

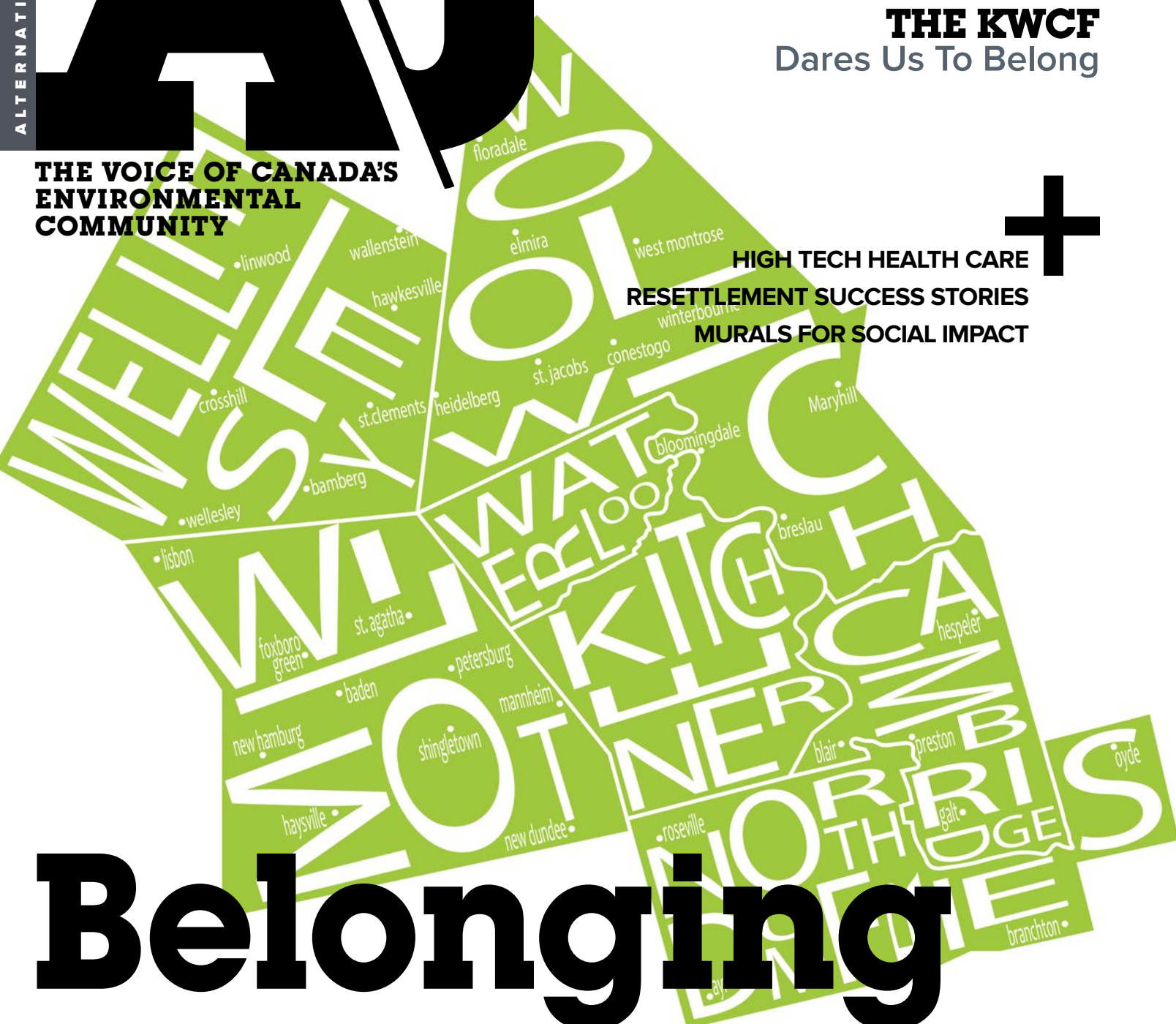
# AAJ

**THE VOICE OF CANADA'S ENVIRONMENTAL COMMUNITY**

**ADRIENNE CLARKSON**  
"Canada Is A Project"

**AT THE Y-M-C-A**  
A Highly Social Safety Net

**THE KWCF**  
Dares Us To Belong



**HIGH TECH HEALTH CARE**  
**RESETTLEMENT SUCCESS STORIES**  
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# Belonging

