

Community  
Innovation Fund

# Impact Report

COMMUNITIES BUILDING  
YOUTH FUTURES (CBYF)



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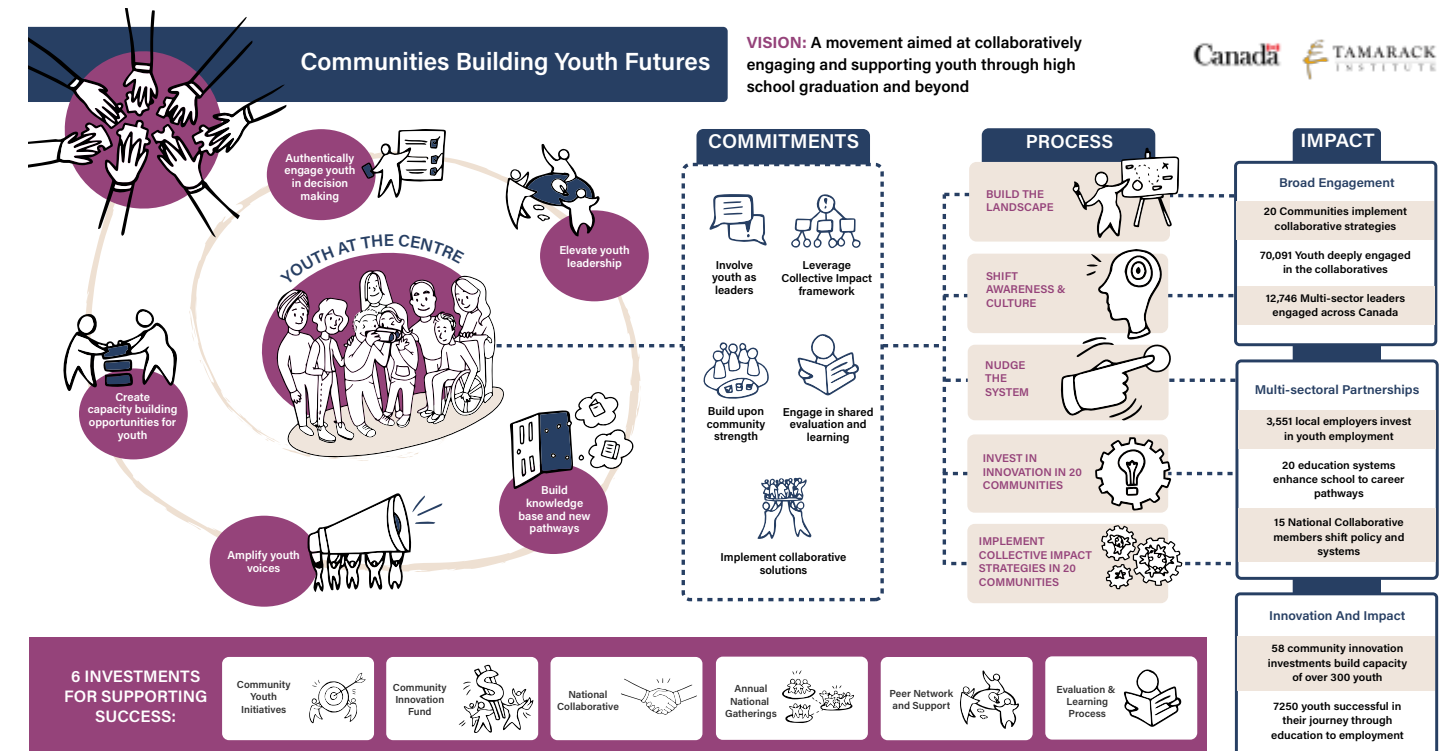
This report was written by Mairead Stewart with help from Sylvia Cheuy and Nathalie Blanchet. The Tamarack Communities Building Youth Futures (CBYF) team also includes Angelina Pelletier, Mike Des Jardins, and Rana Nemat Allah. Thank you also to Owen Henderson and Justin Williams. We want to especially acknowledge the incredible work by CBYF team leads and youth leaders in all 20 communities.

The Community Innovation Fund (CIF) projects were carried out on the traditional lands of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities across Turtle Island. We acknowledge the ongoing oppression of Indigenous people and commit to addressing these inequities in the work we do.

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## IMAGES USED THROUGHOUT THIS REPORT

The images used for this report were selected from an annual youth photography contest hosted by CBYF. The cover image is **Efficient Transportation and Less Waste** by Ash H.



# INTRODUCTION

This report explores the impact of 58 Community Innovation and Scaling Projects that have been funded and completed between 2020 - 2024 as part of Tamarack Institute's 5-year Communities Building Youth Futures (CBYF) Initiative.

## WHAT IS COMMUNITIES BUILDING YOUTH FUTURES?

Tamarack Institute's [Communities Building Youth Futures](#) (CBYF) is a 5-year initiative that seeks to reduce barriers to education for youth across Canada (aged 15 - 29 years old). The initiative takes a multifaceted approach that puts youth at the centre of decision-making in all aspects of the initiative which includes youth leadership tables, youth-led activities, and feedback from diverse youth voices. Rather than relying on outside experts for advice, this strategy empowers youth to share their specific barriers to success and collaborate on meaningful solutions within their own communities. Using a Collective Impact framework, CBYF acknowledges that broad community change to support youth transitions comes from the collaboration of diverse community partners and youth themselves.

Each of the 20 rural, remote, and/or Indigenous communities that make up CBYF receive core funding as well as capacity building support from Tamarack to develop and implement local strategies that support youth success in education, employment and beyond. In addition, communities are eligible to apply annually for one-year innovation fund grants designed to encourage the development and prototyping of promising ideas on a small scale. These Community Innovation and Scaling Projects have highlighted the creativity and ingenuity of youth

and communities and have facilitated short-term action and experimentation while the longer-term work of lasting change is underway.

Having youth serve in key leadership roles ensures that the project is not only listening to youth perspectives, but also empowering young people to be actively involved in designing and implementing meaningful change in their communities. Although each community's initiative looks different depending on their specific context and youth needs, all communities are working towards improving education outcomes and helping youth successfully transition from education to employment and adulthood.

## WHAT IS COMMUNITY INNOVATION AND WHY INVEST IN IT?

Fundamentally new collaborative approaches are needed to generate better results for youth and communities. Continuous improvement of current programs & services is important, however, taking a whole-community approach that reflects the holistic needs of youth can result in novel solutions to complex issues. [Community innovation](#) is imperative if we are to achieve the needed breakthroughs, fresh perspectives and new approaches required to support all youth to fulfill their full potential.

At Tamarack, we recognize community innovation as one of five essential skills – along with multi-sector collaboration, community engagement, collective leadership and evaluating impact – that are needed to effectively mobilize and successfully achieve community and systems-level change.

Our approach recognizes the importance of place and the reality that each community's unique characteristics, strengths, and challenges must be considered in the development and implementation of successful innovations. Effective community innovations are the result of processes that engage all stakeholders and leverage their collective competencies and creativity to co-design novel solutions. These innovations also leverage the unique strengths, history, and context of the community – particularly the knowledge of those experiencing the impacts of a complex issue – to reimagine what is possible and work together to develop promising new solutions.

In all Communities Building Youth Futures local communities, access to innovation fund grants has enabled the local leadership tables to balance the deep work of better understanding and addressing youth priorities with a sense of urgency to act on pressing issues now and leverage opportunities to develop, test, refine and grow promising new solutions. The Community Innovation Fund grants that have been awarded to date also create opportunities to demonstrate the “proof of concept” for promising ideas. This increases the likelihood that these ideas will be adopted by community partners, secure additional funding to continue, and/or be replicated in other communities.

## TAMARACK'S ROLE IN SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES

Each local community uses the [Collective Impact framework](#) to implement their CBYF Initiative and Community Innovation Fund project. Collective Impact invites organizations and other sectors and groups to work together and co-create a shared innovation space where they can learn, deepen understanding, discover new possibilities and work together to bring them to life. Unlike implementing a proven program or service, Collective Impact focuses on discovering new opportunities and gaps, designing and prototyping new approaches, and focusing beyond programmatic approaches to also include strategies to address systemic

## FURTHER READING: THE COLLECTIVE IMPACT FRAMEWORK

Collective Impact is a proven and highly disciplined form of multi-sector collaboration. The CI framework mobilizes whole communities to work together using a shared action plan. It is an approach that is particularly useful in addressing complex and dynamic social and environmental issues that are beyond the capacity of any one sector or group to solve alone.

The Collective Impact Framework, which debuted in 2011, includes 5 conditions that, when integrated, create a powerful container for community change. Over the past decade, Collective Impact has become a world-wide practice that continues to evolve as practitioners refine and share their experiences.

The Collective Impact Framework makes sense and is clear and easy to understand. It is, however, counter-cultural in that it requires a fundamentally different mindset and approach than the organization-centric approaches that are most traditionally used.

For more than twenty years, Tamarack has supported local communities to embrace a multi-sectoral approach to tackle complex issues such as poverty. This experience has led us to appreciate the importance and value of linking together individual Collective Impact initiatives to learn from one another, engage system leaders and adopt a coordinated strategy to advance systems change. One way Tamarack does this is by capturing and disseminating community insights to our network of 48,000 learners worldwide.

barriers that inadvertently contribute to the very issues we are aiming to change.

As a [Field Catalyst](#), Tamarack amplifies the success and impact of promising local efforts by sharing them across communities, documenting common themes and monitoring results individually and collectively. This makes the communities' work easier and more effective.

## DATA AND RESOURCES FOR THIS REPORT

This report was compiled using a variety of resources. Most information about each community's projects was extracted from 58 final reports submitted by community team leaders for the innovation projects funded between 2020 and 2024. In some cases, information also came from [case studies](#) on these Community Innovation Fund Projects that are available on the Tamarack Institute website. These case studies were written by community leaders in collaboration with Tamarack staff. Additional information was also gathered through interviews with Tamarack's Managers of Cities (MoCs).

## PROCESS FOR AWARDED THE CBYF COMMUNITY INNOVATION FUND (CIF)

Communities applied annually for a Community Innovation Fund (CIF) grant to support a youth-led proposal to address an identified local challenge. CIF funding has supported youth-led projects that helped young people access technology, tutoring, employment training, Indigenous cultural connection, and arts exploration among many other examples.

