



COMMUNITIES BUILDING
YOUTH FUTURES

MEMBER'S RETREAT

CO-CREATING SOLUTIONS
FOR THE FUTURE

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Who are the Communities Building Youth Futures (CBYF)?

- 1 Alberni Clayoquot, British Columbia** || Nuuchah-nulth, Hupačasath Territory
- 2 Chilliwack, British Columbia** || Ts'elxwéyeqw, Unceded Land of the Ts'elxwéyeqw Tribe
- 3 Whitehorse, Yukon** || Kwanlin Dün & traditional territory of Southern Tutchone, Tagish, Tlingit nations
- 4 Grande Prairie, Alberta** || Treaty 8
- 5 Prince Albert, Saskatchewan** || Kistahpinanihk, Treaty 6
- 6 Regina, Saskatchewan** || Oskana Ka-Asastēki, Treaty 4
- 7 Portage la Prairie, Manitoba** || Ishkodenamigong, Bdayeta Opta Watokshu, Treaty 1
- 8 Yellowknife, Northwest Territories** || Weledeh, Treaty 11
- 9 Prince Edward County, Ontario** || Territory of the Wendake-Nionwentsiö, Haudenosaunee, and Anishinaabe peoples
- 10 Oxford County, Ontario** || Territory of the Anishinaabe, Haudenosaunee, and Attawandaron peoples
- 11 Chatham-Kent, Ontario** || Territory of the Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee peoples; Three Fires Confederacy
- 12 Sudbury, Ontario** || Traditional and ancestral lands of the Atikameksheng Anishnawbek
- 13 Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, Ontario** || Deshkan Ziibiing
- 14 Laval, Quebec** || Unceded Land of the Haudenosaunee
- 15 St. Léonard, Québec** || Tio:tiake/Mooniyang
- 16 Kahnawà:ke Mohawk Nation** || Kanien'keháka (People of the Flint) traditional territory
- 17 Digby, Nova Scotia** || Wabanaki Confederacy Mi'kma'ki Territory
- 18 Moncton, New Brunswick** || Wabanaki Confederacy Mi'kma'ki Territory
- 19 Cornerbrook, Newfoundland** || ktaqmkuk and Traditional lands of the Mi'kmaq and Beothuk peoples

National Collaborative Members (in attendance)

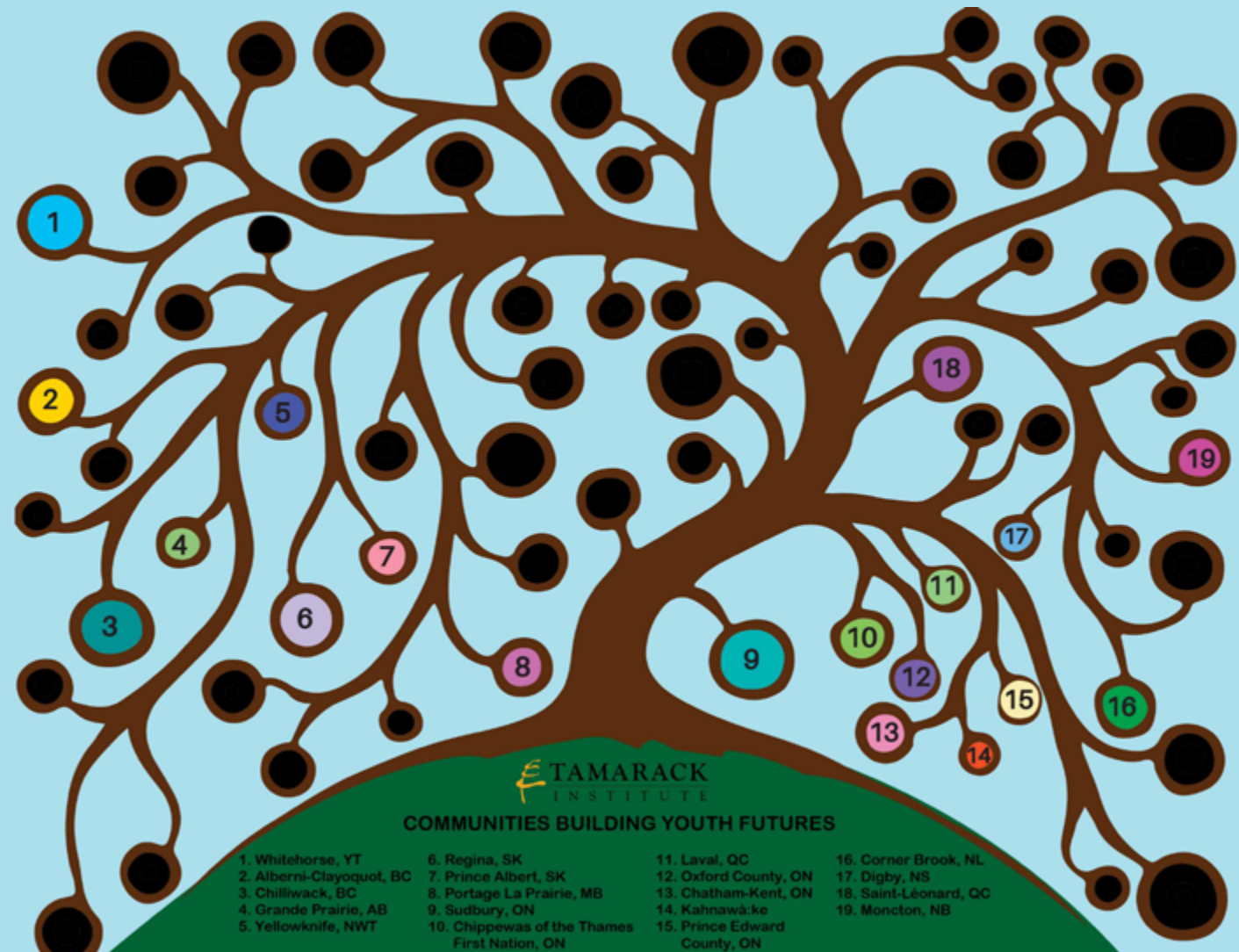
[Chris Duff](#) (Canadian Centre for Youth Prosperity)

