded into every step of the process of collaborative action. This model attempts to reduce hierarchies in collective spaces. In the community spaces that CBYF has created,

youth's thoughts, insights, and feedback are seen as indispensable. CBYF leadership teams, action teams, and initiatives are designed with an emphasis on ensuring accessibility and care for young people. This ensures that youth are welcome as their authentic selves and are supported to contribute their unique ideas. Youth are given key leadership roles and responsibilities throughout the CBYF network which enables them to develop skills and build their confidence to share more ideas in the future. CBYF communities created many unique and flexible ways for young people to participate in their work thereby creating cultures where every person can feel included, celebrated, safe, and heard.

YOUTH VOICE REPORT

After five years of CBYF communities supporting and championing the voices of youth, we wanted to hear directly from youth participants about how their engagement with CBYF initiatives had impacted their lives. We collaborated with Evenings & Weekends Consulting to host listening sessions with 113 youth, analyzed data from a survey of 107 youth, and collected data from CBYF communities, representing an additional 3,546 youth and 327 community partners. The following report disseminates this data to show how youth were impacted by their involvement with CBYF communities.

[Read the Report](#)

In the summer of 2020, CBYF launched the first Community Innovation Fund (CIF) grants, designed to help communities create unique year-long pilot projects which prototyped new ideas for supporting youth graduation and transition to adulthood. These grants allowed communities to achieve “quick wins” early in the project, illustrating the significant potential for success to both youth and community members. Like all CBYF projects, CIF initiatives put youth at the centre of decision-making, prioritized collective impact processes, and engaged the whole community as collaborators and allies of youth. Tamarack supported CIF initiatives with coaching, capacity building, and connections to other communities for peer support and mentorship.

In the five years since the first CIF grants were distributed, communities have generated 58 unique pilot projects across the 20 CBYF communities. In total, these projects have engaged 9,969 youth as participants and 1,561 youth as leaders and initiative designers. CIF initiatives attracted outside funders, resulted in connections with government and school board leaders, became embedded into the standard operations of partner organizations, have been replicated by other communities in the CBYF network, and gained interest and attention world-wide. These successes helped strengthen the many other initiatives created by CBYF communities, even after the funding year was over.

The individual and collective impact of the 58 CIF projects was assessed on three levels: impacts generated for youth, impacts generated for communities and their capacity, and impacts related to systems change. It also identifies key learnings and insights about the

contributions that CIF initiatives played into the long-term effort to advance positive change in supporting youth to be successful in education, employment, and life. The CIF impact report includes:

- **Descriptions of all 58 CIF initiatives** including contributions from community partners and youth leaders
- **The impacts of CIF initiatives** on young peoples' education, employment, and holistic wellbeing
- The ways CIF initiatives' **impacts expanded to community and systems changes** including new education and government connections, project sustainability, and new funding flows
- **Key learnings and take-aways** on the ways successful CIF initiatives can be built and sustained

[Read the Report](#)[Read the Executive Summary](#)[Explore the One-Page Overviews](#)

SUSTAINABILITY



10: A Guide for Building a Sustainable and Resilient Collaboration unpacks the concepts of sustainability and resilience as they relate to long-term collaborative change on complex issues. It offers diagnostic tools, ideas, stories, and resources to inform the CBYF community collaborations as they consider their long-term sustainability.

Sustainability involves effectively resourcing a collaboration to continuously respond to identified community issues and create a lasting impact. It involves many factors including leadership, funding, community engagement, and the ability to influence policy and systems. Sustainability factors fall into four themes: people (who do we involve?), resources (what investments are required?), process (How should we collaborate?), and impact (What's our collective impact? How do we tell the story?).

Resilience is about building a collaboration's capacity to shift, adapt, and change, and is also focused on the overall health and well-being of the partnership and the community and – in the process – the individuals who commit to the partnership. This definition of resilience recognizes that systems have been designed over time to perpetuate our current inequities, and that we cannot look to an individual's or a collaboration's resiliency to address engrained inequities. It also recognizes that partnerships can be the ground for new friends and allies, self-awareness and feelings of belonging and agency in times when our systems are leading many people to burnout, isolation, trauma and poor mental health.

The guide centres on insights from CBYF and other communities on the factors that contribute to sustainable, resilient, and impactful collaboration within and across the CBYF communities. The guide explores the factors

relevant to creating a sustainable collaboration and the practices that build resiliency in collaborations, offers ideas and resources that supplement thinking and action, explores questions for funders and collaboration tables to consider, and shares community stories about collaboration efforts and the lessons that they have learned tied to their sustainability and resilience. Among these stories, the sustainability efforts of CBYF Yukon and CBYF Portage la Prairie are profiled.

Two tools were also developed as complements to the guide. These were: the Sustainability Self-Assessment Tool and the Building a Collaborative Impact Story Tool.

The guide's content was also animated in coaching sessions to all CBYF communities focused on sustainability. These facilitated targeted and intentional conversations that supported each CBYF community to:

- Assess where their community was at in thinking about their sustainability.
- Define what sustainability means for their community/for their work and what needs to be sustained.
- Support the development of a tailored action plan to address the sustainability and resilience factors and elements of their work.