## COLLECTIVE IMPACT'S FIVE CORE CONDITIONS

- 1 The development of a common agenda
- 2 Using shared measurement to understand progress
- 3 Building on mutually reinforcing activities
- 4 Engaging in continuous communications
- 5 Providing backbone support to move the work forward



Community	Year 1 (2020)	Year 2 (2021)	Year 3 (2022)	Year 4 (2023)	Year 5 (2024)
<b>Alberni-Clayoquot, BC</b> Plan on a Page Nuu- chah- nulth, Hupačasath Territory				<b>Safe Spaces for Youth</b> supported and/ or founded seven youth drop-in spaces throughout the Alberni-Clayoquot region to better support youth with little access to resources.	<b>Safe Spaces for Youth</b> supported and/ or founded seven youth drop-in spaces throughout the Alberni-Clayoquot region to better support youth with little access to resources.
<b>Chatham-Kent, ON</b> <a href="#">Plan on a Page</a> Territory of the Anishinaabe and Haudenos- aunee peoples; Three Fires Confederacy		<b>Ambition Incubator</b> established a professional kitchen to teach youth valuable employment skills and connect them with local mentors.		<b>Ignite</b> developed a youth-led conference and six community working groups to address issues youth face such as poverty and bullying.	<b>Ignite</b> was continued for another year.
<b>Chilliwack, BC</b> <a href="#">Plan on a Page</a> Ts'elxwéyeqw, Unceded Land of the Ts'elxwéyeqw Nation		<b>Channeling Youth Voices</b> supported youth as they created a documentary about their experiences of mental health, poverty, and lack of adult support.	<b>After School Hangout</b> designed a youth-led skateboarding drop-in space designed to connect youth to peer and adult support.	The <b>Attendance Incentive Program</b> rewarded students with low attendance for staying in school with the goal of achieving higher graduation rates.	<b>Beyond the Bells</b> provided free and accessible after school programming for middle school students.
<b>Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, ON</b> <a href="#">Plan on a Page</a> Deshkan Ziibing				<b>Oshki-Bimaadziwin Movers &amp; Shakers</b> gathered youth from the First Nation to run a local radio station.	<b>Oshki-Bimaadziwin Movers &amp; Shakers</b> was continued for another year.
<b>Corner Brook, NL</b> <a href="#">Plan on a Page Case Study</a> Ktaqmkuk and Traditional lands of the Mi'kmaq and Beothuk peoples	<b>IGNITE Tutoring</b> provided free youth-led tutoring for students who were struggling in school.		<b>IGNITE Tutoring</b> was continued for another year.	<b>IGNITE Tutoring</b> was continued for another year.	<b>IGNITE Tutoring</b> was continued for another year.

Community	Year 1 (2020)	Year 2 (2021)	Year 3 (2022)	Year 4 (2023)	Year 5 (2024)
<b>Digby, NS</b> <a href="#">Plan on a Page</a> <a href="#">Case Study</a> <a href="#">Interview</a> Wabanaki Confederacy, Mi'kma'ki Territory	<b>The Rural Youth Connection Project</b> provided fun and educational programming online, and in a youth-focused space during Covid-19 restrictions.		<b>The Transportation Project</b> provided funding for youth experiencing barriers to education and employment due to a lack of transportation access.	<b>Digby Alternative High School</b> designed a hands-on community-focused educational program to help youth with low attendance graduate from high school.	<b>The Resource Awareness Project</b> planned to create a directory of youth-focused resources and supports to increase service accessibility for youth.
<b>Grande Prairie, AB</b> <a href="#">Plan on a Page</a> <a href="#">Website</a> Treaty 8 Territory, signed by the Nêhiyaw (Cree), Tsattine (Beaver), Dene, and Métis people		<b>Youth Action Society (YAS)</b> developed youth-led micro-grants to support education and employment for local youth.	<b>The Youth Action Society (YAS)</b> was continued for another year.		
<b>Kahnawà:ke, QC</b> <a href="#">Plan on a Page</a> Kanien'kehá:ka (People of the Flint) traditional territory		<b>Kanien'kehá:ka Traditional Food Cooking Program</b> used land-based learning and hands-on cooking skills to pass down Kanien'kehá:ka traditional culture to youth.	<b>Healing Through Performance Art</b> held youth-led workshops on topics such as painting, powwow dancing, and public speaking to connect youth with peer and mentor support.		<b>Weaving Out Wellness</b> planned a series of workshops integrating traditional Kanien'kehá:ka teachings with holistic supports for youth.
<b>Laval, QC</b> <a href="#">Plan on a Page</a> <a href="#">Case Study</a> <a href="#">Website</a> <a href="#">Video</a> Unceded Land of the Haude-nosaunee		<b>Jeunes branchés</b> developed youth-led technological support for students taking online classes because of Covid-19 pandemic restrictions.	<b>Pépinière d'innovation</b> funded small pilot projects designed to help youth strengthen their employment skills and connect with mentors.	<b>Pépinière d'innovation</b> was continued for another year.	<b>Pépinière d'innovation</b> was continued for another year.

Community	Year 1 (2020)	Year 2 (2021)	Year 3 (2022)	Year 4 (2023)	Year 5 (2024)
<b>Moncton, NB</b> <a href="#">Plan on a Page</a> Wabanaki Confederacy Mi'kma'ki Territory				<b>Opening the Gate</b> conducted a review of youth experiencing homelessness in the region to prepare for more youth-focused initiatives.	<b>Opening the Gate</b> was continued for another year.
<b>Oxford County, ON</b> <a href="#">Plan on a Page</a> <a href="#">Website</a> Territory of the Anishinaabe, Haudenos-aunee, and Attawandaron peoples				<b>Youth-Led Participatory Grant-Making</b> developed a youth-led micro-granting initiative to help youth better access education and employment.	<b>Youth-Led Participatory Grant-Making</b> was continued for another year.
<b>Portage la Prairie, MB</b> <a href="#">Plan on a Page</a> <a href="#">Case Study</a> <a href="#">Website</a> Ishkodenam-igong, Bdayeta Opta Watokshu, Treaty 1 Territory	<b>Roving Campus</b> designed a classroom model to engage youth experiencing many barriers to success with the goal of increasing attendance and graduation numbers.		<b>Portage Innovation Centre</b> provided a fully equipped makerspace and mentorship to youth entrepreneurs starting small businesses.	<b>Roving Campus Grade 11</b> expanded the Roving Campus model into grade 11 classes to improve attendance and prepare youth for their final year.	<b>Adult Education Barrier Reduction</b> provided financial, cultural, and mentorship supports for adults working on achieving mature student graduation.
<b>Prince Albert, SK</b> <a href="#">Plan on a Page</a> <a href="#">Case Study</a> <a href="#">Website</a> <a href="#">Video</a> Kistahpinanihk, Treaty 6	<b>Youth Accessing Digital Devices</b> connected majority-Indigenous youth with Elders, mental health support, access to services, and new technology to help them overcome barriers to success.	<b>Pihikwe: Beyond the Doorstep</b> created a youth-led video directory of local services to help young people better understand and access services in their community.	<b>Pihikwe: Beyond the Doorstep</b> continued for another year, incorporating the video directory into an accessible app in collaboration with a local developer.	<b>The Reconciliation Project</b> formed a youth council to give workshops, create videos, connect with agencies, and hold a conference about reconciliation for the community.	<b>The Reconciliation Project</b> was continued for another year.

Community	Year 1 (2020)	Year 2 (2021)	Year 3 (2022)	Year 4 (2023)	Year 5 (2024)
<b>Prince Edward County, ON</b> <a href="#">Plan on a Page</a> <a href="#">Website</a> <a href="#">Video</a> Territory of the Wen- dake-Nion- wentsio, Haudenos- aunee, and Anishinaabe peoples				<b>Greater than            County Youth            Collective</b> designed youth-led initiatives that increased youth engagement including arts and sports programming.	<b>Greater than            County Youth            Collective</b> was continued for another year.
<b>Regina, SK</b> <a href="#">Plan on a Page</a> Oskana Ka-Asastēki, Treaty 4					The <b>Regina            Youth Summit</b> gathered youth to discuss the barriers they faced in education and employment and collaborate on meaningful solutions.
<b>Saint-Léonard,            QC</b> <a href="#">Plan on a Page</a> Tio:tiake/ Mooniyang				<b>Médialab de la            Léo Van</b> began as an explora- tion into what youth want to see out of a makerspace with the goal of building the space in the coming year.	<b>Médialab de            la Léo Van</b> was continued for another year.
<b>Sudbury, ON</b> <a href="#">Plan on a Page</a> <a href="#">Case Study</a> <a href="#">Website</a> Traditional and ancestral lands of the Atikameksheng Anishnawbek	<b>Future North</b> developed an online map of local services to make service providers more accessible to youth.	The <b>Miskwaawaak            Carpentry            Program</b> used Anishinaabe teachings to prepare Anishinaabe youth for carpentry careers and connect with Elders and mentors.	<b>Future North            on the Road</b> supported youth to bring their learnings from developing the online map to other communities around northern Ontario.	<b>Culture of            the North</b> delivered youth-led workshops and provided materials to schools to increase BIPOC representation and supports.	<b>Future North            on the Road</b> was continued for another year.

Community	Year 1 (2020)	Year 2 (2021)	Year 3 (2022)	Year 4 (2023)	Year 5 (2024)
<b>Yellowknife,            NT</b> <a href="#">Plan on a Page</a> <a href="#">Case Study</a> <a href="#">Website</a> <a href="#">News Coverage</a> Weledeh, Treaty 11	<b>YK Prep            Connect</b> paired youth with peer mentors for tutoring support and opportunities to try out possible employment interests.	<b>Hazhō Elexè            Łets'ėezhe</b> delivered land- based learning and connecting sessions for the majority- Indigenous youth participants.	<b>Don't Fake            It, Make It</b> connected young entrepreneurs with a makerspace, mentors, and employment support to start new small businesses.	<b>Youth in            STEAM</b> developed workshops for local youth out of the new makerspace to increase youth skills and success in science, technology, engineering, art, and math fields.	<b>Don't Fake It,            Make It</b> was continued for another year.
<b>Yukon</b> <a href="#">Plan on a Page</a> Kwanlin Dün & traditional territory of Southern Tutchone, Tagish, Tlingit nations			<b>Youth            Pathways to            Leadership</b> reached out to rural communities in Yukon to support youth leadership and build community capacity.	<b>Youth            Pathways to            Leadership:            Integrating            Education</b> delivered youth-led workshops on creating safe spaces for young people to local educators.	Integrating Education was renamed <b>Empowering            School            Communities</b> and was continued for another year.



**Fast Forward** by Charles Centenera

# FRAMING THE IMPACTS OF CIF INITIATIVES

While the following sections will examine the unique successes of individual CIF initiatives, this section outlines the most significant long-lasting impacts shared by all CIF initiatives. This framing provides greater context for success on three dimensions: for youth, for the community, and for broader systems, illustrating the many positive ripple effects of supporting young people.

It is also important to examine why seemingly small successes, such as high school graduation, adult mentorship, and connections with local leaders, represent revolutionary impacts in the lives of youth with so many barriers to success.

