



FROM DIALOGUE TO ACTION

The Strategy for Belonging Midpoint Report

December 2025

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Acronyms

ABCD	Asset-Based Community Development
CBB	Communities Building Belonging
CoP	Community of Practice
EAR	Equity, Anti-Racism, and Reconciliation
S4B	Strategy for Belonging
SoT	Seeds of Transformation

Acknowledgements

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Tamarack would also like to thank the Samuel Family Foundation for their continuous support and engagement in this work.

I. CONTEXT

In communities across Canada, the call for belonging is resonating. Belonging is more than a feeling – it is a vital condition for human flourishing and collective resilience. In a time marked by social fragmentation, polarization, and inequities, the Tamarack Institute’s movement for a Canada-wide [Strategy for Belonging \(S4B\)](#) set out to articulate a vision for a society where everyone feels valued, connected, and able to contribute. That strategy, grounded in work with our [Communities Building Belonging \(CBB\) network](#), outlined the foundational principles, values, and early actions needed to advance belonging as a Canada-wide priority.

In 2025, the call for a Strategy for Belonging continued its journey towards **transforming skills and knowledge** to enable collaborative action towards making belonging a policy priority in Canada. This report reflects Tamarack’s continued work through its CBB network as part of the broader [Networks for Change](#), representing organizations, leaders, and individuals who are translating the vision of a more connected world into tangible local and national action. We highlight key milestones achieved this past year in the CBB network, the evolving partnerships that are strengthening the belonging movement, and the emerging insights that will inform the next phase to scale Tamarack’s Strategy for Belonging in 2026.

1 Building Awareness and Will

2 Transforming Skills and Knowledge

3 Enabling Systems-Wide Support



WHY FOCUS ON TRANSFORMING SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE?

As outlined in the 2024 Strategy for Belonging Report, our movement follows three vital stages: Building Awareness and Will, **Transforming Skills and Knowledge**, and Enabling Systems-Wide Support.

Having successfully sparked a collective awakening, demonstrated by the widespread recognition of belonging as a policy priority by thousands of changemakers (as you will see in the sections below), we moved into the crucial second stage in 2025.

Transforming Skills and Knowledge is our response to an increasingly polarized and divided landscape. It is an act of hope and recognition that true systems change requires courageous collaboration. We must ensure that local champions have the **tools and capacities to effectively lead change** in their communities. This second stage of the call for a Canada-wide Strategy is about **building next-generation leadership** by enabling changemakers to collaborate effectively, recognizing that we can collectively achieve more than we can separately.

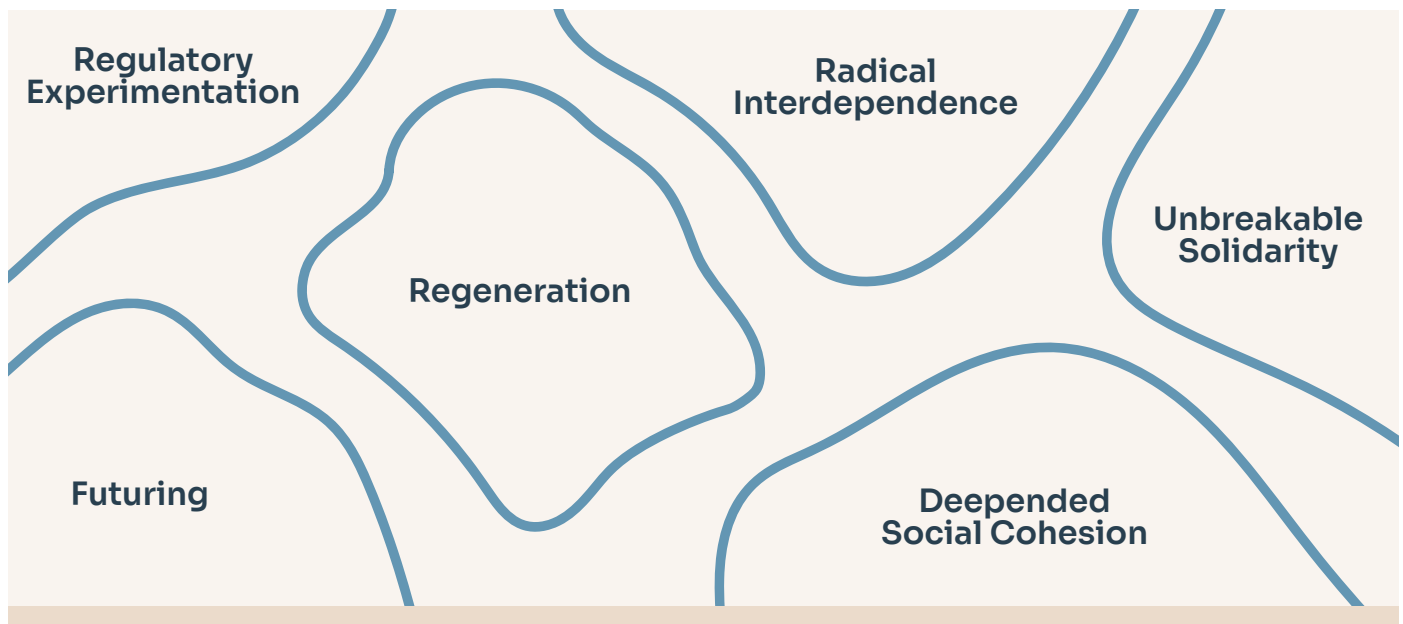
In 2026, we will shift our guiding framework to the third stage: Enabling Systems-Wide Support.

Belonging Commons

The continuation of this work in 2025 directly aligns with the **2024 Strategy for Belonging Report**, which emphasized the need for a **Belonging Commons**.