**Waterloo Region's work to build a stronger sense of community holds vital lessons for Canadian environmentalists.**







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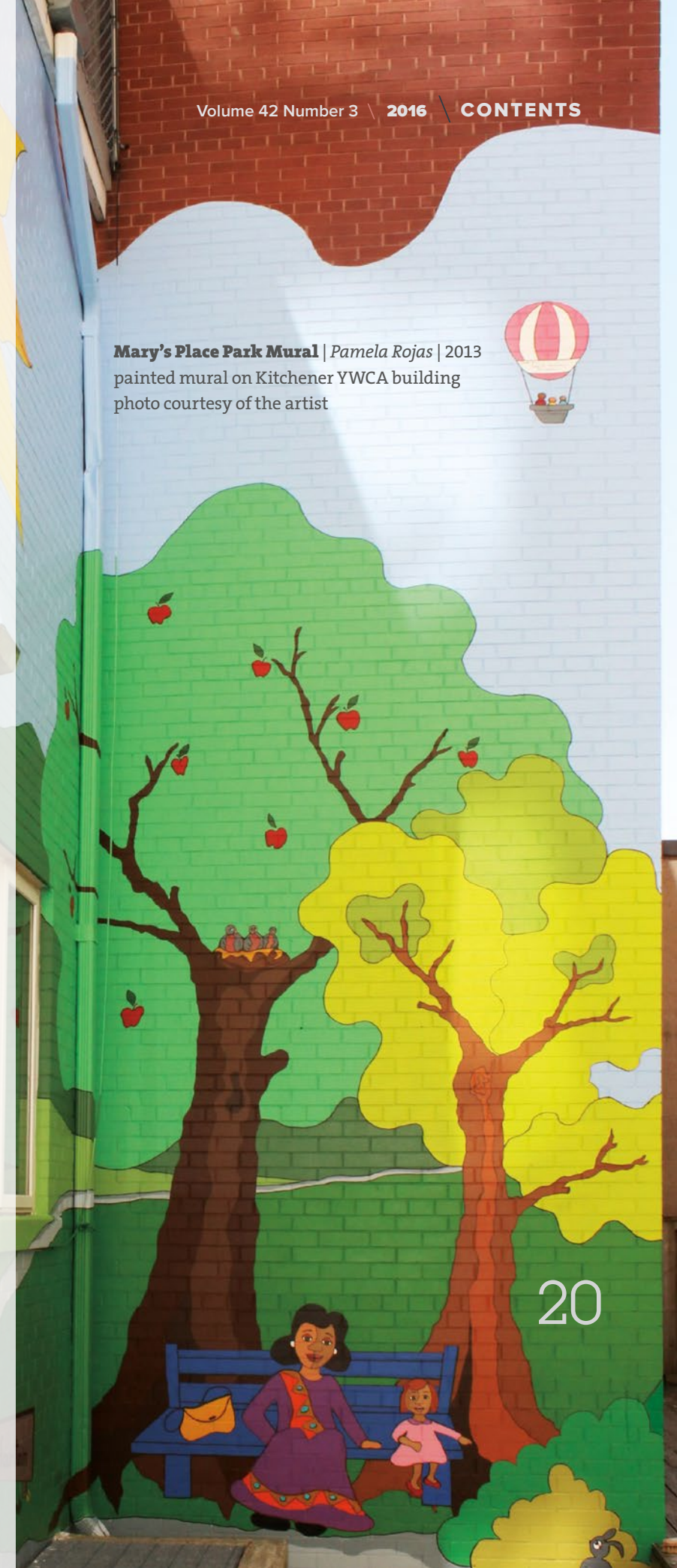
# AJ

