



Deepening Community Impact Report 2016-2021



ENDING POVERTY
DEEPENING COMMUNITY
BUILDING YOUTH FUTURES
CLIMATE TRANSITIONS

Vibrant Communities
TAMARACK INSTITUTE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2016, Tamarack formed a strategic partnership with the Suncor Energy Foundation to build a movement of changemakers working to improve community resilience and strengthen the sense of belonging, connection, and citizenship in cities across Canada.

The foundation of the Deepening Community movement is based on the four pillars of deepening community established in Paul Born's best-selling Book *Deepening Community: Finding Joy Together in Chaotic Times*. The Deepening Community movement has been a timely and powerful response to social isolation, loneliness, and disconnect. We have defined the field, developed a growing membership of communities that are having a real impact, implemented and expanded our support for changemakers and built a learning community this is accelerating the impact of our movement.

This foundation has allowed Deepening Community to grow the field through a strategic framework for growth while still maintaining a connection to the place-based work happening in communities. In 2019, Cities Deepening Community launched its official membership, where communities from across the country collaborate and learn from each other to develop strategies at the neighbourhood or city level. In the last year, this membership has grown to 30 members across Canada.

Through defining the field, we have established a movement of cities and towns, defined a common language, and have built momentum for action. These three factors have resulted in the development of a framework to build neighbourhood strategies. It was vital for the Deepening Community movement to be able to replicate success across the country. We know that despite the shared challenges that communities face, strategies and action need to be place-based and account for unique context and assets of the community differences. This movement mirrored the membership model used in the Cities Reducing Poverty practice area, a proven model that supports community change makers to address a wide-range of community

concerns.

From our first five-years we know that this initiative will have significant long-term benefits for individuals, municipalities, organizations, and communities. We have defined the field, implementing a technology and built a learning community. Imagine cities and towns across the country having impact for individuals because they have made community an essential component of their work:

1. increased sense of belonging
2. improved equity inclusion
3. deepened sense of citizenship
4. strengthened resilience
5. enhanced community security
6. improved community wellness
7. empowered local economies

The next five years have tremendous potential to take this movement to a whole new level. Imagine 75 cities networking and learning together, to support residents developing ideas for their cities. While at the same time a learning community of 15,000 change makers builds the momentum of Deepening Community.

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COMMUNITY



INTRODUCTION

Over the last 5 years, Deepening Community has been a timely and powerful response to the growing social isolation, loneliness, and disconnection occurring across Canada. As we navigate through challenging times and try to find a sense of normalcy in our lives, we know that community is the answer. One of the big lessons that COVID-19 has uncovered is that knowing your neighbours has been critical to getting through the social isolation of the pandemic. Tamarack's Deepening Community work has grown across Canada to address the need to build connected and resilient communities.

We have seen four key impacts as a result of our partnership over the last 5 years:

- We defined the field of Deepening Community in Canada
- We developed a growing membership of communities that are having an impact
- We implemented and expanded our technology to support changemakers
- We built a learning community to accelerate the impact of the movement to deepening community

The impact from this work within communities and across Canada is important. By defining the field, we have rooted the movement in a theoretical understanding of the issues and a practical understanding of what is happening on the ground in communities. Our growing membership implements this framework to develop positive change in communities, and our robust supports accelerate efforts and impacts locally. Finally, our growing learning community of nearly 8,000 learners is building the foundation to spread this movement throughout the rest of Canada. It is building the momentum to deepen community while ensuring efforts to tackle social isolation and loneliness are a priority across all levels of government.



City of Kitchener's Community Edible Forest

When residents come together to deepen community, we have seen seven significant types of impacts:

- **Belonging:** Increasing a sense of belonging to place and people
- **Equity:** Fostering equity and inclusion in the places people live
- **Citizenship:** Increasing a sense of citizenship (enabling care, raising our children together)
- **Resilience:** Increasing a sense of resilience by stewarding local ecology and investing in disaster preparedness
- **Community Security:** Increasing a sense of safety
- **Community Wellness:** Increasing a sense of well-being and enabling health; and
- **Shaping Local Economies:** Investing in community economic development and local food production

At the local level, CDC members are seeing meaningful progress and outcomes in their communities:

East Shore of Kootenay Lake, British Columbia

Formed an Age Friendly Advisory Council of regional staff, seniors, parents, and representatives from senior and youth service organizations to develop an age-friendly strategy to support wellness for community members. The Advisory Council connected with 130 residents during COVID to identify practical ways for community members to share their gifts, skills and resources while improving the livability of their community. This resulted in a clear direction for the Advisory Council as they put together a set of recommendations for the next phase of the age-friendly initiative. This work is increasing the sense of belonging in the community, furthering the sense of citizenship, and empowering residents to address community well-being.