[Dina Al-khooly](#) (Visions of Science & Tamarack Board Member)

[Leandre Nawej](#) (Rideau Hall Foundation)

[Templeton Sawyer](#) (TEAM Work Cooperative)

[Narlie Dapilos](#) (Home Base Yellowknife)



What is the CBYF Member's Retreat?

"The Communities Building Youth Futures (CBYF) Members' Retreat is about coming together to collaboratively create space to solve member communities' most pressing challenges."

In this context, CBYF team members designed this event as a "retreat" from the norm. An opportunity for key members of the CBYF network to come together, slow the pace, collaborate and learn from each other and build our collective understanding around the work being done to build youth futures across Turtle Island. We envisioned this gathering as a way to create and equip everyone with the tools needed to sustain the forward momentum to support youth in their respective community.

Where and When Did We Gather?

Kistahpinanihk Prince Albert, Saskatchewan

Treaty 6 Territory

May 10-12, 2023

Why a Member's Retreat?

Connect in real time to strengthen the network of change-makers, co-design equitable spaces, build deeper understanding of what is working well & what our shared challenges are, and co-create sustainable solutions to support youth learning journeys into adulthood.

Acknowledgements

Pihtikwe (pih-ti-gway), meaning 'enter' or 'come in' in Plains Cree, would be the word that best describes the warm welcome we received during our time spent in Kistahpinanihk, more widely known as Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, for the Communities Building Youth Futures Member Retreat.

All of this, and more, was made possible through the collaboration and leadership offered by CBYF PA team members Nicole Matheis, Daphne Masih, and Dawn Robbins with support from many of the youth interns, community partners and leadership table members.

"This retreat was fantastically organized... We now have lists of folks we'll be connecting with around a variety of topics as we were able to learn a lot about what other communities are working on. Fantastic job to the team, this was amazing."

- Retreat Attendee



Têniki (teen-ni-gi) or 'thank you' in Plains Cree to the entire community of Prince Albert, local business owners who hosted us at the Coronet Hotel and Holiday Inn Express, our venue and caterers at [Plaza 88](#), and the Prince Albert Indian & Métis Friendship Centre and Prince Albert Grand Council for sharing your energy and gifts with us through ceremony and traditional knowledge. The whole experience left a lasting impression on everyone in attendance, from coast to coast.