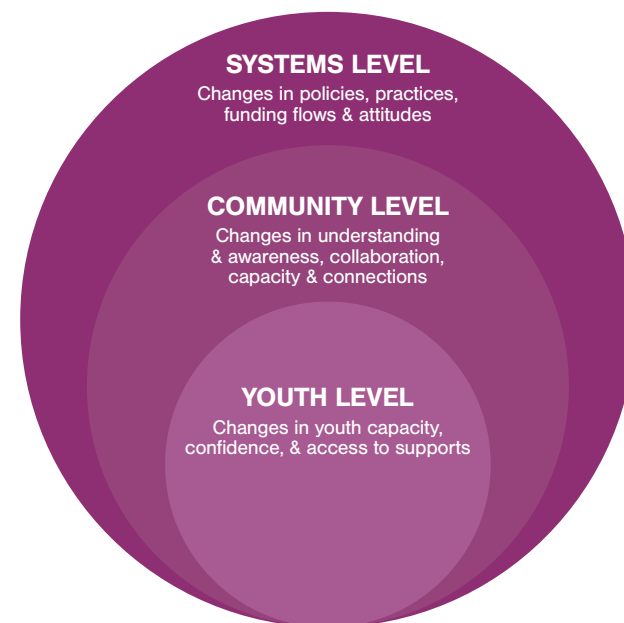
## IMPACT ON YOUTH

### For Youth Facing Poverty, Graduation is a Monumental Success

CIF initiatives are mostly carried out in rural areas, which can lack many of the support systems found in city centres. Youth across almost every community reported struggling to access food, housing, or other basic supports, and spoke openly about how unprepared they felt for life after high school. Covid-19 pandemic restrictions confounded this issue, impacting youth mental health and capacity to succeed in education and employment. Many Indigenous youth disclosed the stigma they have faced when attending school or accessing local services and spoke about the lack of strong adult mentors and Elders in their lives. Other young people experienced natural disasters such as severe flooding, the deaths of friends and family members, and medical issues while involved with CIF initiatives.

When youth experience this many intersecting barriers, survival must come before education success. While a young person with a strong

network of support may see graduation as an achievable and obvious next step, many of the youth involved in CIF initiatives do not have the supports to make this a reachable goal. Each CIF project seeks to address this disparity by creating holistic webs of support that connect youth with service providers, youth-focused organizations, peer and adult mentorship, and employment and training opportunities, among others. This approach has had astounding effects, all of which are explored in the following sections.



## IMPACT ON COMMUNITY

### Community Members as Champions of Youth Success

Each CIF grant is awarded to one youth-focused organization, but as mentioned above, grows to include complex networks of support. One element of these networks that is especially impactful are the adults who have found

success in the community as business owners, community leaders, or other supportive figures. As mentioned above, youth members of CIF initiatives are often severely lacking supportive adults in their lives, which not only limits their networks and references they can rely on to find jobs and training programs, but it also limits their opportunities to gain the employment skills and self-confidence necessary to succeed in education and employment.

Adult allies can help youth navigate the complex path from high school to employment by providing both emotional support and traditional supports such as holding job fairs and connecting youth with potential employers. Importantly, before community members can become champions of youth success, they must believe that their efforts will make a difference in the lives of young people. When community members experience or contribute to small successes early in the process of CIF initiatives, they grow in confidence and even begin contributing their own ideas and projects to the community. These new partnerships don't fade when each CIF initiative reaches the end of its funding period. Many communities shared how new adult allies permanently reframed their views on youth success, helping to promote a culture of support for young people beyond the initial project and timeline.

## IMPACT ON SYSTEMS

### Small Successes Attract Funders and Community Leaders

CIF projects are uniquely structured to create strong and beneficial connections with community leaders. CIF initiatives grow and maintain these connections through a series of small successes and unique pilot projects, which demonstrate to community leaders the power they hold to affect positive change in the lives of youth.

While many community leaders want to hear from young people, there often isn't a system in place to allow this kind of dialogue. Further, young people who are not used to feeling respected and listened to by authorities may be

guarded when engaging with people in positions of power. When CIF initiatives keep youth at the centre of decision-making and prove to community leaders that youth have meaningful opinions and capacity to collaborate, these partnerships become essential to an initiative's sustainability. Community leaders have fully funded some pilot projects to continue for the foreseeable future, donated space at community centres and sports arenas, shared initiatives with wider audiences, facilitated new connections, and scaled projects across school or political districts. They can be essential in securing funding and ensuring initiatives transition to permanent supports.



Forest Green by Daniel Sullivan

## EMPHASIZING SIX DOMAINS OF YOUTH SUPPORT

After the first year of implementing CBYF in communities, common barriers to youth academic and employment success were identified. These were organized into one of the following six domains; accessible education, employment, training & mentorship, holistic health & wellbeing, service navigation & access to supports, youth engagement & leadership, identity & social connection. In the sections below, we further define each domain and demonstrate how it impacts youth success. We also profile individual CIF projects, exploring how they have addressed domain-specific barriers to youth success.

# ACCESIBLE EDUCATION

## CONNECTING YOUTH TO EDUCATION SUPPORTS AND RESOURCES

Youth in rural communities often lack clear pathways from high school to post-secondary education, training programs, or employment. This can be compounded by other barriers including poverty, lack of adult support, and poor mental or physical health. Each CIF project is designed to connect youth with existing services and develop new projects where gaps exist. CIF initiatives:

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

## ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES

**Portage la Prairie's 2020 CIF initiative, Roving Campus**, partnered with the school system to support 22 full-time students who were all identified as "non-attenders" and were experiencing significant barriers to high school completion. Roving Campus' alternative curriculum emphasized hands-on lessons in the community, helping students experience a more direct connection between what they were learning and why it mattered for their futures. Teachers worked closely with students on projects that were tailored to their interests and helped them pursue employment opportunities to boost confidence and increase the chances of long-term employment success after graduation.

**According to the Portage la Prairie team, "100% of students who completed the program graduated or are on track to graduate with mature student status, in the next school year. Prior to entering the Roving Campus, none of the students were on track to graduate". Additionally, after the first year of the Roving Campus initiative, 30% of students were accepted at post-secondary institutions and saw success in their transition.**

This is a phenomenal change in both youth capacity and self-perception compared to the previous year. As one student of the Roving Campus initiative told the leaders, "No one ever asked me what I want to do. People usually tell me what not to do". The young people in this program had been labeled as under-achievers by teachers in their school system, something that had clearly impacted their treatment as well as their confidence. In addition, many of the

youth were experiencing compounding barriers to success due to poverty and anti-Indigenous racism. The incredible successes of youth in the Roving Campus project illustrates a learning we have seen across every CIF initiative: youth can achieve their education and employment goals when they have clear pathways to success, basic needs such as food and housing, and adult allies who believe in their success.

After a monumental first year, the Roving Campus project was incorporated into the Portage la Prairie school system as a permanent program and scaled to include grade 11 students. In 2022, the Roving Campus design was scaled to Digby, Nova Scotia, resulting in the **Digby Alternative High School CIF initiative**.

**Chilliwack's 2022 CIF initiative, The Attendance Incentive Program**, encouraged students with challenging life circumstances to raise their school attendance rates with prizes and celebrations for successful classes. Despite some minor complications at the beginning of the project, 529 students at two separate schools had the opportunity to participate.



Girlfriends/Photo Day 1975 by Erin Nantais

**A.D. Rundle Middle School maintained at least an 80% attendance rate each month, and Kw'iyeqal Secondary School increased their graduation rate by 27% over one year.**

These results are especially meaningful for students at Kw'iyeqal Secondary School, an alternative program for youth facing significant barriers to education success. School staff reported that youth in their classes were deeply impacted by the housing crisis, poor mental health, and lack of basic necessities. Kw'iyeqal's programming is designed to support students facing these barriers, but only if they attend regularly to take advantage of the support. One staff member wrote, "once students created habits of clear attendance, they started to see the impact their attendance would have on schoolwork and emotional well-being which in turn increased their attendance". The students who raised their attendance and successfully graduated during the funding year have since gone on to post-secondary programs such as early childhood education and addiction services. Others have found successful employment in the community.



My Passion to be a Pro  
by Ifeoluwakitan Adebowale



## TUTORING AND PEER MENTORSHIP

**Yellowknife's 2020 CIF initiative, YK Prep Connect**, connected students with older youth for tutoring, mentorship, and peer support. Students and their mentors were encouraged to attend tutoring sessions at two local service agencies, the Youth Centre and the NWT Career Centre, and schedule additional time with their mentorship pairings to explore potential academic or employment goals. In 2020, when Covid-19 restrictions resulted in the closure of many spaces, YK Prep Connect provided youth with much needed social time and safer 'third spaces' to gather outside of home or school. Of the initiative, one young person wrote, "the new people have introduced me to a path I would never have thought of in the past. It opened new doors for me that I had never expected when I learned how to read and write". Another participant mentioned that the tutoring and mentorship he received helped him choose a career path in music and inspired him to apply for further education.

**In an online feedback form, every respondent said that the program provided "immediate support for their schoolwork" and that they felt "more prepared to apply for a job". One respondent wrote, "finishing high school was challenging but I have my diploma and that is thanks to Yk Prep Connect... I'd like to help other people because if you help others, you will receive something good in your lifetime".**

Not only did the program help this participant graduate from high school, but it also inspired them to give back and become a mentor to other youth.

**Corner Brook's 2020-2024 CIF initiative, IGNITE Tutoring**, developed a free youth-run tutoring service designed to target youth who were in danger of disengaging from the school system. In their initial research, the Corner Brook leadership team found that there were no free tutoring



Matriarch Ninsstsiksi by Chataya Holy Singer

programs available in the area and that many families could not afford the cost of tutoring support. Additionally, the team [wrote](#), "we have observed that the loss of connection to the education system is occurring at the elementary age level. It is becoming more challenging to reintegrate students back into the school system due to barriers such as lack of family support, financial responsibilities and mental health issues". Rather than working to reintegrate students, IGNITE Tutoring chose to connect with students before they became disengaged to support their long-term commitment to school success and graduation.



Literathree by Aenea Olsen

One parent wrote of IGNITE tutoring, "the tutor was a vital part of my child's education this year and without her help she would have struggled and fallen behind more. With the tutor's help my child not only caught up but excelled in her math curriculum and is now ready for the next grade level." Another parent wrote, "thank you so much for your time. She went from getting 30s to 90s! I knew she could do it, but now she knows she can."

**Corner Brook's CIF project expanded its student engagement by almost 500% between its first and second year. In the third year, every student accessing the tutoring program moved on to the next grade or graduated from high school.**

**Laval's 2021 CIF initiative, Jeunes branchés**, focused on preparing youth for online school due to Covid-19 restrictions. When the project

began, schools in Québec had shut down with very little warning and many families were unprepared for virtual school. The Laval team wrote about how many students lacked access to internet, technology, or computer skills, and were in danger of dropping out of the school system. The Jeunes branchés tutors helped students navigate this transition through coaching calls and workshops.

According to the Laval team, two tutors used their experience on the project to find further employment in online tech support. Two other tutors felt so dedicated to the project, they chose to take over the leadership of the digital squad after the completion of the original term.

The confidence exhibited by the youth tutors is a major success as both went from first-time employees to feeling comfortable leading the entire program in under a year.

# EMPLOYMENT & MENTORSHIP

## INCREMENTALLY EXPANDING YOUTH EMPLOYMENT READINESS

To succeed in a chosen career, youth need a series of expanding opportunities that incrementally increase their capacity for success. These opportunities not only help young people practice their job skills, they also help youth feel confident in their own abilities, making them more likely to invest in higher education or training programs in the future. CIF initiatives:

- Helped youth gain necessary identity documents, resumes, and references to gain meaningful employment
- Connected youth with local business owners and career mentors for support and job opportunities
- Created new culturally significant training programs by and for Indigenous youth
- Designed makerspaces for youth hoping to develop small businesses
- Instituted microgrants to support youth employment and youth-run businesses
- Offered part-time employment to local youth as project leaders and designers
- Developed instructional courses on applying to jobs, budgeting, filing taxes, etc.