Kelowna, British Columbia

Is working to support citizen leadership and improve community resilience. This past year, they launched a new block connector program during COVID that has grown to 12 connectors. In 2020 Kelowna's Strong Neighbourhood Grant program awarded \$9,236 in matching grant funds to support seven neighbourhood projects and helped socially connect over 100 neighbours. Inspired by our Brunch Chats, Kelowna re-imagined Neighbours Day. Kelowna is now the lead on planning a Neighbourhood Association and Municipal CoP series (supported by Tamarack). This work is building social infrastructure and leadership, enhancing citizenship, and improving community resilience.

Durham, Ontario

Is building social capital in their neighbourhood through asset mapping to build on the strengths of residents. They hosted 8 conversations with 45 people and connected with 43% of their residents through a survey in the neighbourhood. Prior to this engagement, staff planned events that no one attended. Now they are shifting to support residents to plan their own events to build community based on their assets and talents. This is building equity and inclusion in the neighbourhood and helping to build up citizen leadership.

York, Ontario

Is working in a social housing complex that has built a sense of belonging in their neighbourhood. They engaged 60% of the tenants in the building to participate in four community conversations that resulted in new connections with local businesses, and regional partnerships. The outcomes of the conversations were more events planned with, and led by, residents. As an example, two tenants contributed gift cards they won to provide a free Thanksgiving dinner open to all tenants. A total of 31 tenants attended and 5 new residents came out to build the sense of community, inclusion, and sense of belonging for residents.

Rogersville, New Brunswick

A nursing home that has been working on how to be a neighbour in their community for over a year. COVID hit their community as they had just launched their community conversations project. Since they were no longer able to do face to face engagement, they planned a virtual pumpkin carving photo contest for the community and had 37 submissions. This work is improving the sense of belonging for residents and supporting community connections.

The rest of this report looks at the impacts of Cities Deepening Community across Canada. Over the last five years, our partnership has significantly impacted the field of community development across Canada. This report is broken into four sections: Defining the Field; Establishing a Deepening Community Membership for impact; Implementing a Technology Towards Impact; and Building a Learning Community.



DEFINING THE FIELD

For a field to grow, it needs to be rooted in both the practical experiences happening on the ground and a strategic framework for growth. The Tamarack Institute has been successful in defining the field of deepening community across Canada as a result of its strong connection to work happening in communities, its work supporting changemakers through events and coaching, and its thought leadership in Collective Impact and Asset Based Community Development.

Connectedness and belonging are prerequisites for communities solving our most pressing social, economic, and environmental problems. When we are connected to our neighbours, we have the trust necessary to work collectively to create places that are vibrant and support community members to be healthy, resilient, and feel included. At a time when social isolation and loneliness are being recognized as public health crises, there is mounting evidence that building a movement to deepen community is the best prescription for these collective ailments.

For communities to be resilient and thrive, they need to be built on a foundation of care and deep connection. For citizens to address complex issues in their communities, they need to bring together many sectors and tap into the potential of citizen leadership. Yet a growing number of citizens of all ages are experiencing isolation and a lack of belonging. Tamarack became a leader in understanding this work when Paul Born released his best-selling book *Deepening Community: Finding Joy Together in Chaotic Times*, which outlined the four pillars of deepening community.

Tamarack took the lessons from *Deepening Community* to work with cities across Canada and co-generate new knowledge around how cities can reconnect and deepen the bond between citizens. Our Deepening Community Practice Area is a place where citizens and leaders are exploring the unique role that communities and neighbours play in creating positive futures. Together, we are discovering the power of community as an essential driver of social change.

Tamarack's Deepening Community Practice Area continues to build the knowledge and skills of neighbourhood leaders and communities to recognize and acknowledge the power of being vibrant and resilient. This in turn, is helping community members feel connected, engaged, and empowered. We are seeing this throughout our work as more cities and organizations are addressing social isolation and neighbourliness, an increase in the number of municipalities developing neighbourhood strategies, the increased involvement of residents in community planning, and the enthusiastic uptake of Asset-Based Community Development in Canada.