Situated in the heartland of northern Saskatchewan and known locally as Kistahpinanihk and the "Gateway to the North" Prince Albert is in [Treaty 6 territory](#) and serves as the homeland of many people who have called the region home for thousands of years. These Indigenous groups are the Woodland Cree, Plains Cree, Swampy Cree, Dene and the Dakota and Métis Nations. Prince Albert has one of the highest Indigenous (First Nations, Métis and Inuit) population ratios in any Canadian City.

Setting the Context

Communities Building Youth Futures (CBYF) is an initiative that creates the conditions for community collaboration, through the Collective Impact framework, to improve educational outcomes for youth across the country.

By focusing on key areas crucial for youth success, CBYF has paved the way in the development of a comprehensive approach to centering youth voice, engaging youth in their learning journey, and in achieving positive outcomes.

After one year of implementing CBYF, six priority areas were defined by communities: **accessible education, employment and mentorship, identity and social connection, youth engagement and leadership, service navigation and access to support, and holistic health and wellness.**

The CBYF network recognizes the significance of fostering a sense of belonging and connection among youth and adult allies. By providing safe spaces and hosting accessible community events, the initiative fosters opportunities for youth to redefine their identity, create positive connections, raise awareness of their lived experiences, and be a critical part of co-creating community-wide change.

In May 2023, Tamarack Institute and CBYF communities did just that. We came together for the fourth annual gathering - **the CBYF Member's Retreat: Co-creating Solutions for the Future.**

This multi-day event provided a welcoming and nurturing environment for collaboration, relationship building and learning. 120 CBYF members, learners, rights holders, and Tamarack staff gathered in Kistahpinanihk, Prince Albert,



Saskatchewan to share their gifts, their community work, and most notably their commitment to supporting youth-centered initiatives.

Bringing youth leaders and their allies together to co-create and collaborate on solutions for their shared futures is something that Tamarack Institute's Communities Building Youth Futures initiative has been facilitating since 2020.

Despite the challenges that emerged throughout the covid-19 pandemic, the network of CBYF communities has grown and become strongly connected across territories, provinces and traditional lands.

Getting to Know the Community of Prince Albert

[CBYF Prince Albert](#) (CBYFPA) and their community partners [Prince Albert Indian & Métis Friendship Centre](#), [Bernice Sayese Centre](#) and [Prince Albert Grand Council](#) came together to curate a welcoming and inclusive space with countless opportunities for connection.

CBYFPA hosted members in their space for a social evening, engaged in learning led by Elder Cecil on the seven grandfather teachings and explored his workshop where he shared tips on sustainable harvesting.

Taking the lead from our host community, CBYFPA, we dedicated time to connect with the land and ground ourselves in the space.

CBYF members traveled a short distance to the north, across the only bridge in town which spanned over the North Saskatchewan River. Here they were met with 1200 acres of natural beauty with trails, flowers and an incredible ecosystem including boreal plains known as Little Red River Park.

Our group was greeted in a good way with traditional hand drumming and songs, shared by a local youth musician and local community leader Shane Bird from [Prince Albert Grand Council](#) (PAGC). Community helpers guided us around the park, identifying traditional medicines, and exploring the forest. It was just what was needed after two busy days of brainstorming and problem solving.



Traditional Feast and Ceremony

Prince Albert Indian and Métis Friendship Centre

Hosted by CBYF PA, Prince Albert Grand Council, West Flat Citizens Group and the local Indian and Métis Friendship Centre, our group was joined with local musicians, Elders, Knowledge Keepers, community helpers and relatives for an unforgettable gathering. Each community in attendance was gifted a blanket and invited to take part in a traditional pipe ceremony led by Elder . The ceremony was conducted in Plains Cree, with some portions being translated by the MC Elmer Ballantyne.

Following this special welcoming pipe ceremony for our group, we feasted together and shared our last meal of the retreat in the heart of downtown Prince Albert. The sound of the big drum mimicked



the pulse of the room, as we moved into pow wow demonstrations where our MC described for us the history and meanings of the traditional dances being shared. Eventually everyone in the room was on their feet for the grand finale of the evening where we all joined hands for a round dance.

Words could not begin to describe the energy and emotions that filled the gymnasium that evening. This was the moment where we knew we had accomplished what we set out to do from the very start, **for youth to feel a sense of belonging; for adult allies to be grounded in the youth voice; for communities across Turtle Island to feel a sense of connection; and for all of us to feel connected to something bigger than we could ever imagine.**

“This conference was so impactful! ... Being immersed into the indigenous culture and how they welcomed us into their community, shared stories, teachings, songs and dance was the most meaningful part! Looking forward to the next one!”