**THE VOICE OF CANADA'S  
ENVIRONMENTAL  
COMMUNITY**

## **BELONGING**

- 7 Editorial** David McConnachie  
Foundations of Belonging
- 18 Dare To Belong**  
The Kitchener and Waterloo Community Foundation  
We each have a role to play in community-building.
- 20 For The Common Good**  
Community Foundations of Canada  
Belonging is a powerful catalyst for healthy communities.
- 26 Walk With Me** Kathryn Storring  
How the House of Friendship engages at a human level  
with a compassionate, listening ear.
- 32 Health Care Meets High Tech** Laurie Snell  
New med-tech hub plugs in high tech solutions to  
enhance a hospital's legacy of healing.
- 36 Community Medicine** Bruce Lauckner  
Collaboration leads to a 'whole-of-community' approach  
to health.
- 40 Proactive Intervention** Teghan Barton  
The Connectivity Table is a groundbreaking new solution  
that asks agencies to pool their expertise to provide  
innovative responses to high-risk situations.
- 42 State Of Belonging** Teghan Barton  
Canada's 26<sup>th</sup> Governor General, the Honourable  
Adrienne Clarkson, explains the value of belonging.
- 48 Stronger Together** James Glave  
Four groups get together to collaborate on fostering a  
vision for a low-carbon future.
- 51 Psychology Of Green** Lexy Halley  
For Sustainable Waterloo Region, building for the future  
is more than a motto.
- 54 Seeds Of Change** Veronika Szostak  
Four leading environmental groups in Waterloo Region  
share their thoughts on belonging.
- 56 Our Team** David McConnachie  
The YMCA has evolved to become a highly social safety  
net for communities.
- 62 Paying It Forward** Semini Pathberiya  
The lessons learned from past resettlement efforts  
helped shape the success of Waterloo Region's work to  
help today's Syrian refugees.
- 68 Power of Art** Lauren Judge  
The Pomegranate Mural Collective helps communities to  
collaboratively paint a vibrant vision of the future.
- 72 Creating Belonging** A\J Staff  
How building a sense of belonging is relevant to the  
Canadian environmental community.

**Mary's Place Park Mural** | Pamela Rojas | 2013  
painted mural on Kitchener YWCA building  
photo courtesy of the artist







12



48



36



**COVER** "Typographic Map of the Region of Waterloo" by Louise Jessup. Louise is from Kitchener and creates typographic neighbourhood, county and country maps, guaranteed to add a sense of community to any space. You can see all her maps at [etsy.com/shop/AllOverTheMapStudios](http://etsy.com/shop/AllOverTheMapStudios).

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**NEW!**  
Turn the page for **AJ online** features.

## ALSO FEATURED

### 76 Global Citizenship

Jack Parkinson  
Matt Foster founded *Civis Mundi Sum* to empower a movement for positive global activism.

### APPETIZERS

- 4 **AJ Online**
- 8 **AJ Creators**
- 10 **A Letter to the Editor**
- 10 **Footprint in Mouth**  
Japan's whale "research"
- 11 **In Brief**  
Research Digest; Investors Watch Tesla; PlanetInFocus Film Festival; The Muralist

### IN REVIEW

- 75 **Boundary Layer: Exploring the Genius Between Worlds**, Kem Luther, reviewed by Cheryl Hendrickson
- 78 **Community Vitality: From Adaptations to Transformation**, Anne Dale, Rebecca Foon, Yuill Herbert and Rob Newell, reviewed by Sally Lerner

### COLUMNS

- 74 **#CreateChange**  
Tzeporah Berman  
Good campaigning is about driving the conversation.
- 80 **Acceptable** Robert Gibson  
Many approvals of controversial undertakings rest on an obsolete standard.

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## A Governor-General's Journey



The Right Honourable Adrienne Clarkson (Canada's 26<sup>th</sup> Governor General from 1999-2005) has experienced tragedy and triumph in a life's journey that has seen her travel the country and the world as Canada's highest representative. Madam Clarkson shares extended lessons gleaned from her book, *Belonging: The Paradox of Citizenship* and explains why we can be both part of Canada as a country, and part of every other person who shares our land, our values and our history. [ajmag.ca/clarkson](http://ajmag.ca/clarkson)

## ISLAM AND ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE REFUGEES & BENEFITS OF BELONGING



**Indigenous housing**  
Shelagh McCartney, Jeffrey Herskovits & Kathryn Trnavsky reconcile community health concerns with Indigenous housing. [ajmag.ca/indigenoushousing](http://ajmag.ca/indigenoushousing)



**Climate refugees**  
Semini Pathberiya investigates climate change, the Syrian war, refugees, and considers the 200 million more climate refugees projected for 2050. [ajmag.ca/climate-refugees](http://ajmag.ca/climate-refugees)



**Islam & Environment**  
Tammara Soma explores the deep connections between the Islamic faith & environmental awareness and protection – from historic roots to modern day innovations. [ajmag.ca/islamenvironment](http://ajmag.ca/islamenvironment)



**Better Greenbelts**  
Andrew Reeves in a special report argues for the development and protection of stronger and more vibrant near-urban "greenbelts" modeled on Ontario's 10-year old success story. [ajmag.ca/bettergreenbelts](http://ajmag.ca/bettergreenbelts)



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# Foundations of Belonging

**WE ARE SO VERY PLEASED** to be sharing this special issue of *Alternatives Journal* with you. It was developed in collaboration with The Kitchener and Waterloo Community Foundation (The KWCF), and our shared journey of discovery began with a goal of exploring the concept of “belonging” in its myriad of meanings.