“ I just wanted to say how you are creating your tools is really great. I am doing some Compassionate Communities work in Taiwan and will be pointing them to some of your tools. ”

- Pallium Canada, CoP Learner

Establishing a Deepening Community Membership for Impact

As the field of deepening community continues to grow, a membership base of organizations and communities localizing this work and supporting citizens to work together to address complex challenges is vital. The formal membership of Cities Deepening Community provides an opportunity to support cities to develop and implement their strategies, to create opportunities for significant peer-to-peer learning, to learn from what is happening in communities, to share good news broadly in Canada, and to test out new ideas.

Building on the momentum of Deepening Community and learning from our other practice areas such as Cities Reducing Poverty, a membership structure was developed to grow the movement. Membership provides the space for cities to build relationships through peer-to-peer learning, resource development, and impact evaluation.

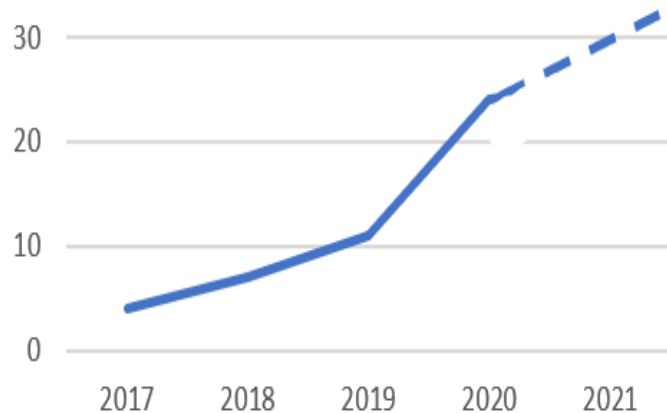
It has been 18 months since Cities Deepening Community (CDC) officially launched a membership in June of 2019, when the City of Edmonton announced that they would be the first member. The membership has grown to 26 communities working to build the movement for cities and neighbourhoods to deepen community using a collective impact approach to develop a neighbourhood plan.

Cities Deepening Community members are working to deepen their collective understanding of the power and possibility of community by developing strategies at the neighbourhood or city level. This growing pan-Canadian movement advances and increases our ability to learn from our peers and deepen our sense of community.

In a recent membership review conducted with our founding members, they outlined the top benefits of being part of the Cities Deepening Community network:

- Learning how to apply Asset Based Community Development as a foundation for building neighbourhood plans
- Getting support and coaching from a Manager of Cities that walks them through how to develop a plan
- Participating in a series on how to track and communicate the impact of their neighbourhood plans

Membership Growth



Below is breakdown of our current members and their phase of development:

Phase I Assess Readiness	Phase II Initiate Action	Phase III Organize for Impact	Phase IV Begin Implementation	Phase V Sustain Action and Impact
E – Emerging: working toward pre-conditions for collective impact	A – Project launch	B – Working towards a common agenda and community plan.	C – Action Planning and implementation	D Mature: Implementing a common agenda/ community plan
Whitby, ON-Hold Fort McMurray, AB Cochrane, AB Cochrane Social Planning, ON Fort St John, BC CVCIN, NB L’Arche NB Christian Horizons, ON City of Burlington NACHA, AB Battlefords SK	Kitchener CC, ON Stony Plain, AB Niagara, ON	Collaborative, NB Cambridge CC, ON L’Arche Stratford, ON-Hold South Kootenay, BC Kelowna, BC	Durham, ON-Hold St Albert, AB	Edmonton, AB Grey Bruce, ON-Hold Hamilton, ON-Hold London, ON Kitchener, ON-Hold

Impacts of the Membership

In the last year, we have grown to **26** members from across Canada (**3-BC, 5-AB, 14-ON, 4- NB**). In 2020, CDC held its first Getting to Impact learning series with Mark Cabaj which shed light on where members are working to have an impact. CDC members are working on the following areas of impact:

- ✓ Ending Loneliness
- ✓ Increase Civic Engagement and Citizenship
- ✓ Deepening a Sense of Belonging
- ✓ Increasing wellbeing
- ✓ Building place-based neighbourhoods
- ✓ Advocating for policy change
- ✓ Making communities more equitable and inclusive
- ✓ Making communities more safety
- ✓ Building age friendly communities

Below are examples of the work happening by members of Cities Deepening Community and completed Local Deepening Community Initiatives:

Name of city	Local Outcomes
City of Kelowna	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launched a block connector program during COVID • Worked with Tamarack to plan and lead a Neighbourhood Association and Municipal CoP series • Re-Imagined Neighbours Day Virtual style- inspired by brunch chats • Tanya completed all 7 GTI modules and is working on developing an Impact Report. • Tanya hosted a very successful online Strong Neighbourhoods celebration event • Kelowna’s Strong Neighbourhood Grant program awarded \$9,236 in matching grant funds to support seven neighbourhood projects and helped socially connect over 100 neighbours.
South Kootenay Lake	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They have formed a leadership team. • They started to do community engagement outreach and making sense of the data. • Attending GTI sessions and developed an impact report • They successful connected with over 130 residents above the age of 55, asking questions about how they were coping during the pandemic and what they needed to thrive in their own homes and neighbourhoods
Durham-Lakeview neighbourhood Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formed a leadership team • Eight community conversations with 45 residents. Hosted a corn roast to wrap up the conversations and 80 surveys were completed. • Asset map with 2.5 pages of gifts and assets in the community • They held a celebration and world café to determine actions • Drafted a plan that will improve safety, neighbourliness, places
Cambridge Community Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formed a leadership team • June 2020, they started community conversations using phones, zoom and surveys • They received 64 survey responses, including ideas about the strengths and future opportunities for the Greenway-Chaplin Community Centre. • Youth were engaged in this process and they took time to reflect and provide their ideas. • Greenway-Chaplin hosted a virtual project summary presentation in January 2021 • Drafted an impact report
Delburne LDCI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A total of 20 community conversations • Delburne convened over 400 people (48% of the town’s population) to participate in conversations about their strengths, challenges and hopes for their community. • Identified 4 projects to advance
Grey Bruce LDCI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A total of 47 different conversation held across the region • 407 people connected • Hosted 6 celebration events • Community training on engagement and positive community change
York Lakeside plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engaged 60% of tenants in the building • Held 4 community conversations that made new connections with local businesses, and regional partnerships • Mapping of local services and assets • Hosting to celebratory potluck dinners

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 tenants participated in the Master Chef competition and all joined for a meal together afterwards- One tenant offered their communications skill to develop promotional posters • A tenant-led breakfast program was started • Two tenants worked together to host baseball and wing night and an Oktoberfest celebration • Two tenants contributed the gift cards they won at the Master Chef competition to provide a free Thanksgiving Dinner open to all tenants. A total of 31 tenants – including 5 new faces – attended this event
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“ I have seen so much progress in this community, it started with my visit to the ABCD Kitchener workshop, I came back with more confidence and knowledge and was able to articulate the ABCD approach and have it adopted as our way of working, which was a great start. I then started to share ABCD with residents mostly through the Neighbourhood Leadership Program that I run each year and so had even more people who understood how we wanted to work. ”

- Kitchener Event Participant



Durham Region Social housing-
Community engagement tree art



IMPLEMENTING A TECHNOLOGY TOWARDS CHANGE

While defining the field and building a membership of cities and towns working on deepening community, we have developed a common language, built momentum for action, and created a framework to build a neighbourhood strategy and a practice to show local community impact. We know that sustained success in the deepening community movement requires us to be able to replicate success across the country. We are supporting this work through tested supports that we know build success within communities.

There are six ways we support communities and changemakers to move from emerging deepening community projects to sustainable action and impact:

1. Peer, expert, and Manager of Cities coaching
2. Community of Practices for peer-to-peer learning
3. Face to face events
4. Online learning (webinars, blogs, newsletter, and social media)
5. Papers, tools, and resources
6. Policy and systems change support

The Deepening Community practice area works with communities to develop and implement a community plan to deepen community. We are using a proven membership model that was tested with the Cities Reducing Poverty practice area as they grew from 12 to 80 members. The success of Cities Deepening Community discussed above highlights that our membership-based practice areas, peer-learning opportunities, and the supports that we are implementing with community changemakers are effective for addressing a wide-range of community concerns. This is a powerful lesson for supporting community change efforts.

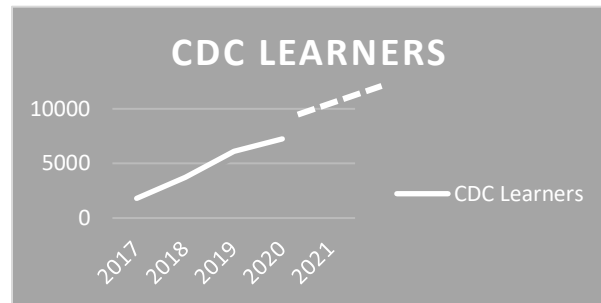
We have developed a practice that provides supports and resources that makes community work easier and more effective. We support our members and learners through the following steps:

1. Engaging a diverse cross-section of citizens to craft a shared vision for the future of their community.
2. Growing from forming a citizen strategy team to building and then implementing a neighbourhood or city-wide common agenda.
3. Building, writing, and implementing a multi-year community plan.
4. Documenting and reporting on impacts.
5. Supporting leadership and financial sustainability.