The coaching sessions also helped to identify additional learning opportunities to support the sustainability of CBYF communities. This led to the design and delivery of a series of virtual workshop sessions for CBYF staff and leadership on building a budget, fundraising and grant writing, and communicating impact.

[Read the Guide](#)

THE FUTURE OF CBYF



In May 2023, CBYF communities travelled to Prince Albert, Saskatchewan to discuss the future of the CBYF network after the initial 5-year project finished. The Members' Retreat, titled 'Co-creating Solutions for the Future', helped communities answer the following questions:

- What's happening in each community currently?
- What patterns do we see in how change is taking place?
- What opportunities are there at a macro level that may not be possible at the community-level alone?

By mapping the work happening at different levels, we were able to zoom out and explore what we as a network could do in the coming years to amplify our impacts, influence change, and reduce barriers at a national level.

These discussions were then brought to the CBYF National Collaborative, a leadership table that includes national youth-serving organizations, funders, government partners, and youth leaders. The National Collaborative worked together to identify the four most viable and impactful macro-opportunities for change that the CBYF network can pursue together in the future. These four opportunities for collective action were then validated by CBYF communities at our annual gathering in Ottawa where members explored each opportunity in greater detail to identify potential projects. Below are the four macro-opportunities that communities are most interested in pursuing together in the future.

OPPORTUNITY 1: ACCESSIBLE EDUCATION – DIVERSE EDUCATION PATHWAYS

Overwhelmingly, youth across CBYF communities report experiencing barriers to school attendance and education success. Youth struggle with food and housing insecurity, poor mental health, and other issues that take priority over attending school full time. Given the often-limited resources available in small, rural, and/or Indigenous communities, and given the varying needs of young people, it is essential to provide diverse pathways for youth to achieve high school credits, helping them graduate and find employment success.

What CBYF Has Achieved

- Created a diverse credit pathways toolkit for educators
- Developed alternative education programs with local school boards
- Designed individualized learning initiatives for diverse learning needs
- Supported culturally appropriate learning materials and methods
- Gathered Indigenous elders and mentors for traditional teaching on the land
- Distributed guides, resources, and learnings about diverse credit pathways to other communities.

Plans for the Future

- Explore the preconditions for creating new credits.
- Involve youth in co-designing new pathways.
- Connect with education and government leaders to raise awareness and engage them in advancing alternative education opportunities.
- Facilitate the CBYF network to support communities as they create new diverse credit pathways.
- Involve local and provincial leaders in imagining, validating, and supporting diverse credit pathways.
- Include youth in the evaluation of new and existing pathways.

OPPORTUNITY 2: YOUTH ENGAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP – MORE YOUTH ON LEADERSHIP BOARDS

As validated through our CBYF initiatives, youth voice is essential for policies and programs to effectively reflect the needs of the young people they serve. It needs to become the ‘norm’ to have youth representation at municipal and school boards, and for youth to be included in decision-making that impacts them. There are successful examples in policy and practice of youth in power that we can point to and learn from. By advocating for behaviour and practice changes for youth to hold power within organizations, collaboratives, and boards, we increase youth voice which changes systems.

What CBYF Has Achieved

- At the onset of the initiative, building a variety of accessible options for youth leadership, recognizing youths’ diversity in leadership styles

- Providing capacity building for youth and adult allies related to leadership, decision-making, and awareness of and making changes to power dynamics to enable youth to participate and contribute fully.
- Learning from communities who meaningfully engage youth on municipal boards and sharing methods, templates, and lessons learned.
- Making sustainable connections with local government, school boards, and other policymakers



Plans for the Future

- Research policy barriers and current practices for youth in power.
- Work with Youthful Cities to develop indicators for youth in power. This might include % of municipal, school, and youth-serving organization boards with authentic youth representation. Test indicators with CBYF communities and then roll out to other communities.
- Develop a case for support, guidelines, templates, and resource for CBYF communities and others to make it easier for governments, schools, and organizations to improve their youth in power practices. Include examples and sample policies and processes to ensure youth are supported

in their leadership, and that adults are appropriately making space, engaging authentically, and sharing power with youth.

- Youth capacity building and adult ally training – Work with youth to develop youth capacity-building workshops/training/cohort. Build youth capacity and confidence to lead. Invite youth to teach adults how to be allies and engage in intergenerational learning. Explore partnership with United Way to update/ integrate their existing training. Bring training to communities so that training can be contextually relevant and create community-wide mindset shifts.
- Explore accreditation and accountability. Explore an accreditation or designation for youth-friendly employers/places. Explore what systems these norms be embedded within. For example, systems leaders’ accreditation, continuous improvement, leadership, or professional development processes.

OPPORTUNITY 3: LEVERAGING NATIONAL RESOURCES FOR HOLISTIC HEALTH

When youth have access to holistic health supports such as housing, food, mental healthcare, social connection, and many others, their education outcomes significantly improve. Many resources exist at the provincial and national scales such as 211, CAMH, Mentor Canada, and Kids Help Phone. On the other hand, smaller and rural communities have limited access to resources and often have a harder time accessing resources that are available. Communities are interested in understanding how they can connect national and provincial/territorial resources with local services to create holistic webs of support.