The KWCF fosters programs and solutions that help individuals and groups to enhance their sense of belonging within Southern Ontario’s fast growing Waterloo Region.

As we developed this issue, we wondered if the community-building stories about enhancing a sense of belonging would be transferable to the Canadian environmental community. Nearly a half century young, our movement is only beginning to understand the importance of collective impacts and unified voices.

We need to build stronger bonds within and between environmental groups across Canada – and we need to build more bridges to average Canadians. A strong, healthy and vibrant environmental community will welcome everyone already involved in our collective work *and* seek to help those finding their place as newcomers to our cause. Thankfully, there are a lot of lessons to be learned and insights to be gleaned from the real-world work of physical place-setting in Waterloo Region.

In this issue, you’ll read about long-time nonprofit organizations evolving their operational models to address changing community needs – and, in doing so, finding new and unexplored opportunities. You’ll read about the collective efforts by key civic stakeholders to foster deeper and more meaningful collaborations and cross-disciplinary approaches to address social challenges manifesting,

in different ways, in all of their individual practice areas. You’ll learn how (and why) a community centre mindfully repositions itself to become a true centre of community belonging by repurposing existing services and pioneering new innovative programs to serve a vital need.

There are stories of businesses doing good, and of do-gooders doing business. There are stories about newcomers finding their way, and about those more established citizens seeking to pay it forward by helping to smooth that journey to acceptance and inclusion for others.

While many of the stories are local in nature, and in geography, to Waterloo Region, the lessons are universal to everyone working to build stronger, more vibrant and more cohesive and collaborative communities, be they place-based locales or cause-related movements.

I hope you enjoy this issue. It has been a labour of love, developed with the much-appreciated support and encouragement of The Kitchener and Waterloo Community Foundation. There is something magical in the air (or water) in Waterloo Region. There’s a spirit of barn-raising new infrastructure, bootstrapping new organizational developments, and beta-testing new ideas to address existing challenges and to develop future opportunities.

We are proud to share with you these stories and insights from the physical community in which **AJ** lives (and works). We hope this issue of *Belonging* inspires your community building initiatives. And we invite you to share your own belonging and community building stories with us. **AJ**

David McConnachie is the publisher of **AJ**.

[editorial@alternativesjournal.ca](mailto:editorial@alternativesjournal.ca)



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- to provide critical and informed analysis of environmental issues;
- to promote an understanding of "environment" in the broadest sense of the word, including social and political dimensions of environments;
- to reflect a Canadian perspective informed by an understanding of global issues;
- to stimulate dialogue and exchange of information among environmental activists, academics and professionals; and
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This journal has an inclusive language policy. All manuscripts, with the exception of poetry, will be edited to eliminate sexist terminology. In quotes, sexist language is removed and replaced by alternative terms in square brackets.

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## A\J CREATORS

**MEET THE TEAM** who helped deepen our sense of BELONGING. Intrepid, impassioned and committed to making their little corners of this world a better place, our contributors shared their insights and perspectives in helping to answer the question: how do you build better communities? The Belonging theme section contributors are:

**The Kitchener and Waterloo Community Foundation** is an organization dedicated to improving the lives of those within the KW Region.

**Bruce Lauckner** is the Chief Executive Officer for the Waterloo Wellington Local Health Integration Network where he works closely with clinicians and community partners. His expertise is in public administration and policy and he blends that with a passion for public health and community development.

**Kathy Storrington** is an award-winning journalist with over 25 years experience covering breaking news and in-depth stories from the Waterloo Region. She works as a freelance editor and served as the theme editor for this issue of AJ.

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**Veronika Szostak** is a student at the University of Waterloo in the Environment and Resource Studies program. She is the Editorial Intern at AJ and aspires to become a journalist hoping to blend her love of art and passion for the environment.

**Teghan Barton** is an editorial assistant at AJ. She has a BA and MA in Canadian Studies and her expertise is in the way in which Canadian identity is formed and told through storytelling.