This Commons is a living infrastructure that fosters deep relationships and **mutual reinforcement** across six domains:

- **Regulatory Experimentation:** Developing innovative policies that prioritize belonging, well-being, and prosperity.
- **Regeneration:** Strengthening our collective capacity to recover from a disaster, elevating our human consciousness, and assessing what is needed to move from a state of destruction toward healing and trust-building.
- **Futuring:** Working with communities to create solutions that anticipate and address future challenges.
- **Unbreakable Solidarity:** Cultivating strong and resilient community bonds for mutual support.
- **Radical Interdependence:** Fostering respectful relationships with all living beings and our planet.
- **Deepened Social Cohesion:** Building collective leadership by finding common ground and stewarding local strengths.



The six domains of the Belonging Commons form a life-affirming framework designed to deliberately amplify voices, especially those of individuals experiencing exclusion or othering. This commitment to centering community voices makes the movement for belonging inherently courageous and inseparable from the pursuit of equity.

The Belonging Commons is our proposal for a renewed social contract. It is a commitment to renewing our relationships with each other and our planet by embedding belonging as a fundamental right for all living beings.



Growth of the Belonging Movement

The past year has seen a significant expansion in both reach and engagement within the belonging movement. The network of individuals committed to advancing belonging grew from **7,000 to 9,000 participants**, representing hundreds of organizations investing in shared learning, dialogue, and systems change. This growth reflects the rising recognition that belonging is not a peripheral goal, but a cornerstone of healthy communities, equitable systems, and democratic futures.

In 2025, almost **2,000 individuals signed the [Belonging Pledge](#)**, signaling a deepening personal and organizational commitment to creating cohesive and connected communities. These signatories come from municipalities, non-profits, regional health authorities, educational institutions, and grassroots networks across the country, demonstrating that belonging transcends sectors and geographies.

Expanding Partnerships and Collective Efforts

Building belonging requires collaboration across sectors, institutions, and lived experiences. Throughout 2025, Tamarack deepened and diversified its partnerships, working alongside organizations that share a vision of social cohesion, equity, and the promise of advancing a Canada-wide Strategy for Belonging. These collaborations have not only expanded the reach of the Strategy but also enriched its content and direction.

Bahá'í Community of Canada

Participated in their national roundtables in Toronto and Montreal on belonging, as well as co-organized one of these roundtables, in the perspective of strengthening collaboration to foster belonging across communities.

Belonging Forum

Shared insights on belonging as the cornerstone of democracy as part of a panel discussion and endorsed their global campaign for a [Charter for Belonging](#).

Canada's Chief Public Health Officer

Our collective work on community wellbeing was featured in the 2025 State of Public Health in Canada report. The report formally recognized our Networks for Change, including Communities Building Belonging, as vital support for collaboratives strengthening wellbeing across over 400 municipalities.

Community Foundations of Canada

Participated in a panel on the intersection between belonging and collaboration through place-based partnerships as part of their biennial event.

Community Justice Initiatives

Collaborated on applying restorative principles to foster belonging through justice and reconciliation.

Foundation for a Path Forward

Shared insights on movement-building, violence prevention, community engagement, and the role of dialogue in advancing belonging.

Future of Good

Participated in a conversation on wellbeing and belonging for non-profit practitioners.

Global Centre for Pluralism

Partnered through the Strategy for Belonging Working Group to advance a shared framework for pluralism and social cohesion.

Gore Mutual Foundation

Participated in a conversation on the power of place-based partnerships with a philanthropic audience.

Health Promotion Canada

Collaborated on a webinar examining belonging as a determinant of health and a pathway to well-being.

National Advisory Council on Poverty

Collaborated on mobilizing communities across Canada to feed into the council's reports on the state of poverty, highlighting the role that this sector plays in creating a sense of connection and belonging for individuals experiencing poverty.

Place Matters UK

Organized and participated in a Canadian delegation at the Collaboration Action Summit on Child Poverty in Birmingham, United Kingdom, and amplified calls from the inaugural Strategy for Belonging around belonging as a protective factor against poverty and the vulnerabilities poverty brings.

Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship

Participated in the Schwab Foundation Summit 2025 in Seoul, South Korea, facilitated a workshop in part focused on one of the calls from the Strategy for Belonging: community-led storytelling

and narrative strategy as key to helping people see themselves in this work, and to changing hearts and minds.

The Neighbourhood Group

Co-hosted a webinar on belonging in urban community development.

The Walrus

Participated in a panel on the promise, challenges, and opportunities of creating places that foster belonging.

United for Literacy

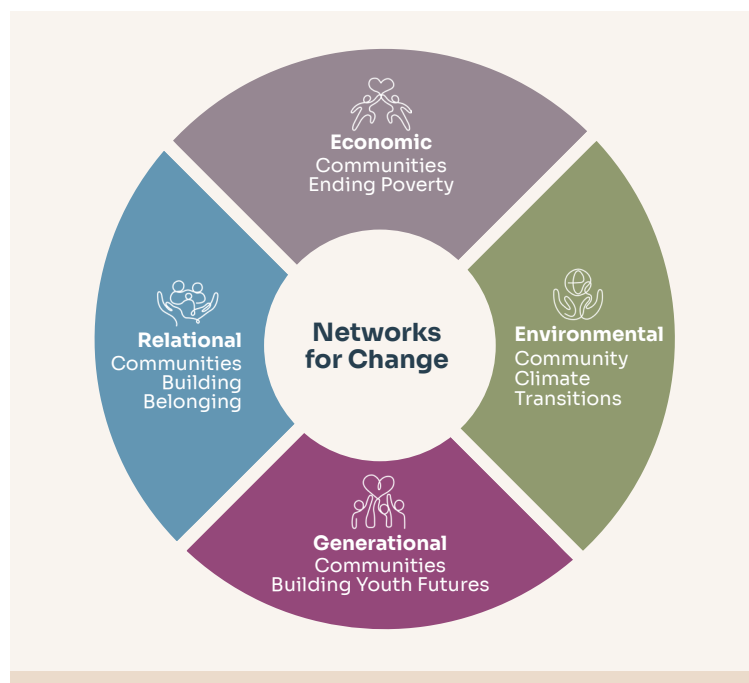
Co-hosted a conversation exploring the intersections between literacy, inclusion, and belonging.