## ALTERNATIVE EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVES

**Chatham-Kent's 2021 CIF initiative, Ambition Incubator**, provided youth with the tools and experience to find employment through hands-on experience in a professional kitchen. The 16 youth participants were encouraged to take on roles in the project that appealed to them, and to attend workshops on navigating employment and managing their money. By the end of the year-long project, all 16 youth were employed in fields of their interest. According to the Chatham-Kent leadership team, "the program's growth and public image garnered interest from various parties in the community who saw the potential of having youth be in empowering positions (i.e. "look what they did, I didn't realize") – this has led to new partnerships forming as well as an openness to move beyond placation in the incorporation of youth voices beyond our CBYF initiative".

**After the success of the first year, business owners and other community members communicated their desire to become mentors and champions of youth employment success. They continue to host monthly workshops and set up job fairs in the Ambition Incubator co-op space.**

**Sudbury's 2021 CIF initiative, The Miskwaawaak (Red Cedar) Carpentry Program**, gathered 10 Anishinaabeg youth for an accessible carpentry program that focused on cultural connection in partnership with staff at the N'Swakamok Native Friendship Centre (NFC). Youth participants began the program by gaining the required certifications and constructing traditional medicine boxes alongside staff at the NFC. They also had a chance to hear teachings on

traditional beadwork, tobacco, and proper care for items such as feathers and drums. Finally, the youth built an arbour on the N'Swakamok sacred land, something the NFC can use for decades to come.

Youth participants reported that they had little to no connection to traditional teachings outside of the carpentry program, and that these supportive and culturally relevant relationships increased their self-esteem. Additionally, several young people involved in the program cited the supportive relationships and cultural teachings provided by the CIF program and the NFC as one of the reasons they were able to successfully complete this program even though they had experienced barriers in completing similar training programs in the past.

Additionally, half of all youth in the Miskwaawaak carpentry program were Anishinaabeg women, all of whom have stated that they have been inspired to continue with their careers in carpentry because of the program.



**Determination** by Krystal Chan



**Citizen Science** by Cassidy McAuliffe

## MAKERSPACES AND ENTREPRENEURSHIPS

**Yellowknife's 2022 and 2024 CIF initiative, Don't Fake it, Make it (DFIMI)**, established a fully equipped makerspace and woodshop to help young entrepreneurs develop and market new businesses. Along with an accessible space, the DFIMI staff provided training on using the equipment, held workshops on practical skills for small business owners, and paired each young entrepreneur with a mentor in a related field. Many of the youth in the program were balancing work and school, alongside other challenging life circumstances. The DFIMI leadership team took these barriers to success into account, providing money for groceries and other practical supports. According to the team lead, "at least 3 youth (all of which felt their business launched because of this program) were unavailable for extended periods during the program- in other programs they may have been disqualified from attending". Instead, all 9 project participants saw successes because of the accessible self-directed design. To support the DFIMI initiative,

Yellowknife created the 2023 Youth in STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) initiative to support youth interest in a career in these fields. The leadership team led members of youth-serving organizations on tours of the makerspace and held workshops for interested youth. The team's networking efforts resulted in the attendance of 45 youth and major partnerships with the Dene Nation and Tłıchǫ Government among others.

**Portage La Prairie's 2022 CIF initiative, the Portage Innovation Centre (PIC)**, followed a similar plan to the DFIMI model. In their final report, the team wrote that many young people are interested in developing a 'side hustle' to provide much needed supplemental income. To address this need, the team designed a makerspace complete with 3D printers, laser engravers, and other specialty equipment. Three youth were awarded seed money and a year of dedicated support from local professionals after winning a pitch competition, but all local youth were encouraged to make use of the space and the many free workshops focused on starting and running a small business.

**Saint-Léonard's 2023-2024 CIF initiative, Médialab de la Léo Van** consulted with local youth on the best way to design a makerspace that would benefit youth and the community at large. The youth-led accessible programming, workshops, and hands-on lessons conducted by 64 youth leaders attracted 181 local youth participants.

Over 2,200 youth leaders and participants took part in **Laval's 2022-2024 CIF initiatives, titled Pépinière d'innovation**, or Innovation Incubator. Rather than designing one initiative, the Laval leadership team chose to use their CIF funding to design a micro grant program that distributed \$4,000 in funding to 19 separate youth-focused and youth-led projects around the city of Laval. One initiative funded by the project engaged 30 young women aged 16-30 who were training for or working in construction. The group offered peer mentorship and networking opportunities

with established female construction workers. Another initiative offered free cooking classes to youth through a local community organization space. Every week, youth alternated between cooking meals and selling them through the organization space, giving youth opportunities to learn valuable employment skills and practice their leadership. Each initiative funded by the Pépinière d'innovation project focused on engaging youth in meaningful ways that would help them gain critical social-emotional skills they could use to find future employment success.



**The Struggle of a Single Mother**  
by Ifeoluwakitan Adebawale

# HOLISTIC HEALTH & WELLBEING

## INCREASING YOUTH CAPACITY BY PROVIDING BASIC NEEDS

CIF leaders recognized that when youth are able to access their basic needs such as food and housing, they have more energy to focus on their education and employment goals. These supports generally require a small monetary and time investment, but have significant impacts on youth success when offered in conjunction with education and employment initiatives. CIF initiatives:

- Provided food, transportation, technology, and money to youth in need
- Developed culturally significant mental health supports such as connection to Indigenous Elders
- Connected youth with peer mentors with similar struggles for advice and validation
- Found and provided meaningful employment for youth seeking extra income
- Assisted youth in their attempts to gain identity documents and treaty membership cards
- Empowered youth to explore their emotions and experiences through performance, documentary filmmaking, and roundtable discussions

## CREATIVITY AND HEALING

**Kahnawà:ke's 2021 CIF initiative, Healing Through Performance Art**, held a series of arts-based workshops designed around the interests of local Kanien'kehá:ka youth. Young people shared that they were looking for opportunities to express themselves through a mixture of art forms, including powwow dancing, nature painting, and public speaking. These workshops provided youth with culturally significant experiences led by Indigenous community members and used art as a medium to help youth express their mental health struggles in a supportive environment. One aspect of the program that was especially successful was the way youth were encouraged to drop in when they were free, allowing them to engage on their own terms around complex work and school schedules. At the end of the initiative, the community was encouraged to attend an open mic night and art show at a local restaurant. Of the experience, the team lead wrote, "a lot of the community came out to support our community's talented youth. It was highly expressed by the community that they would like to see this event happen again and more frequent[ly]". Not only was this type of community engagement beneficial for youth confidence, but it also illustrated to the community how important it is to support youth mental health and wellbeing.

**Chilliwack's 2021 CIF initiative, Channeling Youth Voices (CYV)**, supported a team of youth through the process of creating a documentary about their experiences of homelessness, lack of adult support, and mental health, among others. Youth researchers connected with a professor from the University of British Columbia (UBC) to

learn about research ethics and gained official research qualifications to perform interviews for the documentary. The research and documentary skills learned through the CYV initiative helped youth leaders gain resumé experience, academic mentorship, and opportunities to explore further education as a pursuit or career.

**Three youth leads were able to use the lead researcher as a reference for job applications, resulting in all three being successfully hired in the field of their choice. Another youth leader used her newly acquired research skills to strengthen her university application.**

The young documentarians greatly appreciated the opportunity to advocate for themselves to service providers and share their suggestions for making more accessible services. The team lead wrote, “these experiences have empowered youth in these spaces and contributed to their



**The Importance of Knowing Your Roots** by Alexandra Savoury

sense of responsibility to demand accountability from decision-makers in their community.” Service providers also reported how beneficial it was to hear directly from youth in such a unique way. At the completion of the documentary, several community initiatives recognized the power of the project and came together to host a knowledge mobilization event with over 75 community change-makers based on the issues raised in the documentary.

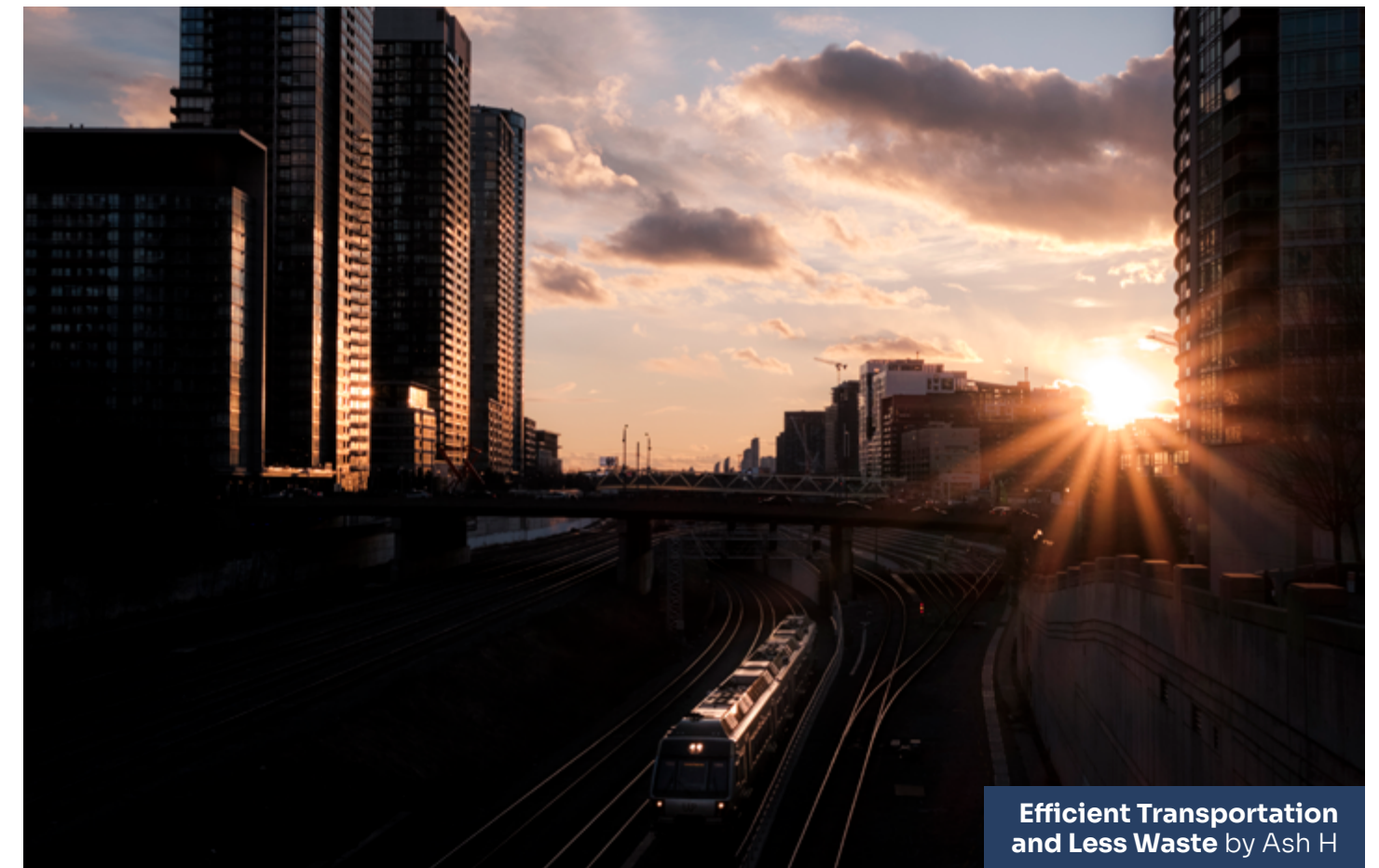
**Kahnawà:ke’s 2024 initiative, Weaving out Wellness**, planned a series of workshops on traditional Kanien’kehá:ka teachings such as food preparation, art, fire-starting, and fishing. However, before these workshops could be fully realized, the youth-led team chose to focus on expanding their network of youth participants and community members. Youth leaders presented the unique initiative in local high schools and CEGEPs and attended career fairs and other community events. During the year, the Kahnawà:ke team attracted almost \$27,000 in additional community funding for a 2SLGBTQ+ pride parade and held a youth summit.