- Retreat Attendee

Measuring Impact

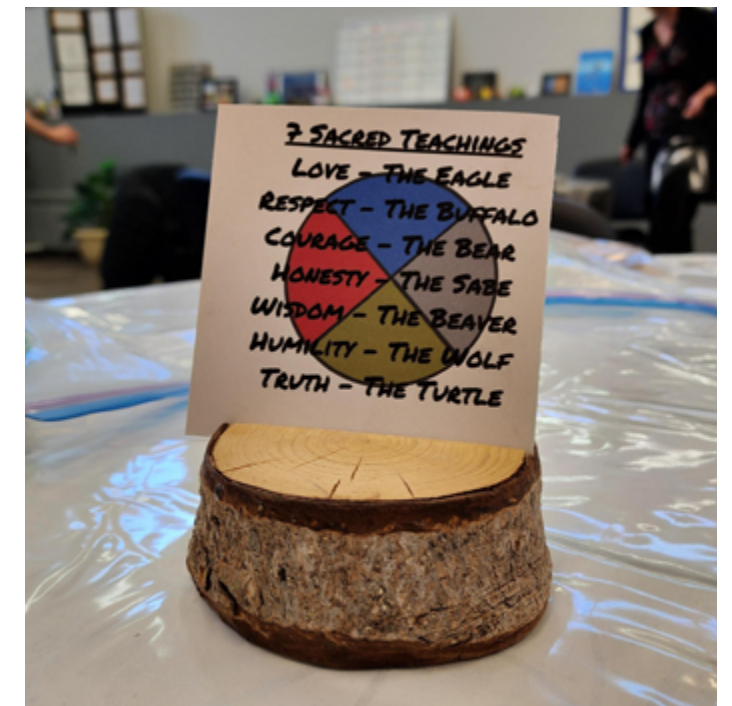
Communities Building Youth Futures' Social Impact

37,626 youth participating, support & engaged

288 youth engaged on local leadership tables

Over **257** youth jobs created as backbone staff members

649 youth engaged in developing Innovation Fund projects



Conversations with Communities

Domains of Change – Identifying Patterns & Opportunities

Communities Building Youth Futures members adopt a multifaceted approach to improving educational outcomes for youth. On day one of the Retreat, we invited members to collectively reflect and identify their place within our six key priority areas and domains of change:

- Accessible education
- Employment and mentorship
- Identity and social connection
- Youth engagement and leadership
- Service navigation and access to support
- Holistic health and wellness

Through a mix of story sharing, unstructured physical movement through six stations, and domain deep-dive conversations, we asked the following powerful questions:

What’s happening in each community in these six areas?

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?

What We Learned

1 Accessible Education

This priority is aimed at improving credit accumulation, high school graduation, and entry in post-secondary and training. This priority area recognizes that there are several factors that lead to youth becoming disengaged in their learning journey and that different approaches are needed to re-engage youth.

What’s happening? What patterns do we see in how change is taking place?

Creating opportunities to **help young people re-engage in their learning journey** through pilots in alternate, holistic education, scaling these pilots, and the creation of integrated curriculum. Recognition of successful pilots is leading to increased resourcing for alternative and holistic education.

Providing supports to help **keep young people engaged in their learning journey** through initiatives such as tutoring, financial support and rewards, seed funding, and providing digital devices. Communities are working to embed supports that have proven success into school systems or community organizations so they can be sustained.

Enhancing ecosystem collaboration so the education system is not operating in a silo and is connected and collaborating with community

organizations. This results in better understanding and alignment of available supports and utilization of community resources.

Bringing awareness to the need to improve safety in schools and the barriers youth face and using this data to build the case for support and movement for change.

Opportunities at the macro level

Sharing policies for inclusive education (eg. expanded education, community use of schools, youth voice in decision making, lowering barriers to activities such as providing transportation)

Including the continuum of education providers in initiatives involving changes to policies and practices

Sharing ideas for how to utilize data to mobilize resources

Determining how we can help validate credentials obtained through diverse credit pathways



2 Employment and Mentorship

This priority is aimed at addressing the barriers youth encounter when trying to obtain meaningful employment and mentorship in a skills area they are invested in.

What’s happening? What patterns do we see in how change is taking place?