Together, these partners and our Networks for Change are cultivating a growing ecosystem for belonging in Canada and beyond. Their shared learning, experimentation, and reflection are laying out the groundwork for a Strategy that is collaborative, inclusive, and action oriented.

This 2025 report serves as both a reflection and a bridge. It takes stock of progress since the launch of the Strategy for Belonging in 2023 and sets the stage for the work ahead. The lessons and partnerships emerging from the past year underscore that belonging is not built by any one actor alone. It is co-created through courageous relationships, community leadership, and shared vision. The goal of the strategy remains clear: to make belonging a lived reality for everyone, in every community across Canada.

II. OVERVIEW OF NETWORKS FOR CHANGE: COMMUNITIES BUILDING BELONGING

In 2025, Tamarack's Networks for Change made a bold strategic transition, working to **break down silos and collaborate more cohesively**. We recognize that true poverty eradication is multi-dimensional: it is economic (requiring policies to end working poverty and advance basic income), generational (championing equitable career pathways for youth), and environmental (closing equity gaps in access to healthy, regenerative ecosystems). Crucially, ending poverty is also relational, which is why we have built the Communities Building Belonging network. CBB is the **evolution and transformation** of our previous "Cities Deepening Community" work, now encompassing thousands of changemakers committed to making belonging a policy priority. The core thesis – that Belonging and Equity go hand-in-hand and cannot be divided – is embedded in this work.



What does it mean to end poverty in all its forms?

Ending poverty means sharing material wealth, increasing our connections to each other and the lands we're on, ensuring health for the next generation of people and our planet, and nurturing mindsets of thriving, equity, abundance, and strength. Transformational change occurs through new ways of thinking, being, and working together.

At Tamarack, our core purpose is to end multi-dimensional poverty and close equity gaps, addressing poverty's economic,

generational, relational, and environmental forms. Our Networks for Change serves as the unified infrastructure committed to achieving this courageous goal.

We recognize that truly ending poverty requires a multi-layered response. Therefore, we operate as a **field catalyst**, driving change by bridging across sectors and diverse communities. This strategic work is committed to **centring equity** and closing the profound gaps caused by systemic failures. Our efforts focus intensely on supporting **place-based collaboratives**, particularly those that have historically experienced exclusion, ensuring their leadership guides new ways of living and working together.

Because resilient collaboratives hold deep roots in the places they serve – a core part of Tamarack’s DNA – we are uniquely positioned to help them transition from idea to action to sustained impact.



Tamarack’s **Communities Building Belonging (CBB) network**, regrouping 37 active collaboratives across Canada and abroad, has served as the collaborative heart of building the movement for belonging. These collaboratives include municipalities, public institutions, non-profit organizations and networks, and neighbourhood groups. From St. John’s to Vancouver, these communities are anchored in 7 provinces and beyond. In 2025, CBB

deepened its impact through three Communities of Practice, one Working Group Series, two Cohorts, seven Tamarack webinars, one workshop series, and several cross-sector partnerships that collectively advanced the Strategy for Belonging into its next phase: moving from **making the case** to **activating the work**.

CBB continues to embody Tamarack’s community-driven approach: learning together, amplifying local innovation, translating insights into action, and collectively deepening impact in places. The 2025 cycle saw hundreds of practitioners, researchers, and community leaders come together to exchange tools, reflect on shared challenges, and co-create pathways toward a more cohesive Canada. In this section, you will find data on the magnitude of this movement and demonstrations that belonging drives equitable change and protects against poverty.

Communities of Practice (CoPs): Building Shared Capacity

Communities of Practice (CoP) remain the cornerstone of CBB's learning infrastructure. In 2025, more than **900 participants** engaged across the interconnected CoPs, cohorts, and working group series, exploring belonging through diverse but interrelated lenses. Each community aims to create collaborative spaces for local leaders to test ideas, share strategies, and generate collective momentum.

[Circle of Actions](#)

Circle of Actions represented Tamarack's response to Stage 2 of the Strategy for Belonging roadmap, cultivating skills and knowledge for belonging at the community level. While Stage 1 ("Making the Case") focused on awareness and evidence-building, Stage 2 focused on applied practice, supporting collaboratives to take concrete actions to foster belonging across their communities. Cohort members worked to advance projects or interventions designed to strengthen connections at multiple levels with the hope of impacting individuals, community organizations, and policies and systems. Interventions ranged from embedding belonging into poverty reduction strategies to developing a community-wide position statement on belonging.

From March to December 2025, **52 participants from 13 collaboratives** explored frameworks for relational change, inclusive governance, and community-led design. They examined how belonging can be operationalized in workplaces, schools, public spaces, and local policy. Circle of Actions emphasized the principle that belonging grows through action. Through repeated, tangible acts of inclusion that build (or rebuild) trust and strengthen the social fabric of communities.