**By the end of the first year, youth leaders had connected with over 460 youth and constructed significant networks of support for the planned Weaving out Wellness workshops. Team leaders are already planning the continuation of the Weaving out Wellness initiative in the coming year.**

**Chilliwack’s 2022 CIF initiative, Juvee [Juvenile] Skate**, provided an opportunity for over 70 youth to gather and practice their skateboard skills at a local park and sports arena. The project’s commitment to social engagement had significant impacts on youth participants. Several youth who had spoken previously about the lack of trusted adults in their lives became close with a mentor and local skate shop owner. According to the team lead, the youth began visiting the skate shop and spending valuable mentorship time with the owner. Three other youth found full time employment in their desired fields as a direct result of their connections with the project and many others gained important career connections and

resume experience. Beyond employment, the leadership team described witnessing youth demonstrating significant improvements in self-regulation, executive functioning, and other social skills. The team lead wrote, “we observed youth who have been described as being unable to self regulate fail to land tricks time, after time, after time. We watch them get up slowly, dust themselves off, regroup and try again. We see the youth use self regulation tools such as breathing deeply or just walking away for a second”.

The project attracted many youth volunteers who were excited to help set up the skateboard obstacles and teach other youth skateboard skills. The Chilliwack leadership team saw a major success in youth engagement, writing, “The youth are highly engaged in the program. The program has high attendance rates... youth engage with prosocial adults who are at [Juvenile Skate] as mentors. The program is very social and the youth are very engaged in social activities”.



**Efficient Transportation and Less Waste** by Ash H

## HOLISTIC YOUTH SUPPORTS

**Digby’s 2022 CIF initiative, the Transportation Project**, covered the cost of transportation for over 400 youth to attend school, job interviews, and work shifts. Young people living in rural areas in the community reported how vital the gas cards, bus passes, and other transportation supports were in ensuring they attended work and school. For several youth, this was the only reason they were able to afford transportation to a part time job, ensuring extra income for them and their families. In addition, youth reported feeling more connected and engaged, noting that their afterschool habits had changed to include more clubs and other social events.

In Moncton, the CBYF leadership team identified homelessness as one of the most pressing issues facing youth. **During their 2023-2024 CIF initiative Opening the Gate**, the team

discovered that there are no shelters or housing subsidies available for youth under the age of 19 in the entire greater Moncton area. In addition, the population of homeless youth in the community is very under documented. As the team wrote in their final report, to increase supports and change policies around youth homelessness, local organizations and politicians need to better understand the number of young people affected. The Opening the Gate team networked with youth serving organizations to gather data, spoke at conferences, and gave workshops on the initiative. In their second year, the team supported 18 homeless and marginally housed youth in their efforts to find stable housing and succeed in education and employment. By the end of the funding year, 14 youth were consistently attending high school and another was in post-secondary. The team intends to continue supporting marginally housed youth and advocating for systems change in the coming years.

After the resounding success of their youth skateboard drop-in program, the **CBYF Chilliwack team established their 2024 initiative, Beyond the Bells**. The team connected with local school boards to provide programming in the form of after-school clubs for middle school students aged 11-13 on school campuses. Each club was led by a classroom teacher and/or youth leader who designed programming based on the desires of the students— including time for sports, art, and social connection. As initiative leaders described, many of the young club members didn't have a safe and structured environment to go to outside of school. Youth were thrilled to find opportunities for social connection, while youth leaders benefitted from the experience as mentors. The team wrote in their final report, “the youth involved in facilitating our programs are getting to ‘test drive’ what a career in youth work may look like. Some of our youth are looking into careers working with youth due to their time with the Beyond the Bells programs”.

**In total, the program attracted 44 dedicated teachers and a stunning 2,380 youth as participants and leaders. In just one year, the program’s early successes attracted enough funding and support from the city and school boards, the program has reached sustainability and is already scaling to other schools in the region.**

As in many other CBYF communities, one reason the Beyond the Bells program gained so much support from local leaders is because of the long-term and continuous trust generated through years of successful CIF projects led by an extremely talented and dedicated CBYF team.



# SERVICE NAVIGATION & ACCESS TO SUPPORTS

## DEVELOPING AN INTEGRATED WEB OF SUPPORT FOR YOUTH

Accessing services can be a stigmatizing and emotionally vulnerable experience for youth, compounded by the fact that many young people do not know what services are available to them. CIF initiatives focused on integrating existing service providers, mental health supports, and adult mentors to create holistic ‘webs of support’ that helped youth overcome multiple barriers to success. CIF initiatives:

- Helped youth access previously unknown or inaccessible local services
- Facilitated workshops and other ‘get-to-know-you’ events with service providers to allay youths’ fears about accessing services
- Developed culturally meaningful forms of support such as beading circles and medicinal plant walks
- Provided social connection with youth and adults as an additional mental health support
- Empowered youth to speak directly to service providers and community leaders about their experiences accessing supports

## INCREASING ACCESS TO SERVICES

**Prince Albert’s 2021–2022 CIF initiative, Pihtikwe: Beyond the Doorstep**, brought together young people to create a [video directory](#) of youth-focused services in Prince Albert. Youth participants learned to use a variety of filming equipment to capture interviews with service providers and tour the service spaces. Each video was categorized and added to the online directory, helping provide better understanding and access for local youth-focused services.

In a [documentary film](#) about the initiative, youth filmmakers shared how much of an impact this project had on their own understanding of local services, while one young person wrote in the final report, “being from Prince Albert, I never knew all the services we provided for people struggling. It was an eye opener to see how many organizations believed in our community and wanted change for the youth here. I felt more connected in the empowerment I felt by speaking with them on their vision”. Another participant reflected, “my confidence has increased hugely. I became less unsure of myself... I’m very proud of myself because I was able to do things that made me nervous”.

As well as gaining new connections and networks with local business owners and service providers, all 10 youth joined the Youth Leadership Council where they use their newfound knowledge of local services to advocate for more safe spaces in Prince Albert. In addition, the Early Childhood Coalition hired the “CBYF Youth Video Company” to create a similar directory focused on early childhood resources in the community. One

youth participant was offered a communications job with one of the service providers they interviewed while others strengthened their resume skills and their networks in the community.

**Sudbury's 2020-2024 CIF initiative, Future North**, began with a similar goal to Prince Albert's project. After interviewing over 130 youth about their experiences with local services, the Sudbury leadership team found that "61.4% of youth surveyed stated that the most significant barrier they face when accessing information is that 'it is not clear what steps I need to take to access a service'. 53% of youth indicated that 'every resource is organized differently so it is hard to find the right information'".

To address these barriers to support, the youth leadership team created the Future North branded [website](#) with a [community map of services](#). The community map contains relevant

youth-focused services with information such as hours of operation, contact details, and location. Beyond the concrete details, youth also shared a desire for information on how safe the service would be for them. One young person wrote, "people need to realize. When you tell your story, you are reliving your trauma... Each time you fill out a package and forms, you have to go through it all again". For youth who have had past negative experiences interacting with service providers, reaching out for support carries the very real risk of encountering racist or culturally inappropriate programming, emotionally draining intake processes, or even just lack of communication about wait times and options. Having information about whether a service is Indigenous-run, or designed by and for the Trans community for example can be very helpful in dispelling some of these concerns.

**The Future North project was so successful, it attracted over \$18,500 in additional funding**



Three Feathers by JeenaLeigh Hill

**in its first year and won contracts with the City of Greater Sudbury and the Sudbury Youth Wellness Hub, offering expertise on youth engagement and pathways to education.**

In the second and third years of the initiative, the youth leadership team began visiting small communities around Sudbury to share the community map and the youth engagement resources they had created. According to the team lead, "going directly to the people is super effective and catches people off guard. People were so excited and eager with the concept of not having to come to us for the food and presentation". Having in-person connections and a simple interface for service information helped youth understand what services were available to them, and how they should access them.

**Digby's 2024 initiative, the Resource Awareness Project** attempted to create a directory of youth-focused resources and supports to increase service accessibility for youth. Inspired by the work of CBYF Prince Albert and Sudbury's Future North initiative, the team partnered with students at the Digby Alternative High School, showing them how to research and report on the resources available for youth. Unfortunately, the initiative ran into several roadblocks including insufficient funding and staffing, and concerns about the work involved in creating and maintaining a directory of services. The team chose to pause the initiative until those concerns could be addressed.

## CREATING WEBS OF SUPPORT

**Youth in Prince Albert's 2020 CIF initiative, Youth Accessing Digital Devices**, similarly reported a lack of knowledge around local services, or had negative past experiences when attempting to access services. To address the many challenging life circumstances of the 52 youth participants, the Prince Albert team adopted a plan of "unrelenting outreach", focusing on creating one integrated web of support. The first step was to gather a group of trusted adults and local Indigenous Elders who could hear a young person's specific concerns and help connect them to relevant



Youth Under Surveillance. Summer 2021 by Bakr Elfekak

service providers, ensure their basic needs such as food and housing were being met, help them access identification cards or treaty membership cards, and purchase technology to help them graduate from education programs. Alongside formal services, the Prince Albert team incorporated Indigenous tradition into their web of support. They ran traditional beading circles, connected with local Elders, and designed a "[How to Connect with an Elder](#)" infographic in collaboration with Dakota and Métis Elders and youth.

**The unrelenting outreach approach had significant impacts on the lives of young people. The Prince Albert team wrote, "youth who have been unable/unwilling to engage in counseling/ mental health support in the past have connected with Indigenous Elders and continue to see them for mental health support. One youth who was struggling with alcohol addiction was able to get sober and maintain that sobriety through connecting with one of our Elders. He attributes his sobriety to the connection found through CBYF".**

To learn more about how the unrelenting outreach model and the web of support impacted youth, please check out the case study "[Prince Albert Bridges the Digital Divide With Local Youth](#)".