BUILDING A LEARNING COMMUNITY

Tamarack's theory of change is that communities have a central role to play in responding to the intertwined challenges of climate change, racism, polarization, pandemics and income inequality. The five reasons communities are best suited to do this work are that **(1)** shared geographies make it easier for diverse people to build and strengthen their connections and relationships; **(2)** community-wide efforts provide immediate and meaningful opportunities for leadership by people with lived experiences; **(3)** the scale of community increases the chance to address integrated challenges of economic, social and environmental issues; **(4)** the increased sense of ownership makes it easier to commit to long term efforts; and **(5)** place-based efforts can provide greater flexibility to address local realities. The Cities Deepening Community Learning Community is an important part of spreading this theory of change broadly, while motivating the movement for deepening community in Canada.



We have seen tremendous growth in our learning community from 1,800 to over 7,800 learners. The growth of the learning community is because of the timely and relevant topics of the webinars, events, and newsletters that we put together. This learning community is important, because it builds further momentum around our membership to promote advocate for the work of deepening community.

Webinars

Over the past 5 years, we put together **29** webinars on a variety of topics including:

- Asset Based Community Development
- Building community into neighbourhoods
- Restoring leadership as a noble profession
- Building inclusive communities
- Rekindling democracy
- Placemaking in community

National Events

These topic areas are also explored at our national events that bring people together to share, learn and network. Participants come to these gatherings so that they can:

- Make face to face connections (feeling seen and heard in the work they are doing)
- Dive deeper with top thinkers
- Get inspired
- Learn tools to turn theory to practice

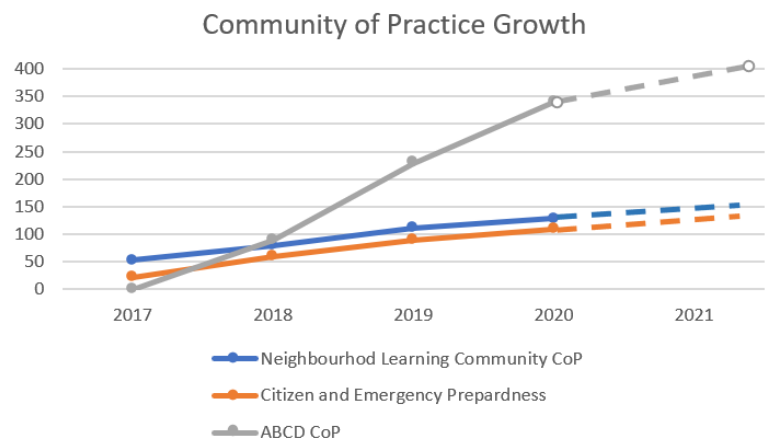
CDC National Events	
Neighbourhoods- The Heart of Community: Mobilizing for Impact (Montréal, June 6-8, 2017) 120 participants	ABCD for Healthy Neighbourhoods (Kitchener, April 17-9, 2018) 179 participants
ABCD Healthy Neighbourhoods, Healthy Cities (Edmonton, May 28-30, 2019) 325 participants	Celebrating Neighbours-Measuring the Impact of ABCD (Postponed due to COVID-19)

“ *The City of Red Deer contingent was very impressed with the content and learning shared during the event. We are even stealing some of your great ideas (i.e. Youth introducing the keynotes) for our next large community event. One of the themes we appreciated most was to open up to the possibilities of community and the contributions they bring which resonated very strongly with my senior leadership* ”
 - City of Red Deer, Edmonton Event Participant

Community of Practices

As part of our learning community, we create space for people to come together to learn, network, share resources and co-generate knowledge. These spaces are known as community of practices (CoP) and people sign up so that they can:

- Connect with each other (expand network)
- Find tools and resources to make their work easier
- Learn the latest thinking in the area
- Hear stories of the application of the tools and resources we provide
- Gain feedback on their work/ test it / practice place for presenting
- Feel inspired
- Obtain recognition for the work they are doing



We started off with one CoP called Neighbourhood Learning Community CoP which has grown from 30 to 125 participants. We have since launched two new CoPs on Asset Based Community Development (354 learners) and the Citizens role in Emergency preparedness (110 learners).