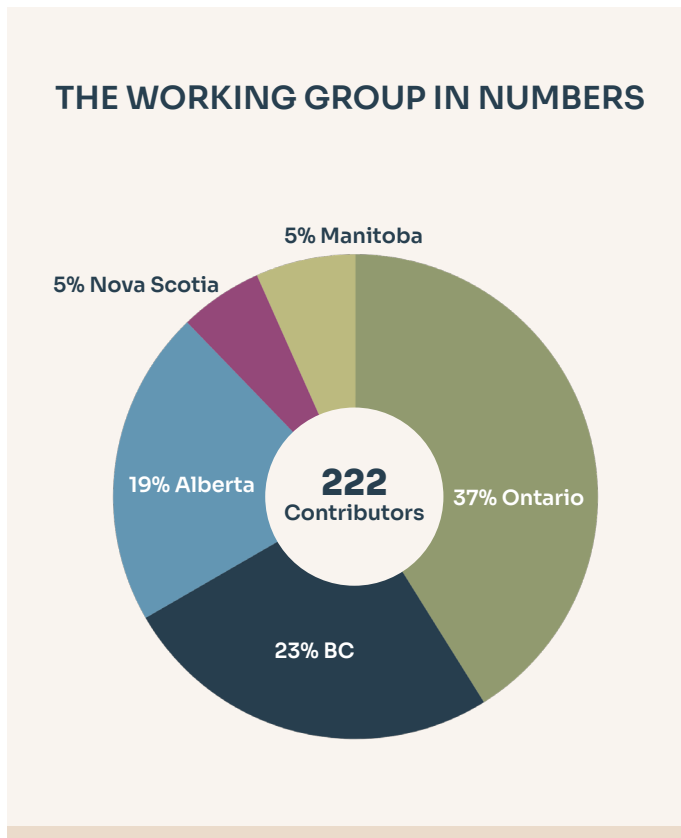
[Pathways for Change](#)

Pathways for Change was a 7-month cohort from April to October 2025 for **16 individuals** nominated by their Circle of Actions teams. This cohort provided changemakers with tools and methodologies to design interventions that cultivate belonging. Sessions introduced resources for mapping assets, engaging residents, and aligning belonging initiatives with local priorities such as equity, accessibility, and well-being.

Participants used these pathways to identify leverage points for systemic change, emphasizing belonging not as an "add-on," but as a core lens for planning, evaluation, and decision-making.

Strategy for Belonging Working Group

Over the course of the year, the Strategy for Belonging Working Group convened **222 contributors from 118 organizations across Canada**, including community leaders, policy thinkers, and partners to refine the Strategy and explore how belonging can shape both local practice and federal policy. This Working Group provided an opportunity for individuals both within and outside of Tamarack's network to contribute to **making community belonging a policy priority and outcome in Canada**.



Its four sessions in 2025 traced an intentional learning arc:

Session 1 – Cultivating Belonging: A Foundation for Leadership

This session explored leadership as a relational practice and examined how personal experiences shape an individual's sense of belonging. Researcher Emma Pears shared insights on grounding leadership in relationships and highlighted how nurturing belonging within ourselves and others can strengthen organizational cultures. Participants discussed practical ways to foster empathy, inclusion, and courage in their leadership approaches, emphasizing how personal actions can contribute to building broader cultures of belonging across organizations and communities.

Session 2 – Investing in Belonging: The Role of Social Infrastructure

The second session focused on how social and physical environments shape experiences of belonging. With contributions from Ada Chan Russell at the City of Vancouver, participants examined how well-designed places can encourage connection, participation, and safety. The session highlighted examples of initiatives that bridge divides and build stronger communities, and explored strategies for strengthening social infrastructure through thoughtful, courageous leadership.

Session 3 – Enabling Policies for Belonging

This session examined the role of policy in advancing belonging and considered how policy conversations can be activated within communities. Reflections from Andrea González and Carolyn McKee from the Global Centre for Pluralism emphasized pluralism as an enabling infrastructure for belonging and democratic governance. Participants discussed policy levers related to housing, education, healthcare, and community development, and explored innovative policy approaches that prioritize social connection, address systemic inequities, and support full participation in community life.

Session 4 – Building on Our Momentum

The final session synthesized key insights from the year’s conversations, identifying key takeaways and recommendations to continue this work in 2026. Participants reflected on their insights from 2025 and considered strategic opportunities for 2026. Together, they contributed to a “Wheel of Engagement and Action” naming the level of involvement they would like to take as we move forward, shaping a shared vision for strengthening belonging and advancing the next phase of the call for a Canada-wide Strategy.



Communities of Practice: Thematic Deep Dives

Three of our Communities of Practice (CoPs) extended the belonging conversation into key domains of community life:

Community Safety

Focused on safety as a precondition for belonging, examining restorative practices, trust-building, and prevention approaches that nurture inclusion and connection.



Reached 115 participants
from 77 collaboratives

Neighbourhood Learning

Highlighted best practices on building social infrastructure for belonging, emphasizing local knowledge, peer-to-peer learning, and the role of public spaces in fostering vibrant communities.



Reached 347 participants
from 191 collaboratives

Emergency Preparedness

Explored how belonging underpins resilience, demonstrating that connected communities respond more effectively to crises and recover more quickly.



Reached 207 participants
from 155 collaboratives

Webinars and Workshops: Deepening the Conversation

Throughout 2025, Tamarack hosted a series of webinars and workshops that drew almost **800 participants** from across Canada and beyond. These interactive sessions extended learning from the CoPs to a wider public audience, reinforcing belonging as a shared priority. The topics covered included:

- [Belonging as a Social Determinant of Health](#) (April 2025) – Engaged 195 participants with the concept of belonging as a social determinant of health, examining how social cohesion, connection, and a sense of community impact physical and mental well-being.
- [Building Belonging into Public Health Practice](#) (April 2025) – Presented to 178 participants on practical strategies for integrating belonging into public health practice, including successful community-based public health initiatives that prioritize belonging.
- [Building Belonging Through Climate Action & Community Resilience](#) (June 2025) – Explored how climate initiatives can foster connection and agency at the local level with 87 participants, illustrating that climate action and belonging are mutually reinforcing goals.
- [Building Belonging: The Youth Housing Challenge](#) (June 2025) – Explored the housing challenges facing youth today with 56 participants, from challenges such as affordability and homelessness prevention to innovative solutions like co-living.
- [Advancing Climate Equity through Municipal Leadership](#) (August 2025) – Discussed how municipal leadership can drive equitable climate action with 109 participants.
- [Loving Lessons from Our Equity, Reconciliation & Belonging Journey](#) (September 2025) – Reflected with 96 participants on Tamarack’s internal learning process, linking reconciliation, equity, and belonging as interconnected practices essential to authentic community change.
- [Disrupting Poverty Through Belonging](#) (November 2025)– Highlighted to 41 participants ways an Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) approach can disrupt the cycle of poverty and alleviate some of its immediate impacts, while helping to build community resilience and resist polarization.