# YOUTH ENGAGEMENT & LEADERSHIP

## EMPOWERING YOUTH AT THE CENTRE OF LEADERSHIP AND DECISION-MAKING

CBYF leadership teams acknowledge that youth are the ultimate subject matter experts. Youth have strong opinions on what initiatives and services they want and are much more likely to participate when their feedback is genuinely respected. Leadership opportunities in a CIF project often served as a stepping stone for youth, helping them gain relevant job experience and encouraging them to take up further leadership positions. CIF initiatives:

- Employed youth as leaders and subject matter experts on their own experiences
- Kept youth at the centre of all decision-making within CIF initiatives
- Empowered youth to join community leadership tables and other local leadership initiatives
- Facilitated peer mentorship opportunities between older and younger youth

## ENGAGING YOUTH AS LEADERS AND MENTORS

**Grande Prairie's 2021 and 2022 CIF initiatives, Youth Action Society (YAS)**, established a youth-led microgrant program. Youth leaders were involved at every stage of the project, from designing and developing the concept to recruiting youth to choosing successful applicants.

While the microgrants were designed to help youth achieve a range of education and employment goals, a reoccurring theme was technology access. Through the micro-grant program, over 30 youth received laptops and other technology to help them attend school and secure and maintain employment. According to the leadership team, "... one [youth participant] was able to get into college as a result of their grant. Others were able to purchase technology to support their learning, tools to support their apprenticeship, and... school tuition just to name a few". These supports are 'easy' fixes that require very little time and monetary investment from the youth-led leadership team but had life-changing results for the youth who received the microgrants.

**In 2023-2024, Oxford County established their own microgrant CIF initiative, which they titled Youth-Led Participatory Grant-Making.** The leadership council used several innovative approaches to ensure youth remained at the centre of all decision-making including the "youth speak first" model, asking that youth always share their opinions before the adult allies in the space. In their first year, the initiative gave \$52,000 to 452 youth involved in six separate projects. These projects included accessibility supports for youth with disabilities pursuing a driving license, the first Indigenous support

program in the community, and belonging events for female and non-binary high school students. In their second year, the leadership team connected with local funders to encourage the use of the accessible youth-led participatory strategies the Oxford County team have developed over the course of the initiative.

**The Chippewas of the Thames First Nation designed a unique CIF initiative in 2023-2024 titled Oshki-Bimaadiziwin Movers & Shakers radio station.** The goal of the radio station was to provide the community with youth-led audio programming while teaching youth employment skills in radio production and podcasting. At the beginning of the project, community members reported how important strong communication channels were for the First Nation, and how vital a radio station could be in improving communication. Despite some challenges recruiting young people, the youth leadership team were able to achieve podcasting credits from Fanshawe College, tour the CBC offices, and set up a designated space for radio equipment. In the second year of the initiative, 4 youth completed a micro-pilot of the radio station, attracting significant interest and excitement for the first broadcast.

## UNDERSTANDING YOUTH PERSPECTIVES

**Yukon's 2022 CIF initiative, Youth Pathways to Leadership (YPL)**, surveyed young people in the Yukon about how the territory could make pathways to youth leadership more accessible. To do this, the Yukon team found a youth representative who lived in Carmacks, Yukon and had deep connections to the community. In their final report, YPL staff discussed how rural Yukon communities were tired of seeing groups from Whitehorse parachute in for one-off initiatives without taking the time to really engage or listen to local youth. These colonial models did nothing to build capacity or strengthen youth leadership potential. However, by working to remove as many barriers to engagement as possible and making long-term in-person connections with communities, the YPL team was able to gather input from 70 youth.

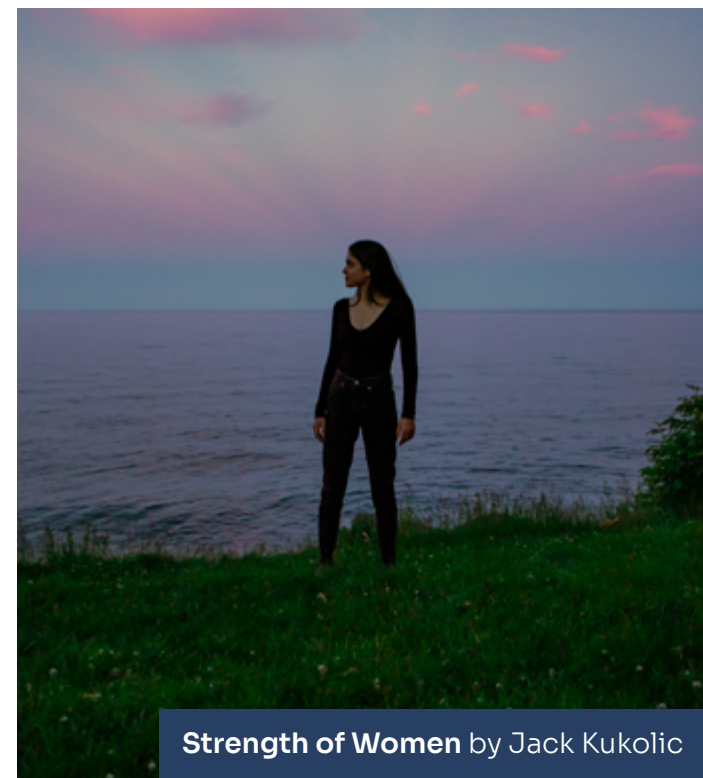
**This greatly exceeded the team's initial goal and provided valuable feedback to aid the design of future projects and initiatives. This data was so**



Youth Politics in Action by Krystal Chan

effective, the territory chose to use it as a guide when designing the Territorial Youth Strategy, meaning that rural youth were able to have their voices heard on a greater scale.

After the initial year gathering youth feedback, the YPL team learned that youth desired safer learning environments that better supported young peoples’ intersectional identities. To address this, the team created the 2023-2024 Empowering School Communities team, made entirely of youth. Together, the team designed and delivered two-hour workshops on creating safe spaces for Whitehorse educators and school staff. The team researched innovative approaches to create more supportive relationships between students and teachers and involved as many additional youth in the constantly evolving process as possible. The leadership team plan to continue expanding the initiative outside of Whitehorse in the coming year.



**Chatham-Kent’s 2023-2024 CIF initiative, Ignite**, began with a youth conference, designed to engage young people interested in making a difference in their community. Youth shared the issues they felt were most pressing in Chatham-Kent, which included poverty, bullying, and drug abuse. After the success of the conference, youth leaders developed and ran six community projects related to these themes, which constituted the only youth engagement initiatives using the by-youth for-youth model in the area. While the team had some struggles with engaging and recruiting youth leaders, young people associated with the project reported that they felt a greater sense of belonging in the community and 90% of Ignite participants felt that they had made a positive change in their community.

**Regina’s 2024 initiative, the Regina Youth Summit** gathered 71 youth participants from 9 high schools to discuss the barriers they faced in education and employment and to collaborate on meaningful solutions. Throughout the planning of the project, youth leaders aimed to engage hard-to-reach youth facing many challenging life circumstances. While the knowledge and experiences of these youth are vital additions to conversations around youth success, few youth-focused initiatives are accessible for them to attend. To address this issue, summit leaders invited trusted adult chaperones from youths’ communities, Indigenous advocates and Elders, and access to local service providers.

Youth summit participants benefitted from workshops on mental health, connecting to services, community leadership, education, career paths, and many more topics. In a survey after the summit, 87% of respondents said they would stay connected to CBYF Regina in the future.

## YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN CIF PROJECTS

Community Name	Youth Participants of CIF Initiatives	Youth Leaders and Designers of CIF Initiatives
<b>Year 1 (2020)</b>		
Corner Brook	26	0
Digby	60	29
Portage La Prairie	32	32
Prince Albert	54	4
Sudbury	138	138
Yellowknife	57	4
<b>Year 2 (2021)</b>		
Chatham-Kent	17	3
Chilliwack	34	6
Grande Prairie	69	5
Kahnawà:ke	215	15
Laval	25	25
Prince Albert	10	10
Sudbury	10	9
Yellowknife	197	10
<b>Year 3 (2022)</b>		
Corner Brook	129	29
Chilliwack	70	29
Digby	404	5
Grande Prairie	25	4
Kahnawà:ke	8	4



Laval	1234	0
Portage La Prairie	15	35
Prince Albert	10	10
Sudbury	273	4
Yellowknife	9	9
Yukon	75	8
<b>Year 4 (2023)</b>		
Chatham-Kent	27	16
Chilliwack	529	529
Chippewas of the Thames First Nation	14	20
Corner Brook	65	65
Digby	11	11
Laval	451	78
Moncton	6	6
Oxford County	452	29
Portage La Prairie	22	0
Prince Albert	27	15
Prince Edward County	488	38
Saint-Léonard	363	27
Sudbury	20	20
Yellowknife	45	6
Yukon	15	15

<b>Year 5 (2024)</b>		
Alberni-Clayoquot	66	29
Chatham-Kent	25	25
Chippewas of the Thames First Nation	11	4
Chilliwack	2,380	2
Corner Brook	164	9
Digby	30	0
Kahnawà:ke	465	10
Laval	536	N/A
Moncton	18	5
Oxford County	28	6
Portage La Prairie	50	4
Prince Albert	40	40
Prince Edward County	115	6
Regina	77	6
Saint-Léonard	181	64
Sudbury	15	15
Yellowknife	10	2
Yukon	27	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>9,969</b>	<b>1,561</b>

# IDENTITY & SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

## INCREASING YOUTH CONFIDENCE AND BELONGING IN THE COMMUNITY

Young people need to feel like valued and respected members of community to realize their potential in education and employment. Supportive adult allies and peer mentors can increase youth confidence and help them prepare for new challenges in the future. CIF initiatives:

- Established and rejuvenated community spaces for youth to socialize and receive support
- Supported youth in contributing to the community through collaborative projects
- Provided opportunities for communities to recognize the talents and contributions of local youth
- Connected youth with community members for mentorship and support
- Helped Indigenous youth connect to their culture through art, performance, and social events

## SUPPORTING CULTURAL CONNECTIONS

**Hao' Teakhón:ni, or the the Kanien'kehá:ka Traditional Food Cooking Program, is Kahnawà:ke's 2022 CIF initiative**, dedicated to revitalizing traditional Kanien'kehá:ka (Mohawk) growing, preparing, and eating practices. Over the course of a school year, 200 students at Karonhianónhnha Tsi lonterihwaienstákhkwa, a school in Kahnawà:ke, participated in a seed-to-table experience that involved planting, preserving, hunting, cooking, and eating traditional foods. The project was designed and implemented entirely by Kanien'kehá:ka people, most of whom were local youth. The project's final report reads, "Hands-on learning was... implemented at Karonhianónhnha through this project and is one of the greatest successes in engaging Indigenous youth. The Program Facilitator noted that certain students who had behavioural issues in the classroom setting did not have behavioural issues in the cooking and greenhouse classes. In fact, students with behavioural issues were actually some of the most involved and attentive participants in the cooking classes".

While the project was designed specifically for students experiencing barriers to success in education and employment, it ended up impacting the entire community. When students began bringing food home to share with their families, parents took an interest, and provided their own feedback on the experience. They were especially excited about a workshop on skinning and tanning moose hide to ensure no part of the animal was wasted.