What CBYF Has Achieved

- Released Improving Service Navigation: A Guide for Community Organizations
- Created service directories to build awareness of existing supports
- Held open houses for youth to meet local service providers
- Launched peer connector initiatives
- Streamlined referrals between services and supports
- Hosted training for service providers on engaging youth

Plans for the Future

- Develop a work plan for connecting national organizations with communities – discuss system dynamics; identify systems that need to change; identify champions.
- Provide visibility into grant opportunities that can connect communities to national resources.
- Create a statement of understanding that can be used by communities—in grant applications, reports, etc.—that provides an evidence base for the importance of supporting stable health, food, housing etc. through and within youth initiatives

OPPORTUNITY 4: EMPLOYERS
AS CHAMPIONS OF YOUTH
SUCCESS

Direct employer connection and involvement in education and training reduces risk and increases economic prosperity by aligning education and employment availability within a community. Supportive employment environments are needed to build a skilled and sustainable workforce and increase employee retention. By supporting communities who are engaging employers as champions of youth success, we can build the evidence base for closing the gap between education and employment, change narratives around youth employment, and scale out promising practices to increase youth success.

What CBYF Has Achieved

- Developed long-term mentorship connections between youth and employers
- Held on-the-spot-hiring job fairs
- Created employment incubators for young people to practice their work skills in professional environments
- Included youth and employers on local leadership tables

Plans for the Future

- Support communities who are piloting innovative ideas that promote employers as champions for youth success – This includes: Increasing opportunities for youth to work and obtain education concurrently; Co-developing programs that better connect education and employment in specific industries; Enabling resourcing for on-the-job employment supports to

increase employee success and retention; Establishing social enterprises as a bridge employer in skilled trades to provide meaningful employment alongside support workers; Mentorship opportunities for business owners and other community members and youth.

- Create case studies and document lessons learned – Sharing successes and opportunities of strong partnerships between education and employment that increase options in employment pathways. Share these case studies broadly to build the evidence base and adoption rate of practices that enable employers to be champions of youth success.



CONCLUSION



Communities Building Youth Futures (CBYF) initiative has been instrumental in fostering positive change and empowerment within 20 diverse communities across the country. Through collaborative efforts and innovative strategies, CBYF has re-imagined the way adult allies can support the creation of youth-centered spaces that enroll them to overcome systemic barriers, achieve educational milestones, and successfully transition into post-secondary education, training, and employment opportunities.

With this report, we offered an insider-view of the transformative impact of community-level engagement and collective action in addressing the complex challenges faced by young people, particularly in small, rural, remote, and Indigenous communities. By centering the voices of youth and fostering partnerships across sectors, CBYF members have defined six priority areas which include; Employment and Mentorship, Holistic Health and Well-Being, Accessible Education, Identity & Social Connections, Service Navigation and Access to Supports, Youth Engagement and Leadership. These themes have anchored all the work happening at the community level and informed the learning across the vast Tamarack network of members and learners.

Through our shared journey between communities, their teams and champions across sectors, Tamarack Institute has played a unique role as a field catalyst. We have shared guidance, resources, and support to CBYF communities, facilitating peer learning and knowledge exchange, and advocating for policy and systemic changes at the national level. The establishment of the CBYF National Collaborative and the hosting of national gatherings have further strengthened the network, enabling continuous learning, collaboration, and collective action.

Amidst the unpredictable challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, the 20 CBYF-member communities have demonstrated unwavering resilience and adaptability, swiftly pivoting to online engagement and leveraging technology to meet the evolving needs of youth. Rather than hindering progress, the pandemic served as a catalyst for innovation and accelerated momentum, highlighting the need for agile and responsive community approaches in times of crisis.

We hope for those like-minded individuals & organizations who are reading, to consider this as an open invitation to join us as partners and champions for youth-centered initiatives. By growing and expanding our shared reach, we know that the opportunity to create impact will benefit all communities who have an interest in supporting poverty reduction and youth prosperity.

As we look ahead, we celebrate the lessons learned and wise practices developed through the groundwork done by CBYF communities. By prioritizing inclusivity, equity, and youth-centric approaches, CBYF has the potential to catalyze systemic change and create brighter futures for generations to come. Communities Building Youth Futures believes in the power of inclusive places where every young person can not only thrive, but also feel a deep sense of belonging. We remain committed to the ongoing pursuit of youth empowerment and social justice, knowing that our collective efforts today will shape the trajectory of tomorrow's leaders and changemakers.

COMMUNITY IS A VERB.

EMPOWERING ACTION, INSPIRING CHANGE.

The Tamarack Institute empowers communities and individuals to break free from poverty, adopt sustainable climate transitions, invest in youth, and inspire belonging and purpose through coaching, collaborative partnerships, and guiding resources.

Tamarack's Communities Building Youth Futures (CBYF) team supports and invests in youth-led action and strategic investments, shaping a future where the potential of every young person is realized.

Tamarack is located on Turtle Island (North America), the ancestral home of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Peoples. We acknowledge historical oppression and commit to addressing ongoing inequities in this territory.

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