In addition, in collaboration with the Equity, Anti-Racism, and Reconciliation (EAR) team at Tamarack, a workshop series entitled “[Equity+ Belonging in Community Change: Practicing Inclusion, Shifting Culture, and Deepening Belonging in Community Spaces](#)” was offered to members during the fall of 2025. A total of 34 participants attended the series, which addressed the following topics:

- Workshop One: [Building Shared Language & Grounding in Community](#)
- Workshop Two: [Designing for Belonging – Accessibility, Neurodiversity, and Intersectionality](#)
- Workshop Three: [Gender & Sexual Diversity – 2SLGBTQIA+ Inclusion & Addressing Transphobia](#)
- Workshop Four: [Embedding DEIB into Policy, Culture & Conflict Resolution through Practical Application](#)

Communities Building Belonging By The Numbers in 2025



Emerging Themes

This year, the movement for a Canada-wide Strategy reached an impressive and inspiring level of maturity.

We are seeing a significant transformation in engagement: institutional participation has grown by an estimated **20–30%**, moving from individual changemakers to representatives from organizations. This shift is notable, particularly for the growing interest from **community foundations, regional health agencies, and local governments**.

We are now focused on expanding the movement and bringing more leaders into positions to ignite lasting, sustainable change. We want to emphasize that, despite growing institutional interest, **individuals are and will always be at the heart of this movement**, especially those who have experienced exclusion or othering.

This new generation of participants, ranging from climate scientists to local poverty roundtable chairs, are unified by a common concern: the escalating **crisis of loneliness and polarization**. They view nurturing belonging as the essential antidote to the challenges of our time, recognizing its profound impact on poverty, climate action, and well-being.

While our webinars, Communities of Practice, workshops, and learning events may appear unique, they are fundamentally connected. Each event contributes directly to [strengthening the skills](#) **changemakers and communities need** to operate effectively in this polarized context. These sessions provide different pathways for engagement, unlocking opportunities for **collaboration, resilience, and sustainable change**.

Across Tamarack's partnerships in 2025, several themes consistently surfaced, revealing a shared understanding of what strengthens belonging in communities. Participants emphasized that belonging must be treated as vital infrastructure, shaped by the systems and environments people move through, including housing, transportation, education, digital access, and public spaces. They underscored the connection between belonging, economic security, and equity, noting that stable livelihoods and fair access to opportunity are foundational. Climate change also emerged as both a risk and catalyst for strengthening cohesion through collective resilience building. Finally, communities highlighted the importance of building safety and trust recognizing that meaningful belonging requires confronting histories of exclusion and creating spaces where communities feel valued and secure. These insights will be explored in more detail in the next section on the core learnings that will guide the next phase of Tamarack's Strategy for Belonging into 2026 and beyond.

III. SUMMARY OF LEARNINGS FROM THE STRATEGY FOR BELONGING

In 2025, the collective learning process reaffirmed that belonging is not a single intervention or policy, it is an ecosystem of relationships, practices, and commitments that reinforce one another. Through the work of Tamarack's Networks for Change, 5 takeaways have crystallized as essential to strengthening and sustaining a Canada-wide Strategy for Belonging (S4B).



1. Collaborating Across Difference and Sectors

Belonging is built through connection, and connection thrives when individuals and organizations collaborate across difference. Participants in the S4B process consistently emphasized the importance of **cross-sector and cross-identity collaboration** as the foundation of any movement for belonging.

The work of belonging is relational, but it is also structural. It calls for civic leaders, public institutions, grassroots organizers, and residents to work together across boundaries such as culture, geography, discipline, and lived experience. In 2025, the Strategy's partnerships with organizations such as the Belonging Forum, the Global Centre for Pluralism, United for Literacy, and Health Promotion Canada demonstrated how collaborative leadership can bridge sectors to advance shared goals of inclusion, equity, and collective well-being.

This learning reinforces a central principle of the Strategy for Belonging: **belonging cannot be built in isolation**. It requires shared ownership, humility, and a willingness to learn and act together across difference.

2. The Connection Between Well-Being and Belonging

Communities affirmed a deep and inseparable connection between **belonging and well-being**. Belonging is not a by-product of health and safety; it is a determinant of both. When people feel connected, valued, and included, they are more likely to thrive physically, mentally, and socially.

This insight has significant implications for public policy and community design. Belonging should be recognized as a **driver of population health**, influencing everything from civic participation to chronic disease prevention. The Strategy for Belonging positions well-being and belonging as mutually reinforcing: investments in mental health, housing, recreation, and public spaces are also investments in belonging.

By embedding belonging into frameworks for well-being – as communities across the Networks for Change have done – Tamarack and its partners are demonstrating that well-being and belonging are two sides of the same coin.



3. Accountability in Movement-Building

A core theme emerging from the S4B learning process is that **movement-building begins with accountability**. Drawing on Tamarack’s [Seeds of Transformation \(SoT\) framework](#), participants reflected that genuine systems change requires us to name our positionality, recognize our power and privilege, and remain accountable to ourselves and to the communities we serve. Tamarack is committed to advancing equity, anti-racism, and reconciliation (EAR) and centering this work in community-led efforts, as it is intrinsic to the work of building belonging.