Skill development opportunities (eg. trades, culinary, broadcasting) are being offered by CBYF communities through workshops, projects, and programs to expose youth to different career pathways, offer the ability to ‘try things out’, invite youth to achieve certification, and support youth to gain employment as they stay connected to their learning journey.

Expanding the diversity of employment pathways – Communities are bringing awareness to a broader range of employment pathways, especially those with local economic need. Communities are hosting or partnering to offer youth-centric job and career panels and fairs, and individually connect youth with opportunities. We have observed an increase in entrepreneurship as a viable and supported employment pathway. These efforts are building youth confidence and self-awareness and increases positive perceptions of youth.

Direct employer connection and involvement reduces risk by aligning education and employment availability within a community – eg. the risk of starting a four-year post-secondary education program with no guaranteed employment at the end. Direct-to-employment training is being piloted in partnership with educators, employers, and youth. Successful pilots can be scaled to other industries and communities.

Across all CBYF communities, **youth internships** are providing employment and enabling youth to develop greater confidence in pursuing post-secondary and training options. These opportunities provide valuable hands-on experiences in a variety of areas, such as conducting research, analyzing data, writing reports, coordinating events, developing programs, and forming collaborations with other youth, service providers, and community partners.

Opportunities at the macro level

Sharing successes and opportunities of strong partnerships between education and employment that increase options in employment pathways.

Highlighting what tools are needed to support an investment in youth jobs, and for employers and community leaders to see themselves as mentors and contributors to their development.



3 Youth Engagement and Leadership

This priority is aimed at creating meaningful space and opportunity for youth voice and leadership in communities, by addressing and removing barriers which cause youth to feel disengaged, disconnected and disenfranchised within their own communities.

What's happening? What patterns do we see in how change is taking place?

CBYF members are strengthening youth leadership. By offering paid training, workshops, and ongoing leadership opportunities, youth are being empowered to take charge and become active members in their communities. This has promoted healthy self-esteem, increased resilience, and a sense of purpose, which all contribute to overall youth achievement.

Pathways are being developed for youth to be agents of change. This is happening through youth conferences, micro-granting, social labs, municipal and territorial youth strategies, and a youth consulting initiative.

This is leading to the recognition that youth voice is essential. **Mindset shifts are still required for adults to make space for youth leadership.** CBYF communities are paying attention to power dynamics and supporting adult allies (eg. through training and practice changes) to let go of needing to have all the answers and to make space for youth (who know what they need).

System changes are occurring through **behaviour and practice changes within organizations to enable youth leadership and decision-making.** By incorporating several options for youth leadership and decision-making at the onset of youth-centred work, the resulting outcomes are leading to longer lasting changes to systems involving youth leadership.

Opportunities at the macro level

Developing mechanisms to link youth to current work and to hear youth perspectives.

CBYF communities playing a role in advancing youth strategies at the provincial/territorial or national level.

Making it the norm for youth to be on boards and in decision-making roles.

Communities are exploring Social Enterprise and community bond models to sustain successful youth-led initiatives.



4 Identity and Social Connections

The focus of this priority area is to support spaces and opportunities that allow youth to build connections and foster a sense of belonging within their communities. This includes addressing the stigmas and discrimination experienced by youth (based on their identity) and the creation of physical and social safe spaces designed to engage youth.

What's happening? What patterns do we see in how change is taking place?

Ensuring there are spaces for youth to belong – CBYF communities are piloting or building youth spaces, events, and after school programs. These have included pop-up and permanent spaces, and many are co-located (building more awareness of supports and strengthens relationships between community partners). Most of these initiatives have been youth-led through Action Teams, and communities have experimented and learned along

the way to better understand youth needs and interests. Communities are working to transition pilot projects so that they become embedded in permanent structures through partnerships.

Fostering positive connections – This has been made possible through peer support and intergenerational mentoring initiatives. Communities have identified the need for opportunities where young people will have positive connections with peers, with Elders, and adult allies and will continue to grow confidence in their identity and belonging. This has increased youth engagement in education, employment, training, and social and cultural environments.

Bringing awareness to lived experiences of youth – Through storytelling, the creation of mini-documentaries, and awareness campaigns (eg. billboards and social media) youth voices are being centered. Increasing opportunities for youth to appreciate and communicate their unique identities, strengths, gifts, and lived experiences has resulted in many positive impacts. These include; stronger relationships between partners, heightened awareness of adult allies and decision makers about the urgency of youth issues and has both strengthened the case for support while creating increased funding opportunities.