**Jack Parkinson** is a graduate of Conestoga College's print journalism program and is an editorial intern with AJ.

**Selina Vesely** is a recent graduate of the University of Waterloo's Global Business and Digital Arts program and works with AJ as a Graphics Assistant. \

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**Faith & Change**

"These days, there is much terrible news on climate change. One may now choose from a wide variety of YouTube videos that offer reasons why their authors think humans will be gone by 2030 – 15 years away!

Consequently, it was with mounting disquiet that I read through the *Faith in Earth* issue of *AJ*. I haven't got a lot of faith in those who say, "I have faith in the future because I have FAITH" (Ursula

M. Franklin, *AJ* 42:1, p. 80). That quintessentially circular argument attaches to almost every voice in the magazine: Atwood "believes," McKibben "hopes," the ghosts of Julian Simon and Pollyanna are much in evidence. But do we have time for them? Instead, can we move on to approaches that may yet solve the crisis of the biosphere? Why not devote an issue to biological carbon capture, another to

a tough-minded critique of carbon taxes, renewables, and the much-touted recipe for vegan panacea, another to considering how to reduce population quickly and humanely, and another to vigorously restoring nature. If, after a hiatus of 10,000 years, we re-enter into a bioremediating partnership with Nature, we may yet make it."

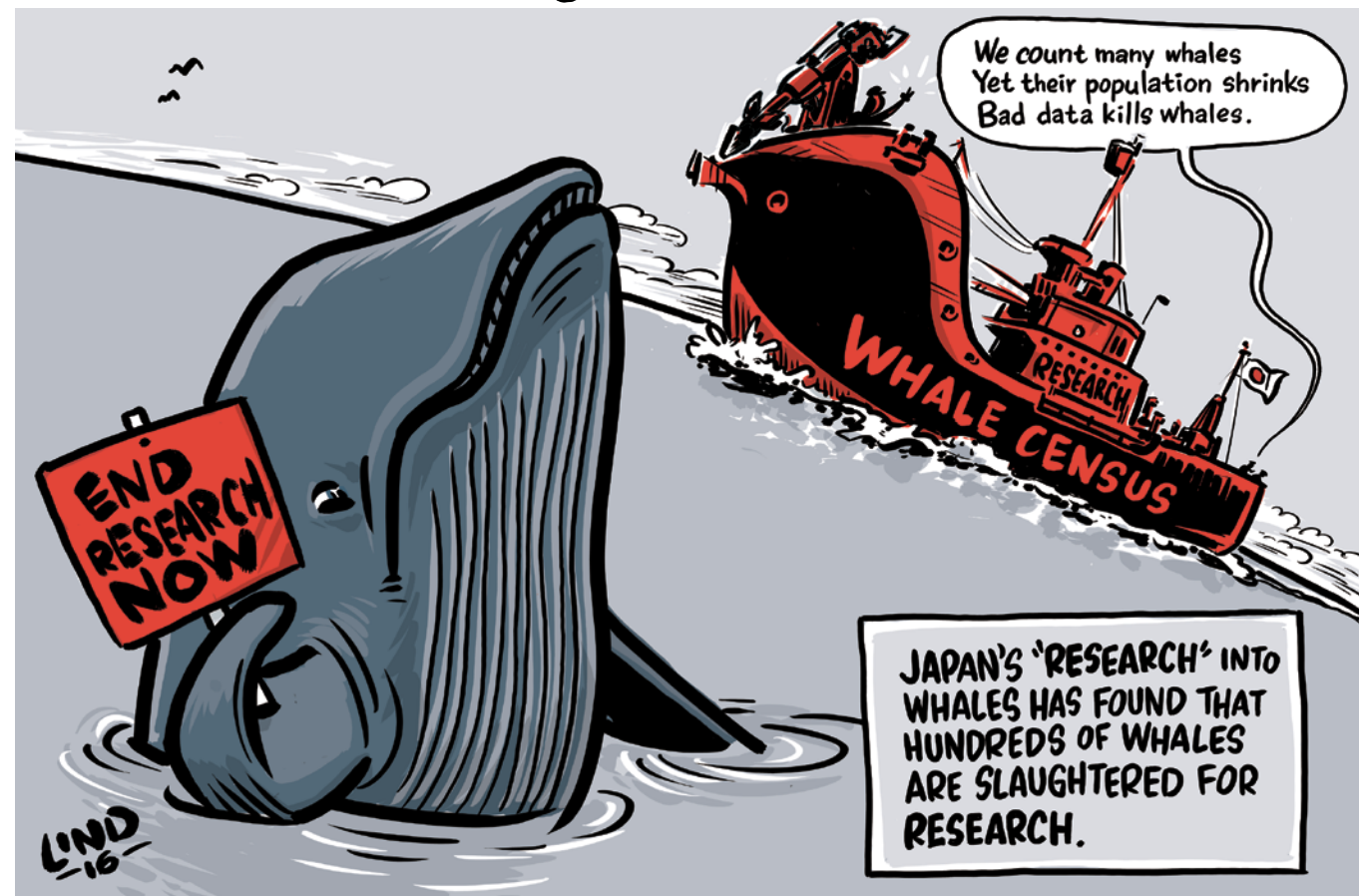
– Michael Purves-Smith, *Waterloo*

*Publisher's Note: After every great effort, a pause to reflect and refresh is often required to sustain progress. As environmentalists prepare to undertake the significant work ahead, we crafted this issue to provide our readers with this emotionally-sustaining respite.*

Send your comments to [letters@alternativesjournal.ca](mailto:letters@alternativesjournal.ca). All letters are edited for length and clarity.



**FOOTPRINT IN MOUTH** by LUND



**Research Digest**

**Whale Wanted: Alive**

**ALASKA** In the summer of 2014, Phillip Morin didn't expect a dead whale on a beach in St. George, Alaska, to propel him on an adventure to describe a new species. But that's exactly what happened after a local teacher told him about it.

Morin, a molecular geneticist at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Southwest Fisheries Science Center, initially thought the carcass was a Baird's beaked whale, which are fairly common in the area and sometimes wash in, dead, with the tide.

But a few details about the carcass, such as the colouration and position of the dorsal fin, didn't match any known description of a Baird's beaked whale.

Morin conducted research around the globe to determine what species the whale was, including examining more than 50 DNA samples from NOAA databanks. He even examined a skeleton hanging in a high school gymnasium and collected bone dust from skeletons at the Smithsonian and in Los Angeles.