EQUITY, ANTI-RACISM, AND RECONCILIATION ANALYSIS TOOL

We have developed an Equity, Anti-Racism, and Reconciliation Analysis Tool to consider the ways which Equity, Anti-Racism, and Reconciliation have been incorporated into how we work, and if the way we are working is moving us toward our goals. The tool includes these inquiries:

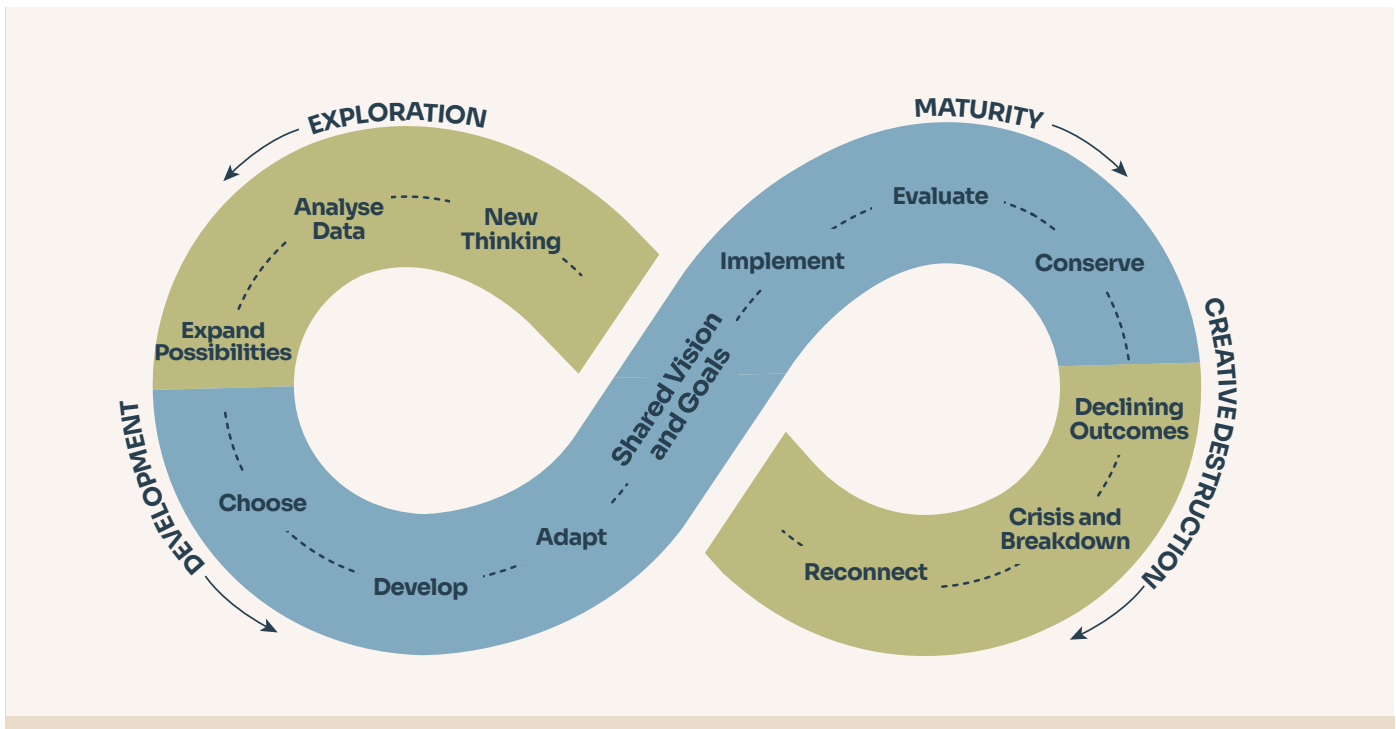
- ☐ Who benefits from how things are now?
- ☐ Who is currently excluded? What intersectional identities do they carry?
- ☐ What factors contribute to this exclusion?
- ☐ How will we know that Equity, Anti-Racism, and Reconciliation are centred in the work? How will you contribute?
- ☐ How will we assess and share progress and learnings? How do we use, validate, and interpret data? Who stewards and owns these processes?
- ☐ How do your biases, privileges, and experiences shape your perspective and decision-making processes?

Equity is not an outcome separate from belonging, it is a **practice that sustains belonging**. Building a culture of belonging demands that individuals and institutions confront exclusionary patterns and biases, and take responsibility for creating conditions where all voices are valued.

This takeaway shifts the frame of movement-building, reminding us that external advocacy efforts must be accompanied by **internal transformation**. Belonging grows when people and organizations live its principles every day, in both relationships and structures.

4. Movement-Building is a Long-Term Journey

Communities also emphasized that the work of belonging is a long-term journey, not a one-time campaign. Sustainable movements must anticipate [cycles of momentum and challenge](#), which speaks of the [evolving practice](#) of collaboration.



This perspective underscores the need for **resilience and adaptability** as we build the movement for belonging. Just as relationships evolve, so too must the strategies and structures that support them. Building a Canada-wide movement for belonging means cultivating the patience, endurance, and flexibility to navigate ups and downs, celebrating progress while learning from disruption.

The Strategy for Belonging is, therefore, not a static roadmap but a **living ecosystem**, continually renewed by community learning and reflection.

5. Belonging *And*, Not Belonging *Or*

Perhaps the most significant learning from 2025 is that belonging does not exist in isolation from other community priorities. The S4B process revealed a powerful truth: belonging is not *either/or*, it is *both/and*.

Communities are advancing belonging **alongside** other transformative agendas:

- **Belonging and Climate Transitions** – [The Guide for Advancing Climate Equity through Place-Based Collaboration](#) published in 2024 illustrates that equitable climate action can strengthen social connection and belonging by mobilizing communities around shared purpose and place.
- **Belonging and Housing** – Access to safe, affordable housing is a prerequisite for belonging; without stability, participation and connection become harder to sustain.
- **Belonging and Public Health** – The link between health and belonging continues to grow stronger, with practitioners centering belonging into the design of inclusive health promotion strategies.
- **Belonging and Poverty** – Tamarack’s [Exploring Poverty Intersections tool](#) demonstrates that belonging can help address the root causes of poverty by fostering dignity, agency, and social connection.
- **Belonging and Local Action** – The [Tri-Cities case](#) study shows how municipalities can integrate belonging into policy, planning, and participatory governance to drive inclusive outcomes.