**After a successful first iteration, the initiative drew outside funding and was continued for future classes of by Kanien'kehá:ka students.**

**Yellowknife's 2021 CIF initiative, Hazhō Elēxē Łets'eēzhe (We Are All Connected)**, focused on both peer and Elder support for almost 200 Métis, Inuit, and settler youth participants through a series of land-based activities such as campfire chats and a walking tour of traditional medicinal plants. The leadership team also designed a 'human library' model, where community members were invited to connect and share their stories and gifts with young people. These opportunities for mentorship were credited as the reason two young people discovered what they wanted to do for their careers— one wanted to be a pilot while the other decided on a career in counselling.

**Overwhelmingly, youth reported how meaningful it was to be out on the land making lasting social connections with peers and mentors after the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions.**

**Prince Albert's 2023–2024 CIF initiative, the Reconciliation Project**, supported youth-led workshops, videos, and conferences on the topic of reconciliation. Over the course of the initiative, the Prince Albert team engaged over 500 community members on school boards, city leadership tables, front-line agencies, and other service providers. The initiative found success in partnering with local high schools to offer alternative credits based on reconciliation and Indigenous knowledge. They also engaged city workers and service providers on the importance of understanding what reconciliation looks like in practice when working with the wider community. Not only did this project engage new networks and community members, but it also helped youth participants explore their own identities and understandings of reconciliation.

## YOUTH COLLECTIVES AND CONNECTIONS

**The Greater Than County Youth Collective is Prince Edward County's 2023–2024 CIF initiative**, focused on increasing youth belonging in the community. One of the first projects the youth leadership team chose to undertake was the creation of a youth-generated website as part of a nine-hour hackathon event.

**This project was very popular with youth, with one young person stating, "learning these skills have been so beneficial, and I will carry them with me for years to come. Due to this hackathon and the training I received, I'm now considering pursuing a career in graphic design!". In the second year of the initiative, attendance at hackathon events had increased by 400%.**

To further connect with youth, the team created and distributed a video discussing the issues they faced themselves growing up and inviting youth to join the collective. The youth leadership team also focused on sponsoring youth-centred events designed to promote belonging in the community. They provided the funds for girls at the local high school to have a hockey team and attended almost every game to support the players. They also helped to fund the school play, providing much needed arts engagement for local youth. After 2SLGBTQ+ youth shared their desire for more support and mentorship, youth leaders instituted a drop-in program for queer youth and held a pride event that attracted over 200 people from the community.

**Sudbury's 2023 initiative, Culture of the North**, similarly sought to build youth belonging in the community, especially for Black and Indigenous People of Colour (BIPOC). After an extensive youth-led study on the experiences of BIPOC youth in Sudbury's four school boards, researchers found that of the 220 young people surveyed, 67.8% reported that racism had affected their education. Compounding the issue, 68.8% of teachers' college students completing their placements at Sudbury schools reported that they were not comfortable with

the quality of cultural education received in their college programs. To address these issues, the youth team provided schools with a 'BIPOC library' of books, worked with local artists to create art pieces for local high schools celebrating the cultural identity of their students, and held workshops on Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) in high schools.

**The Sudbury team was astounded by the results of the project, which exceeded all their goals in creating more representation for BIPOC students in Sudbury schools. The team reported, “we witnessed shy students become bold and express their opinions. Youth really took initiative and we were blown away by the incredible ideas they had once they felt that we were actually ready to act upon ideas brought to the group”. One young person who was initially too nervous to join the project grew in confidence throughout the year and eventually ran for and won a spot on the school’s student council. She credited the project for her success.**

The project also attracted important connections and allies in the Sudbury school system and beyond. Because of the project’s successes, the Sudbury school board invited the youth leadership team to join their anti-racism strategy. The team even met with the Mayor in October to share their project and discuss further funding. The team hopes to expand to provide EDI training to every high school in the region, with several high schools already showing interest.

**In 2020, the Digby CBYF team facilitated their first CIF initiative, the Digby Area Youth Space (DAYS).** After hosting several feedback sessions with youth in the mostly rural Digby County, the leadership team learned that young people were struggling with social isolation and lack of mentorship due to the ongoing pandemic restrictions. Youth reported that they did not feel ready for life after high school and had little to no connections to help them access higher education, training, or employment.



Additionally, there was no designated youth space in the entire county, something the Digby team remedied by setting up the DAYS space. The entirely youth-led team designed workshops on resumé-building, budgeting, and other workplace skills as well as fun online events designed to provide youth with much-needed social time. As the pandemic restrictions eased, youth leaders organized **campfires, outdoor movies, and other social events for youth. The DAYS space continues to be a hub for organizations to network and youth to learn and connect with one another.**

# IMPACTS OF CIF GRANTS

This report set out to assess the impact of CIF funded projects, guided by the following four questions:

1. What impacts and insights did the Community Innovation Fund (CIF) Projects have on youth outcomes?
2. What impacts and insights did CIF Projects have on community capacity?
3. What impacts and insights did CIF Projects have on systems that affect youth?
4. What insights have been generated about the role of innovation and impact in the work of community change by CBYF’s CIF projects?

The experience of reviewing 58 of CBYF’s CIF projects has been both inspiring and frustrating. Because the assessment of impact in this report is occurring soon after these projects have been implemented, we are only seeing the initial impacts of these projects on the lives of youth and on communities. The inspiration comes from seeing the willingness of youth to provide leadership and contribute to the success of these projects; the creativity and ingenuity of communities in prototyping new solutions to address youth needs, and the demonstration of what becomes possible when entire communities are mobilized around a commitment to provide all young people with the support they need to succeed at school and beyond.

## THE IMPACT OF CIF PROJECTS ON YOUTH

To assess the impact that CIF projects had on youth outcomes, our review looked for evidence that demonstrated whether young people:

- Had greater access to opportunity
- Developed or strengthened their capabilities
- Experienced greater overall well-being
- Achieved greater academic and/or employment success

As a whole, all of the CIF Projects that were reviewed did contribute to one or more of the four areas of youth impacts listed above. Some projects – Portage la Prairie’s Roving Campus for example – achieved results for youth in all four areas and all projects generated results in more than one of these areas.

Another overall observation about the impact that CIF projects collectively had on youth is that while the total number of youth engaged and participating across all the CIF projects was impressive, some projects were able to reach more youth than others.

A scan of the achievements generated across all of the CIF Projects revealed seven important learnings about what young people need to thrive both academically and overall. Each of them is explored in more detail below.

## 1 Communities That Prioritize Youth Well-Being and Stability Achieve a Direct Impact on Success in Education and Employment

When young people lack food, stable housing or the technology they need to learn, they have less time and energy to focus on learning or work. To address this need, 25 CIF initiatives focused on strengthening overall youth well-being and increasing opportunities for success. CIF leaders provided transportation to school and work, access to local services, assistance in gaining identification cards, and many other supports, which allowed young people to focus on school and work success. As a result, youth whose basic needs were met through CIF projects demonstrated greater capacity to focus on and achieve their education and employment goals.

- **2,249 youth** had the opportunity to meet one or more basic needs through their involvement with CIF initiatives
- Youth in **8 communities** discovered life-long career passions, while others were able to graduate from high school, enter post-secondary institutions, gain certifications, and achieve their dream jobs among other examples

## 2 Opportunities for Young People to Connect are Increased thanks to Multi-Faceted, Integrated Support

Young people are most successful in education and employment when they have a strong foundation of support. However, several CIF leadership teams found that while communities had multiple services aimed at youth, young people did not know about them or were unsure how to access them. 20 CIF projects prioritized creating webs of support that integrated existing services with mentorship from CIF leaders to help youth better access the support they needed. This included inviting local service

providers to hold relevant workshops, running CIF activities out of non-profit spaces, providing culturally relevant mentorship for youth undergoing challenges, and supporting youth as they interacted with various systems and government programs.

- **Almost 10,000 youth** received opportunities for greater connection with adult allies and local services because of their involvement with CIF initiatives
- **18 CIF initiatives** also provided Indigenous cultural teachings and mentorship from elders for their majority Indigenous youth populations
- The final reports for 4 of these CIF initiatives specifically emphasized that, for many of their participants, the project was the greatest or only connection youth had to their Indigenous identities

## 3 Youth Leadership Capacity Increases When Their Input Is Valued and Respected

Ensuring that youth are involved in the decision-making that affects their lives is a core design principle of each CIF Project. When youth see that their perspectives are genuinely respected and acted upon, it creates a virtuous circle of trust that allows youth to more fully embrace their leadership potential.

- **1,526 youth** were involved in designing and developing CIF initiatives, with another 48 youth employed as project staff
- In all **58 CIF initiatives**, youth leaders had opportunities to build relationships and recognition within their communities, earn academic credits, broaden their perspectives, and build the self-confidence needed to set bolder goals for themselves
- Youth leaders of **11 CIF initiatives** specifically reported that their leadership experience with the project had resulted in either successful applications to further education or jobs in their desired field

## 4 Youth Gained Increased Confidence in their Abilities

Youth who attend job interviews or apply for further education are often asked to demonstrate confidence in their own abilities, yet have few opportunities to build that self-belief. One leader from Chatham-Kent wrote, “youth are more prepared than we might realize for employment, and in fact require confidence and self-esteem boosts through confirmation and reinforcement of knowledge they already have”.

- **88% of CIF initiatives** incorporated opportunities for youth to celebrate their skill development and employment successes
- **534 youth** spoke directly to local leaders and service providers to advocate for change
- **Youth in 10 communities** reported feeling more confident in their own abilities as a direct result of their involvement with a CIF initiative

## 5 Connecting with Peers through Mentoring Fosters a Sense of Belonging and Well-being

Youth experiencing multiple barriers often live isolated lives. Connection to peers who are going through similar experiences provides much-needed emotional support and practical advice. These experiences foster a sense of belonging and acceptance that improves their mental health and overall wellbeing. In addition, youth often feel safer and are more likely to share vulnerable experiences with someone their own age, rather than with an adult or authority figure.

- **4,420 youth** had specific opportunities to provide or receive peer mentorship through tutoring relationships, classroom settings, and youth-led programming
- **Final reports from 13 communities specifically mentioned the shift in confidence and capacity experienced by youth mentors**

- One young person in Yellowknife’s YK Prep Connect spoke about how their relationship with their mentor helped them discover a career passion in music
- Peer mentorship in Chilliwack helped 10 youth researchers experiencing many barriers to success advocate for changes to the youth-focused services in the region

## 6 Trusted Relationships and Belonging Contribute to Youth Success

It is vital that youth feel a sense of belonging in their communities in order to overcome barriers to success. Building strong social connections with peers, mentors, and other allies can help youth feel that their contributions are valued by those around them. This can boost their confidence and motivation to pursue their interests and goals. When youth feel that they are valued members of their community, they are more likely to take on new challenges and take advantage of opportunities that arise.

- **16 CIF initiatives** specifically empowered youth to engage with local political leaders and systems to advocate for better youth-focused support systems
- **Almost 60% of CIF project leaders** who engaged with local systems wrote about how the experience profoundly increased youth leaders’ confidence and understanding of their own capacity

## 7 Strong Social and Emotional Skills Build Success

Strong social and emotional skills provide youth with the necessary tools for success in education and employment.