Months earlier, Japanese research used whaler sightings of black whales called *karasu* ("ravens") to describe a potential new whale species allegedly seen since the 1940s – whales which match the description of the St. George's carcass.

In August of this year, Morin and his team published a study in *Marine Mammal Science* with the full details of the new species and their work to describe it.

[ajlinks.ca/newwhale](http://ajlinks.ca/newwhale)

**Amish Asthma Test**

**CHICAGO** A study performed by the University of Chicago and published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* in August has discovered significantly lower rates of asthma in Amish children (5%) compared to the national average (10.3%). Intriguingly, in Hutterite populations the rate was more than double (21.3%) in spite of a similar genetic background and lifestyle between the two groups.

Both Amish and Hutterites lead rural lives without many modern "vices" such as television or cars, but Hutterite farms use modern equipment and



**Investors Watch Tesla**

**TESLA'S ANNOUNCEMENT** that it will seek to acquire SolarCity for \$US2.6-billion coincides with the announcement of its "Master Plan, Part Deux", a blog post outlining Tesla's plans to revolutionize the transportation sector in the years ahead. For all investors, this has been a moment of reflection and reconsideration, and for investors motivated by the environmental impacts of their investments, an opportunity to look around the bend on Tesla's ambition.

For those looking carefully, Tesla's corporate success to date has relied on the value investors place on Elon Musk's vision and strategy as much as anything else. According to the Nasdaq Composite Index, Tesla's stock price initially opened to the public at \$19.20 in June 2010, and over the past year, has had a price of between \$141 and \$272 – an appreciation of between 7 and 14 times on the original stock price. Nonetheless, Tesla has repeatedly missed its earnings and revenue targets, and yet many analysts continue to set growing target prices. Investors, both at the retail level like you and me, and institutions such as pensions and endowments, are clearly continuing to support the stock, buying into a vision for a very different energy system.

We see these same motivations at play in our work supporting impact investors to develop and deploy strategies for more of their money to advance their missions. Indeed, what distinguishes impact investors is the intention they have for their investments to generate positive impacts alongside a financial return, and clearly Tesla's investors aspire to similar positive impacts. This should come as no surprise, as some of the earliest investors in Tesla before it went public were impact investors such as DBL Partners. It has been empowering to see these motivations persist with Tesla as a public company.