Opportunities at the macro level

Emphasising the importance of identity and belonging as it relates to achieving positive outcomes for youth (eg. connection between pride and youth success).

Hosting Communities of Practice to support communities focusing on identity and belonging.

Creating a coordinated social media strategy.

Modeling cultural diversity and acceptance.

Equipping policy makers – increased accountability, decolonizing practices.

5 Service Navigation and Access to Supports

The focus of this priority is to address the challenges for young people to access services like long wait lists, difficult intake processes, lack of safe or culturally appropriate services, limited transportation options, inaccessible cost of services, and stigma related to utilizing some services.

What's happening? What patterns do we see in how change is taking place?

Building more awareness of existing supports

– Through youth engagement, CBYF communities are gaining a deeper understanding of the barriers youth are facing in accessing supports. As a result, communities have created service directories and apps to build awareness of supports, launched peer connector initiatives, enhanced service navigator supports, and hosted open houses to bring more awareness to existing supports.

These initiatives have often included training for community partners and youth in service availability which has strengthened community connections. **An improved collaborative environment (less working in siloes) is a tipping point to improvements in service navigation.** The first ripple is better awareness and communication across the ecosystem, and that creates the second ripple of trust and readiness to align offerings.

It has been identified that when service navigators (whether peer or adult) are a shared resource and asset across an ecosystem, they play a vital systems connector role and help build communication processes across organizations.

Making it easier for youth to access these supports – communities are tackling specific,

long-term barriers to accessibility including transportation and stigma.



Opportunities at the macro level

Expanding the practice of having youth navigators in communities.

Focusing on continuity of supports (eg. aging out of care) and improvements to systems (eg. streamlined, simplified, or integrated referral and intake).

One barrier that has been identified by CBYF communities that prohibits a youth-centric model of coordinated intake or integrated services is data privacy and data sharing agreements across providers. There may be policy-change opportunities or shared resources like process templates that could enable more communities to integrate youth supports.

The National Collaborative is interested in understanding how they can support collaborative work in this area. One possibility is to explore partnerships with municipal services like 211 to improve service navigation for young people.

6 Holistic Health and Wellbeing

This priority addresses the mental health and wellbeing of youth who may be experiencing anxiety, depression, lack of motivation, hunger, homelessness, etc., which affects youth attendance and engagement at school.

What's happening? What patterns do we see in how change is taking place?

Communities are working to **increase literacy around these key issues** (eg. through training).

The scope of support is broadening so that they are addressing the health and wellbeing of their youth participants in a more holistic way. We see a range of programs that focus on the person first (with positive adult connection and ensuring basic needs are met), and education second, which then increases the likelihood of positive educational outcomes. We also seeing supports offered for basic needs throughout other programming (eg. always having food and hygiene products available), and arts-based practices to promote healing and connection.

Communities are working on specific initiatives to target key issues, for example youth-led participatory grantmaking to address individual barriers for youth living in poverty to pursue their education and employment goals. We are also seeing communities responding to the current mental health crisis by working toward zero-barrier holistic and mental health supports.

Opportunities at the macro level

Continuing advocating for holistic health and wellbeing supports in connection with educational outcomes. Learning can only happen when youth have basic needs met.

Exploring how to access free mental health care.

Sharing Open Space

Open Space Technology

Open Space Technology was the methodology used to create brave and safe spaces to explore topics that matter to CBYF communities. Together, members and learners co-created an agenda of conversations that people were interested in having and were willing to host. Once all topics were assigned a time and a space, everyone was invited to participate, however they felt most comfortable. The process was guided by four principles and one law.

Four Principles

1. Whoever comes are the right people
2. Whatever happens is the only thing that could have
3. Whenever it starts is the right
4. When it's over, it's over

Law of Mobility

Anytime you feel that you are not learning from, or contributing to, a conversation, feel free to move on to where you can contribute most.

Feedback from CBYF members was overwhelmingly positive. Participants affirmed that the process was meaningful, empowering, and provided a safe way to connect and learn from peers. As the dialogues unfolded, connections were forged between CBYF members and across communities.