Last year, when COVID hit, we took this opportunity to bring together all the CoP learners to share and support each other. We created an 8-week brunch chat series that addressed the current issues learners were facing such as organizing random acts of kindness, online community engagement, how to not cancel Neighbours Day, and connecting with children and youth through COVID. We had a total of **179** learners participate in the brunch chats. One of the successes of the brunch chats was that many cities reversed their decision to cancel Neighbours Day during COVID.

Example of CoP's Impact

Kelowna's fifth annual Neighbour Day was May 3, 2020. Traditionally, residents are encouraged to celebrate the day by meeting new neighbours, performing a random act of neighbourliness or by holding a neighbourhood get-together. However, this year's Neighbour Day was a little different. The City encouraged everyone to find creative ways to connect with neighbours, in whatever form resonated with them, while maintaining physical distance. We asked residents to share their stories of neighbourliness with us. How has their neighbourhood come together during this challenging time?

Publications

We package our learnings into case studies, guides, tools, and blogs about what our members and learners are learning. We have produced **27** publications on a variety of topics such as:

- Asset Based Community Development at a glance
- Building the case for Neighbourhood Strategy
- Engaging for a neighbourhood strategy
- 14 case studies on our learners and member
- Putting citizens at the center of our work

Five Year Learning Plan Snapshot

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Webinars	4 webinars	9 webinars	6 webinars	10 webinars	1 webinar
Publications	4 case studies 6 newsletters	6 case studies 1 Article 6 newsletters	4 guides 4 case studies 6 newsletters	1 Case Study 2 guides 3 articles 6 newsletters	2 case study 1 newsletter
Annual Event	Neighbourhoods- The Heart of Community: Mobilizing for Impact (Montréal June 6-8, 2017) 120 participants	ABCD for Healthy Neighbourhoods (Kitchener April 17-9, 2018) 179 participants	ABCD Healthy Neighbourhoods, Healthy Cities (Edmonton May 28-30) 325 participants	Postponed due to COVID	Planning for an online 2.5 day event in the Fall
One day workshops in Suncor priority cities	Edmonton -Upside Down thinking Regina - Turf and Trust & Collective Impact	Edmonton - Collective Impact Calgary -Evaluation & Design Halifax and Moncton - Turf and Trust Edmonton & Calgary Masterclass St John's - Turf and Trust	Sarnia -Deepening Community Montreal -Evaluation Calgary & Halifax -Citizen at the centre St John's -Leadership and Collective Impact	2 virtual one day workshops ABCD- putting citizens at the centre of your work	

“

I just want to tell you how much I loved the conference in Edmonton. The speakers and workshops were amazing. You did an excellent job of pulling this together. I can't stop thinking about how I can apply what I learned in my work. Thanks so much for all that you and everyone involved to help us all feel welcomed and part of a movement. I will recommend next year's conference to others.

”

- Huron County (a CDC member because of the event), Edmonton Event Participant



BUILDING FOR THE NEXT 5 YEARS

As we navigate a challenging recovery from the pandemic and try to find a sense of normalcy in our lives, we know that community is the answer to building back better. Over the last five years, we have had tremendous buy in and growth. Today we have 32 cities that have or are implanting large scale change projects, nearly 8,000 learners that are engaging regularly with us, and publications such as case studies that are helping to define the field. This work is a powerful tool to address the growing social isolation, loneliness, and disconnection that people are feeling across Canada and to create the social infrastructure for community leaders to create places with residents that allow everyone to thrive.

The next five years have tremendous potential to take this movement to a whole new level. Imagine 100 cities networking and learning together, while at the same time developing ideas for their cities. Imagine cities and towns across the country making these seven areas a priority in their community:

1. Increased sense of belonging
2. Improved equity inclusion
3. Deepened sense of citizenship
4. Strengthened resilience
5. Enhanced community security
6. Improved community wellness
7. Empowered local economies

Imagine a learning community of 15,000 learners advancing these ideas throughout Canada. The possibilities are endless. We are inspired by Cities Reducing Poverty where cities are developing and implementing strategies and have now influenced provincial governments and the federal government to have strategies too. It is our hope that we are on the same trajectory for Cities Deepening Community in the next five years and that we will be able to move policy and strategies forward throughout all levels of government and community.