So, how to parse the acquisition of SolarCity? The acquisition turns Tesla into a sustainable energy company, not just a transportation company. Tesla has shown a pattern of vertical integration (where a company controls its supply chain) in the past, pushing the envelope on building a "Gigafactory" to supply batteries for both the Tesla vehicles and their Powerwall, a household energy storage system. This acquisition fits with the same pattern. By bringing the capacity to design and install the solar systems of SolarCity within Tesla's supply chain for energy storage and electric vehicles, those looking to transition to sustainable energy in their home and transportation could have a more seamless experience.

If Tesla aims only to be an electric car company, this is an odd move, and seems off mission. If Tesla is a vertically integrated sustainable energy supplier for multiple applications, such as your home or your car, it starts to look and feel consistent. Indeed, many Tesla buyers might be interested in SolarCity's products, and vice versa. The company begins this transition as the leading electric automotive brand, and it must continue to motivate its investors by the impacts this vision could create. Doing so will be key to Tesla continuing to benefit from their optimism and patience.

Lars Boggild is a consultant at Purpose Capital in Toronto.



machinery – a stark contrast from the single-family dairy farms of many Amish communities.

Amish children spend much more time near animals than either urban children or Hutterite children. Since they are in and out of the house all day, this means the air in an Amish house is much richer in microbial activity. The body's innate immune system was strengthened by this exposure, which means less chance of asthma developing.

Of course, neither Amish nor Hutterite homes are dirty, and it's important to keep in mind that a too-clean home can have negative effects on personal health as well. [ajlinks.ca/amishasthma](http://ajlinks.ca/amishasthma)

### Auto-Drive Fender Bender

BEIJING Last August, a Tesla Model S crashed into another car parked half off the road while the driver was using its advanced driver assistance system (ADAS) and not paying attention to the road. The collision sheared a side mirror off the parked car and scraped both cars, but no one was injured.

Tesla has had trouble selling its cars in China and achieving large market saturation in the US, partly due to a legal grey area around the usage of ADASs while driving. Auto makers emphasize the driver should always be vigilant and ready to correct the steering, but that message is not always clear in the marketing.

Customers in Beijing said sales reps pantomimed taking their hands off the wheel and repeatedly used the term *zidong jiashi*, which translates literally to “self-driving” but can also mean an airplane's autopilot function. Naturally, this has led to confusion among potential buyers. [ajlinks.ca/tesla](http://ajlinks.ca/tesla)

### Recapturing CO<sub>2</sub>

TORONTO There are many ways to reuse or outright reduce carbon emissions, and researchers at the University of Toronto may have found a way to do both.

Carbon splitting (using electricity to split a carbon dioxide molecule into carbon monoxide and oxygen) has traditionally been too expensive for widespread adoption in industry, and is impractical for capturing CO<sub>2</sub> out of the atmosphere.

If the CO<sub>2</sub> is siphoned directly from, for example, a factory's exhaust pipe, it never hits the atmosphere. And after



A scene from *The Gardener* | Sebastian Chabot | Canada

## Time for Planet in Focus

WITH THE COMING OF FALL comes the time of year for red carpets, celebrities, fancy parties ... it's movie festival time again! And for Canadian environmentalists, there's no better party than Planet in Focus, the annual environmental film festival celebrating its 17<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2016 from October 18 to 23 in Toronto.

Planet in Focus is an environmental media arts organization with year-round programming. The organization's mandate is to produce cultural events that showcase engaging and artistic films that question, explore, and tell stories about the world in which we live. Using film as a catalyst for public awareness, discussion and engagement on a broad range of environmental issues, Planet in Focus is an important annual opportunity for film makers to network, to connect and to build future collaborations.

AJ is a proud media sponsor of Planet in Focus, and will be on-site throughout the festival, enjoying the films, meeting with the contributors, engaging with the viewing public and, in general, being inspired and motivated by all that we see, hear and do. We are also working collaboratively with Planet in Focus to develop and hopefully deliver a cross-Canada “best of PiF” for our friends at environmental post-secondary programs and campuses for early 2017.

Planet in Focus will be saluting their 2016 ECO-HEROES, including Canadian Eco-Hero, David Suzuki and International Eco-Hero, Alexandra Cousteau (granddaughter of Jacques Cousteau). Both are coming to the festival to receive their awards in person and speak at their respective events.