In a room of 120 individuals, ten topics were proposed by participants. Of the ten, eight

conversations took place based on the flow of dialogue and tenacity of the youth changemakers and their allies to continue leading the spaces that served their needs. Topics included:

- **Intergenerational Connections**
- **[FR] Learning from youth-based work in Brussels: S'inspirer d'ailleurs pour innover dans sa communauté**
- **Navigating Burnout of Changemakers**
- **2SLGBTQIA+ & Community PRIDE events**
- **Harm Reduction and Decolonizing Suicide**

High-level summaries for most of these conversations can be found in the appendix

Important Takeaways Gained in the Open Space Dialogues – that we will take with us on the rest of our CBYF Journey

CBYF communities hold tremendous wisdom and value the opportunity to share and learn from one another around common issues

CBYF has built youth-driven leadership for change across the country

Engaging and supporting youth is integral for them to become powerful changemakers

Creating space for youth-centered dialogue is necessary for change

Peer to peer learning connections matter and are valuable in identifying similar challenges emerging across communities

Innovation and collaboration are key driving forces in solving complex issues faced by youth

Linking the twenty communities within the CBYF network can create a powerful movement for change capable of generating powerful impact for youth success across the country



What's Next for CBYF?

The solution to addressing systemic barriers faced by youth, is to create spaces for youth to lead while nurturing environments where they can also learn. While there are certainly spaces that support the healthy development of youth, CBYF members have championed the many ways in which we can all support a diverse approach to youth empowerment to effect systemic change.

As we have been focused on youth transitioning from high school to post-secondary and employment, we recognize that rather than questioning “what you want to be when you grow up?” we should be asking “what problems do you want to solve in the future?”.

Appendices

This section is designed to be an accessible and comprehensive hub of materials that were gathered, discussed or emerged during our Communities Building Youth Futures (CBYF) Members' Retreat. Over the course of the event, many meaningful thoughts were shared and so we wanted to encapsulate the wealth of knowledge, expertise, and insights that didn't fit into the body of the report. Our overall aim is to enhance our collective understanding and catalyze impactful action towards solutions within communities. The below comprises a range of resources from various domains including strategic documents, innovative tools, inspiring presentations, and accessible website links.

Appendix A

Retreat Presentations

This subsection houses copies of all presentations shared by our guest speakers and workshop facilitators. Each presentation is packed with useful insights, innovative ideas, and practical strategies.

Appendix B

Transcribed Open Space Session Notes

The transcripts from the Open Space sessions provide a detailed record of discussions and ideas shared during the Members' Retreat. Serving as a valuable reference, it allows learners to tap into key insights and proposed strategies, especially those who missed certain sessions. The brave space that was created will help to foster

ongoing collaboration and innovation by igniting new perspectives and dialogues. This resource highlights our commitment to transparency and shared learning, empowering our members to keep the momentum forward.

Appendix C

CBYF Yellowknife Team Retreat Highlights

This video, produced by CBYF Yellowknife, presents a vibrant snapshot of the CBYF retreat in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan. Showcasing key moments from presentations to brainstorming sessions, it offers an insider's view of the retreat's energy and collaborative spirit. It's an impactful tool for all members, capturing our shared commitment and the event's transformative moments.

Appendix D

Kumu Visualization

This tool was created using insights shared with Tamarack during conference workshops and open sessions. Developed by Consulting Director, Jean-Marie Chapeau, the visual enables you to explore intricate relationships, identify key influencers, and discover hidden patterns within our community. Unleash your curiosity; click on nodes to reveal stories behind the connections, adjust filters to spotlight critical factors, or use Kumu's analytics for a more nuanced investigation. As you navigate this visual network, remember that every connection holds a potential insight.

Appendix E

News Articles

Through existing relationships with local media in Prince Albert, CBYFPA staff were profiled for their role with the Members' Retreat in local news outlets. The media engagement centering youth voice underscores the retreat's aim to foster dialogue, collaboration, and innovative thinking.

[Prince Albert Now: National retreat in Prince Albert addresses challenges facing youth](#)

Appendix F

Tamarack's Collective Impact Toolkit

Within this toolkit, you can find a detailed list of Collective Impact tools, articles, webinars, videos, and resources curated by Tamarack Institute for member communities and key partners. The Toolkit is organized into eight chapters, following the key components of the Collective Impact framework.

Appendix G

Blog post from Turning the Tide - CBYF Digby

Learning in Community: CBYF National Retreat Reflection





CONTACT INFORMATION

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