This “Belonging And” lens reflects a mature stage of the movement: one that situates belonging as an **integrative principle**, a unifying thread across issues of equity, environment, economy, and community life.

A Growing Foundation

Together, these five insights mark a deepening of the Strategy for Belonging. They signal a shift from awareness to action, from isolated efforts to collective accountability, and from short-term initiatives to long-term systems change.

“We discussed the importance of bringing neighbours together as a way of being, not just when there’s a crisis (flood, fire, pandemic, etc.), and we need to do this across boundaries/identities even when people don’t initially think they have anything in common”

Participant from the S4B Working Group

As Tamarack and its partners continue this journey, the focus will remain on nurturing a movement that is [collaborative](#), [reflective](#), [regenerative](#), and [intersectional](#); a movement grounded in the belief that **belonging is not the work of a few, but the shared project of an entire society**. At the center of this movement is the critical role place-based collaboratives play in this work. [Place-based collaboratives](#) nurture community cohesion because they:

1. **Ground the Work:** They help name and understand the community's starting position, which is the foundational step in centering equity.
2. **Build Capacity:** They strengthen local collaborative capacity, ensuring sustainable, long-term advancement.
3. **Amplify Impact:** They bridge thematic initiatives, transforming isolated efforts into unified, community-led change that ensures no one is left behind.

[Investing in belonging](#) through place is investing in the sustainability and resilience of all other change efforts.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NEXT STEPS

The collective work of the last couple of years has made clear that communities are ready to take the next step to shape a Strategy for Belonging that unites people, governments, and sectors around a shared goal: ensuring that everyone feels connected, included, and valued.

This section outlines **5 recommendations** for strengthening and advancing the Strategy for Belonging in 2026 and beyond. These recommendations are grounded in Tamarack's community and partner conversations, reflecting both local insights and system-level opportunities for scale and alignment. They fundamentally build upon the groundwork established in the [2024 Strategy Report](#).

1. Invest in Community Infrastructure for Belonging

Belonging is built in everyday places where people live, gather, and participate. Alongside our members, Tamarack has explored investing in various types of infrastructure, such as parks, community centers, and other spaces that hold meaning and value for communities. We believe the Strategy should prioritize investment in **social infrastructure** that fosters cohesion. Based on lessons learned [over the past decade](#) of building the movement for belonging, we confirm that social infrastructure is dual-sided: it is both physical and relational. Physical spaces facilitate cohesion, while relational capacity enables diverse perspectives to navigate differences and come together. This relational capacity is indispensable to building and sustaining democratic foundations.

Therefore, social infrastructure includes:

- **Community hubs, libraries,** and parks that act as inclusive meeting points.
- **Housing developments** that integrate social connection into design through shared spaces, co-housing models, and mixed-use planning.
- **Digital inclusion programs** that bridge the gap for those excluded from online participation.
- **Neighbourhood safety and restorative justice initiatives** that rebuild trust and belonging in communities facing violence or exclusion.

These investments should be guided by [equity-centred principles](#) and co-designed with residents, ensuring that social infrastructure reflects the diversity and needs of local communities.

Tamarack calls on funders to collaborate with communities and invest in partnerships that strengthen place-based collaboration, which is key to build social infrastructure for belonging, as expressed in a joint [Open Letter from Canada's Nonprofits and Charities to Corporate and Philanthropic Funders](#).

“We need to be able to identify the places in our community where people experience a sense of belonging”

Participant from the S4B Working Group

We issue a bold call to institutions of all sizes, particularly philanthropy and governments: **be mindful of the resources you meaningfully allocate to place-based collaboratives**. While supporting important thematic causes is vital, the impact of these causes remains isolated and less amplified unless it leverages the [power of place](#).

2. Integrate Belonging into Policy Intersections

The Strategy for Belonging should explicitly address the intersections where belonging connects to other national priorities. Insights from Tamarack's CoPs and partner dialogues point to several critical intersections, which we will be emphasizing in 2026:

- **Belonging and Climate Resilience:** [Support community-led climate adaptation](#) efforts that strengthen relationships, build resilience, and grow local capacity to respond to emergencies.
- **Belonging and Housing:** [Integrate belonging outcomes into housing policy](#) through community-oriented design, resident engagement, and anti-displacement measures.

- **Belonging and Public Health:** [Recognize belonging as a driver of health](#) by expanding access to care and investing in community-based supports.
- **Belonging and Guaranteed Livable Income:** [Advance income and employment policies](#), such as guaranteed livable income, that provide stability and allow people to participate fully in community life.
- **Belonging and Community Safety:** [Promote safety approaches](#) centred on prevention, trust, and restorative practices that create safe and connected neighbourhoods.
- **Belonging and Youth Civic Leadership, Employment, and Education:** [Strengthen opportunities for youth engagement](#), learning, and employment so young people can actively shape community and civic life.

3. Strengthen Movement-Building Capacity

Belonging will not advance through policy alone, it requires a [sustained social movement](#). Tamarack’s 2025 learnings reaffirmed the need to strengthen the capacity of individuals and organizations to champion belonging in their spheres of influence.

“Brave conversations and collaborations with committed people of all ages gives me hope for the future”

Participant from the S4B Working Group

The strategy should:

- **Expand Networks for Change and Communities Building Belonging** as a national backbone for peer learning and innovation.
- **Provide funding and technical support** for place-based belonging initiatives.

- **Offer training and leadership development** in Equity, Anti-Racism, and Reconciliation, as well as other [key areas](#) including Collaboration, Collective Leadership, Community Innovation, Asset-Based Community Development, Community Engagement, and Evaluating Impact.
- **Foster storytelling and narrative change** that highlight belonging as a shared aspiration across Canada.