- **All 58 CIF projects** provided youth with opportunities to take on leadership roles, try out career options, practice healthy communication, and build strong relationships with adult mentors.
- **Over 80% of CIF projects** focused specifically on using their webs of support to connect youth with employment opportunities, internships, or training programs. These low-risk opportunities allowed youth the chance to build their networks, create resumes, and feel more confident about their future education or employment plans

## THE IMPACT OF CIF PROJECTS ON COMMUNITY CAPACITY

As well as generating tangible impacts for youth, CIF projects built capacity and generated impact within their communities. Our assessment of the impact that CIF projects had on community capacity involved looking for evidence that a CIF project contributed to:

- Greater awareness about the strengths and/or needs of youth
- More collaboration between sectors, organizations and groups
- Development of new relationships and connections
- Increased community capacity to address issues and/or respond to new opportunities

Raising community awareness about the challenges, hopes and potential of young people was a common achievement of all the CIF Projects. This increased and deepened the community's collective understanding of youth needs and the specific circumstances and obstacles they must overcome to reach their full potential. This building of community awareness made it easier for CIF projects to mobilize various assets from across the community to support these projects in a variety of tangible ways.

The results and impact of some CIF projects helped reinforce that the community's collective contributions are vital to youth success. An impact that many CIF projects had on their communities was a contribution to the community's confidence and commitment to investing in the success of young people. Another impact of CIF projects was their ability to demonstrate the contributions that youth bring to the well-being of their community and the value this contributes both now and in the future.

The review of the CIF projects revealed the following learnings related to community impact:

### 1 Communities Have the Capacity to Address the Complex Issues Youth Face

CIF initiatives provide communities with essential infrastructure that is needed to support the success of their young people. These initiatives create valuable incentives to take action together by developing and learning from clear, tangible projects to promote youth success while strengthening the social fabric of the community.

- CIF projects supported **over 2,700 youth** to engage with local leaders, politicians, business owners, and other community members
- **35 initiatives** directly engaged community members. These experiences allowed them to experience firsthand the vital role they played in supporting youth success, which increased the likelihood of their continued involvement
- **4 final reports** mentioned the ways community members voluntarily began discussing and designing further youth-focused initiatives as a result of their increased understanding of their own capacity to contribute to youth success

### 2 When Communities See Project Successes, They Are More Likely To Participate In The Future of the Initiative

A focus on creating “quick wins”, is a real strength of CIF Projects and the results these projects generate frequently inspire continued involvement. When small-scale projects like this one generate further funding, their impact can ripple out and lead to greater investment from within – and beyond – the community in the future of its young people.

- **18 CIF initiatives** have become sustainable and/or expanded as a result of early successes
- **4 initiatives** were replicated in other communities across Canada and all 20 communities learned from each other's successes to create more engaging initiatives

### 3 Community Members are Able and Willing to Contribute To Youth Success

All 58 CIF projects successfully engaged a diversity of people beyond the typical players in the education and youth-service sectors. Local business owners, politicians, board members and interested residents were among the various stakeholders that participated in the implementation of one or more of the CIF projects. Welcoming the involvement from people with a variety of backgrounds, professions, and walks of life contributed fresh perspectives and learnings that are necessary to create unconventional solutions that resonate with youth and can be tailored to their needs.

- **100% of CIF projects** engaged diverse community members as mentors and support systems

- **16 CIF projects** focused on connecting Indigenous leaders and community members with **1,155 Indigenous young people** for knowledge sharing and emotional support
- Final reports in **4 communities** described the meaningful connections that happened when youth were able to find commonality with their new mentors through shared cultural or ideological identity

## THE IMPACT OF CIF PROJECTS ON SYSTEMS

Systems level impact is an important focus that is required to achieve high-impact lasting change on a complex issue. Rather than addressing an immediate problem, the work of systems change intentionally focuses on identifying and addressing factors that contribute to and perpetuate the very issues that we are working to fix. While a program can help a small number of youth to “beat the odds,” a systemic solution changes the odds for all youth which leads to a greater, longer-lasting impact.

Evidence of systems-level impact generated by CIF projects included:

- Greater alignment between existing programs and services
- Changes in organizational and/or public policy
- Changes in organizational practice
- New funding flows
- Shifts in power dynamics

Learnings from a review of the systems-level impacts that were generated by CIF projects include:

## 1 Successful Prototypes Increase the Willingness of Funders and System Actors to Invest in Innovative Ideas

CIF projects are intentionally structured to deliver short-term, measurable results for youth and communities. When a CIF project's novel solution generates positive outcomes, it demonstrates proof of concept that can inspire funders and other system partners to make significant financial, human, and/or in-kind investments to continue or expand the project. For example, the quantitative and qualitative results generated in one year by Portage la Prairie's Roving Campus CIF project led to many of its students wanting to act as ambassadors and mentors for the project; its teachers being recognized as "Teacher of the Year" for the province; the school board partner committing additional resources to continue



Like Oceans, We Rise by Mika S

the project; and, the securing of a **\$250,000 grant** to continue the project from a new funder. Of course, the short-term nature of CIF projects means that they may need more time to be ready for further funding, but **at least 12 CIF initiatives** have already attracted further funding and partnerships between 2020 and 2022, ensuring they could continue to expand their contributions to youth success.

## 2 Systems Changes Related to Youth are More Successful When Youth are Involved in Their Design and Delivery

As discussed by several CIF leadership teams, most local politicians, business owners, and funders want to hear directly from the youth they are supporting. Engaging youth at all levels of a CIF project helps ensure the project is meaningful to the youth it is trying to serve and makes it easier to identify systemic barriers. Youth can also serve the project's "trusted messengers" to engage other youth, and are powerful ambassadors when engaging stakeholders and the whole community.

- **Over 4,000 youth** were engaged with CIF projects that engaged directly with local changemakers or encouraged youth to become changemakers in their own right
- When youth actively participate and contribute to systems and policy changes, the likelihood that these changes will positively address their barriers and aspirations is increased. For example, feedback from **75 youth participants** of the Yukon's CIF project directly informed Yukon's youth territorial strategy

## 3 The CIF Projects Have Been Effective at Eliminating Systemic Barriers That Limit Youth Success

All 40 CIF projects addressed at least some of the systemic barriers that limit young people's capacity for success in education and

employment. The often unique approaches of youth-led projects illustrated the importance of listening to youth input in conjunction with conventional methods to best meet youths' needs. Projects centred around drop-in skateboarding sessions, open mic nights, online trivia, and campfire chats, among others, provided youth with both engaging activities and access to a wide array of support systems. Importantly, some of the barriers that youth face in education and employment success, for instance treaty membership cards and ID cards, transportation, access to service providers, and work references, are "easy fixes" that can have tremendous impact on a young person's success

- CIF projects were able to engage **almost 10,000 youth** over the span of 5 years, ensuring that youth in all communities focused on education had fewer barriers to success in education and employment

## LEARNINGS ON THE ROLE OF INNOVATION IN COMMUNITY AND SYSTEMS CHANGE

Our review of the CIF grants has confirmed the necessity of innovation to achieve meaningful impacts on youth success in school, work and life. Improving current programs and systems is necessary but alone will not be enough. Innovation is a driver of transformation. It requires us to deepen our understanding of the issue of youth success, and test our assumptions about what is needed and what is possible in order to create new options and opportunities.

Individually, the CIF Projects have developed and tested a multitude of different solutions to address youth needs. Collectively they have demonstrated the value and necessity of cultivating a diversity of ideas. This is important because achieving long-term impact on this issue will likely require several innovative solutions that are loosely aligned. It is highly unlikely that a single innovative solution will be able to address the complexity of this issue.

Three learnings about the role of innovation in the work of community and systems change have been identified. Each of these is explored in depth below.



Rich in Culture by JeenaLeigh Hill

## 1 Short-term Innovation Projects Play a Valuable Role in Achieving Long-term Impact

In spite of their short-term nature, CIF initiatives have become catalysts for impacts that extend far beyond the lifespan of the grants themselves. The short term successes of CIF projects can prove to communities, funders, and youth themselves the importance of investing in youth success.

- **54 CIF projects** have already been successful in attracting additional funding from outside investors, organizations, or community members
- **100% of CBYF communities** continued successfully supporting local youth after the one-year funding window
- While some communities experienced difficulties engaging youth or organizing events, especially as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, the leadership teams of **all 58 projects** persevered to build community awareness and support for future initiatives



Vancouver Climate Strike by Krystal Chan

## 2 Supportive Infrastructure from Tamarack and Connection to Other CBYF Communities was Crucial for Success

Field Catalyst Intermediaries, like Tamarack, play an essential role in promoting the success of Collective Impact projects. Tamarack provides CBYF communities – and their innovation fund projects – with regular coaching, tools and support to translate their ideas into action. We also connect – both virtually and in-person – the communities to each other to accelerate learning and the sharing of ideas.

This organizational support from Tamarack and peer support from other CBYF communities has been vital to the success of CIF projects because of the structure, guidance, and encouragement that it provides to community leadership teams. This is demonstrated by the fact that communities have been adopting – and adapting – each others' successful strategies and project

designs. One significant example is Portage La Prairie's Roving Campus project, which has been adopted in the CBYF Digby community.

## 3 CIF Projects Reinforce the Value of Collaboration and CBYF's Convening Role

The success of the CIF projects is a powerful demonstration of what communities can accomplish when they work together, across sectors, and keep the voice of youth at the centre. CIF projects create opportunities for a diversity of groups to work together on a common goal, establish new relationships, and experience what can be accomplished by working together. Such collaboration rarely happens spontaneously. CBYF Local Initiatives provide communities with the infrastructure needed to convene across the community and facilitate the development and implementation of shared strategies and action plans.

# CONCLUSION

This review has confirmed that CIF Projects were successful in generating an array of impacts for young people and communities, and were also able to identify and address systemic barriers that undermine youth success in education, employment and life. The diversity of these projects has developed and tested a multitude of new, creative solutions for meeting the needs of youth. This provides other communities with a more robust array of options to consider for how to support their young people and makes it simpler and easier for them to adapt them for their own communities.

The CIF projects have also been a rich source of learning. There was tremendous variety in the CIF projects and yet clear and consistent learnings emerged that offer useful advice about youth needs and how to meet them, the value of a whole community response to supporting youth, and the importance of identifying and addressing systemic barriers.

The CIF projects have highlighted the need and benefit of youth and community-driven innovation and its ability to infuse the fresh thinking necessary to develop creative solutions

that effectively support youth to succeed in school, work and life. They have illustrated the importance of dedicated resources and a supportive local infrastructure to facilitate community innovation and demonstrated how a national Field Catalyst Intermediary can support community innovation to flourish by accelerating and amplifying its impact.

These projects have demonstrated that youth and communities are willing and able to meaningfully contribute to development and implement projects that support youth to succeed. They have also confirmed that the ingenuity and insights of youth and community are critical to the development of innovative solutions. These projects have also created immediate – and possibly long-term – positive impacts for youth and communities.

Finally, these CIF projects have developed and tested an array of promising ideas and options to support youth that can be scaled and replicated while also generating valuable learnings about what youth need and what's important about how those needs are met.



Those Summer Days by Jack Kukolic

## COMMUNITY IS A VERB.

## EMPOWERING ACTION, INSPIRING CHANGE.

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

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

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

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