By investing in movement-building, we ensure that the Strategy remains **dynamic, regenerative, and rooted in lived experiences**.

4. Center Equity, Accountability, and Evaluation

We call on all interested collaboratives and institutions to recognize that building belonging requires much more than simply activating a block party or adding infrastructure to a local park. This movement's distinct power lies in its explicit commitment to **equity as the center of change**. We

assert that **belonging and equity are fundamentally unbreakable**; they go hand-in-hand. This commitment drives us to embed [Seeds of Transformation](#), Tamarack's Equity, Anti-Racism, and Reconciliation framework, directly into our developmental work.

To remain credible and transformative, the Strategy for Belonging must be grounded in equity and accountability. This means:



- **Reflecting on our goals and roles** to build skills and confidence essential to advancing Equity, Anti-Racism, and Reconciliation goals.
- **Reshaping our commitments** to gain an understanding of individual and collective responsibilities and leverage our collection of knowledge and perspectives more effectively.
- **Advancing reciprocal engagement** by establishing participatory methods, including feedback loops between communities and decision-makers to ensure responsiveness and co-creation. It also involves prioritizing reciprocal engagement with equity-denied individuals and organizations to ensure their experiences shape decision-making.
- **Promoting respectful communication** is the essential foundation for enabling trust and transparency. This is particularly relevant when conducting community-based research and evaluation that seeks to capture the rich, qualitative experiences of belonging alongside quantitative data.
- **Conducting systematic reviews** to celebrate success, encourage sensemaking, and adjust based on feedback. We aspire to publish an annual **Strategy for Belonging Report** to track national progress and guide course corrections.



5. Co-Design the Future: A Call to Collective Action

Finally, the next phase of the call for a Canada-wide Strategy should continue its co-design journey with communities from coast to coast to coast. Co-design means more than consultation; it means **shared power and shared authorship**. This process could include:

- **Holding regional belonging dialogues** and design labs to shape and localize the call for the Strategy.
- **Sustaining the inclusion of lived-experience voices** in governance and policy design.
- **Partnering with academic and philanthropic institutions** to sustain research, innovation, and investment.
- **Co-mapping social infrastructure** assets for belonging.
- **Exploring intersectional perspectives** on belonging tied to land and the power of place.

“Belonging has to include how we feel our bodies and engage with the land... getting out of our heads and feel belonging with each other, including with non-human relations”

Participant from the S4B Working Group

A truly Canada-wide strategy will emerge not from a single institution, but from **a network of relationships** committed to a shared vision: a world where everyone can belong, contribute, and thrive.

Moving Forward

Moving forward, our Strategy is centered on enabling systems wide support by exploring deep connections with causes that are also championing belonging as a human right, including the [Belonging Forum](#) and the global movement for a [Charter for Belonging](#).



We also salute the critical work being led across the entire ecosystem of social purpose organizations, governments, foundations, and institutions. Specifically, we honour the changemakers who contribute to building belonging whether through [climate action](#), [wellbeing](#), and [economic prosperity](#) initiatives. We find profound resonance in key efforts, including the [Calls to Action](#) from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada and the pursuit of [Black futures](#).

Centering these insights will enable us to drive significant progress toward courageous collaborations specifically aimed at ending relational poverty and decisively closing equity gaps. We welcome your input as we embark on this crucial next stage. Please contact us if you are ready to join the conversation and help solidify belonging as a fundamental human right.

V. CONCLUSION

Belonging is emerging as one of the defining challenges and opportunities of our time. Across the globe, communities are showing that when people feel connected, valued, and seen, they contribute more fully to collective well-being, [social regeneration](#), and democracy.

Through Networks for Change – Communities Building Belonging, Tamarack and its partners have demonstrated that creating the conditions for belonging to thrive is not just a possibility, it is a reality already under construction.

The lessons learned over the past three years affirm that a Strategy for Belonging must be collaborative, intersectional, and enduring. It must recognize that belonging is shaped by housing, health, income, climate, and community safety and that these systems are more equitable when they are designed with people and our planet at their center.

The work for a Canada-wide Strategy for Belonging is intended to be **complementary and a starting point** for forging deeper connectedness and a renewed sense of purpose across society. We are keen to continue this dialogue, recognizing with humility that **there is much to (un)learn and urgent action needed on multiple fronts**.

In 2026, Tamarack will launch the third, pivotal stage of the call for a Canada-wide Strategy for Belonging. This phase focuses on driving courageous collaboration where systems-wide policy support meets local, place-based action. We will work closely with collaboratives keen to advance local policy solutions, ensuring their efforts are coordinated and mutually reinforcing to decisively shape Canada's policy landscape. This work will be guided by the core publications that have shaped our movement, including lessons learned from:

- [Seeds of Transformation](#): Tamarack's framework for **Equity, Anti-Racism, and Reconciliation**.
- [Community-Driven, Place-Based Change](#): A recognition of the promise of **place-based partnerships** in igniting lasting change.

These foundational publications, along with this report and the [2024 Strategy report](#), emerged from deep dialogue with changemakers across sectors, including neighborhood roundtables, local governments, academia, and philanthropy. Building on this legacy, Tamarack is also launching **Community Pathways**, a new framework designed to mobilize local collaboratives from **ideas to action to impact**.

As this movement enters its next stage, the invitation is clear: to act collectively and courageously, embedding belonging in every policy, program, and partnership. Together, we can create a world where everyone in every community not only has a place but truly belongs.

The next chapter of the Strategy for Belonging will require courage and imagination. It will demand that we move beyond pilot projects toward systemic integration, embedding belonging into how we plan our cities of all sizes, deliver services, shape policy, and relate to one another.

By acting on these recommendations, we can move closer to realizing the vision that communities have voiced since the beginning of this journey:

A future where belonging is both a Canada-wide aspiration and an everyday practice.

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