In addition to movies, celebrities and all that glitz, there are ample learning opportunities, with forums and panel discussions throughout the festival period to get audiences engaged with the issues presented on-screen.

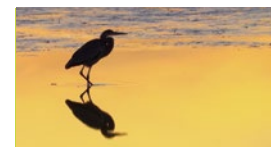
Check out the festival and the films by visiting [planetinfoocus.org](http://planetinfoocus.org).



*Appetite for Invasives*  
United States of America



*Coal India*  
Germany



*Nature's Orchestra*  
United States of America



*Coast of Death*  
Spain



*Microworld in a Balcony*  
Colombia



*Nuclear Neighbour*  
Sweden

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**CUPE.ca**



being split, carbon monoxide can then be combined with hydrogen to make synthetic fuel, such as diesel.

A metal rod sends electricity through water and splits the water and CO<sub>2</sub> molecules into hydrogen, carbon monoxide and oxygen. Since carbon dioxide doesn't mix well with water (like carbonization in pop), this process can take a long time – the electricity will only split molecules that touch the catalyst rod – but researchers at the University of Toronto have discovered a way to speed it up.

Many have experimented with different catalyst materials, but U of T researchers, led by Ted Sargent, used a more malleable metal – gold – and reshaped the rod into an array of “nanoneedles” each 10,000 times finer than a human hair. This greatly increased the surface area of the array compared to a single rod, and accelerated the process.

The U of T researchers say the increase in speed would not lead to widespread industrial use by itself, but are hopeful it could lead to something in the future, and make CO<sub>2</sub> waste more reusable or recyclable. [ajlinks.ca/recapturing](http://ajlinks.ca/recapturing)

Compiled by Jack Parkinson.

## Research Digest

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Are you working on cutting-edge research, a ground-breaking discovery, or a planet-protecting project? Send us a 50-100 word summary.

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## The Muralist

**PAMELA ROJAS IS AN ARTIST**, a community organizer and civic mobilizer who uses murals as a way to build connections between people and places in her home community of Waterloo Region. Believing that ‘a mural is a piece of art for everyone’, Rojas has been helping to physically transform urban spaces while empowering individuals since she first moved to Canada in 2005. Read more of Pamela’s story in “Power of Art” (page 68)

**AJ:** *What was your inspiration to do murals in the first place?*

**Pamela Rojas:** Murals can have a social impact. It’s not the kind of art that is selective or just for educated people. A mural is a piece of art for everyone. When I first moved to Canada (2005), I remember my first winter was so cold and grey. I wondered, why does the city have to be so grey? Why don’t they paint, why don’t they use colour? I saw that when I lived in Switzerland too. Why don’t they use murals to make the city look more vibrant and more welcoming? We have so much talent that we can cover the whole city in colours. It would be like having an outdoor museum. Why do all museums have to be inside? You have to pay for a ticket, that makes it selective. I’m more interested in the education of the masses.

*Tell me about your greatest influence.*

Ximena Ahumada. She is the founder of the first mural collective in Seville, Spain. I was her assistant for six years. She approached the murals from a social background. When she was young and in Chile, she belonged to a very famous mural collective. At that time, the people were oppressed and they didn’t have access to the press, so how could they communicate? Through the murals on the wall or very basic print. When we painted murals

together, I heard a lot of that history, and I became very interested in how social work and art can be connected. I could see a lot of potential. When I came to Canada, I started working at Reception House, and I could clearly see all the challenges that a social agency has in the community, trying to address different problems, so I thought muralism and the arts are tools to advocate – friendly, and everyone can participate. You can interact with people you don’t know, and when they are painting something together they are at the same level. They have a brush in their hand and they just have to follow the instructions.

*It’s an equalizer.*

Exactly. When everyone is at the same level you feel accepted and that you belong. I take charge of the design and assigning the colour because I know that the product has to be something beautiful and with harmony. I want the volunteers to see the finished mural and say, “Wow! We did it! We did it together!” So the ownership of the mural does not just belong to the artist, it belongs to all the people who help. When you do it with guidance you are not set to fail. Make it clear and have a result, a nice one, so you can say, “Yeah, I made that.” **AJ**

The long version of this edited interview is at [ajlinks.ca/PamelaRojas](http://ajlinks.ca/PamelaRojas).

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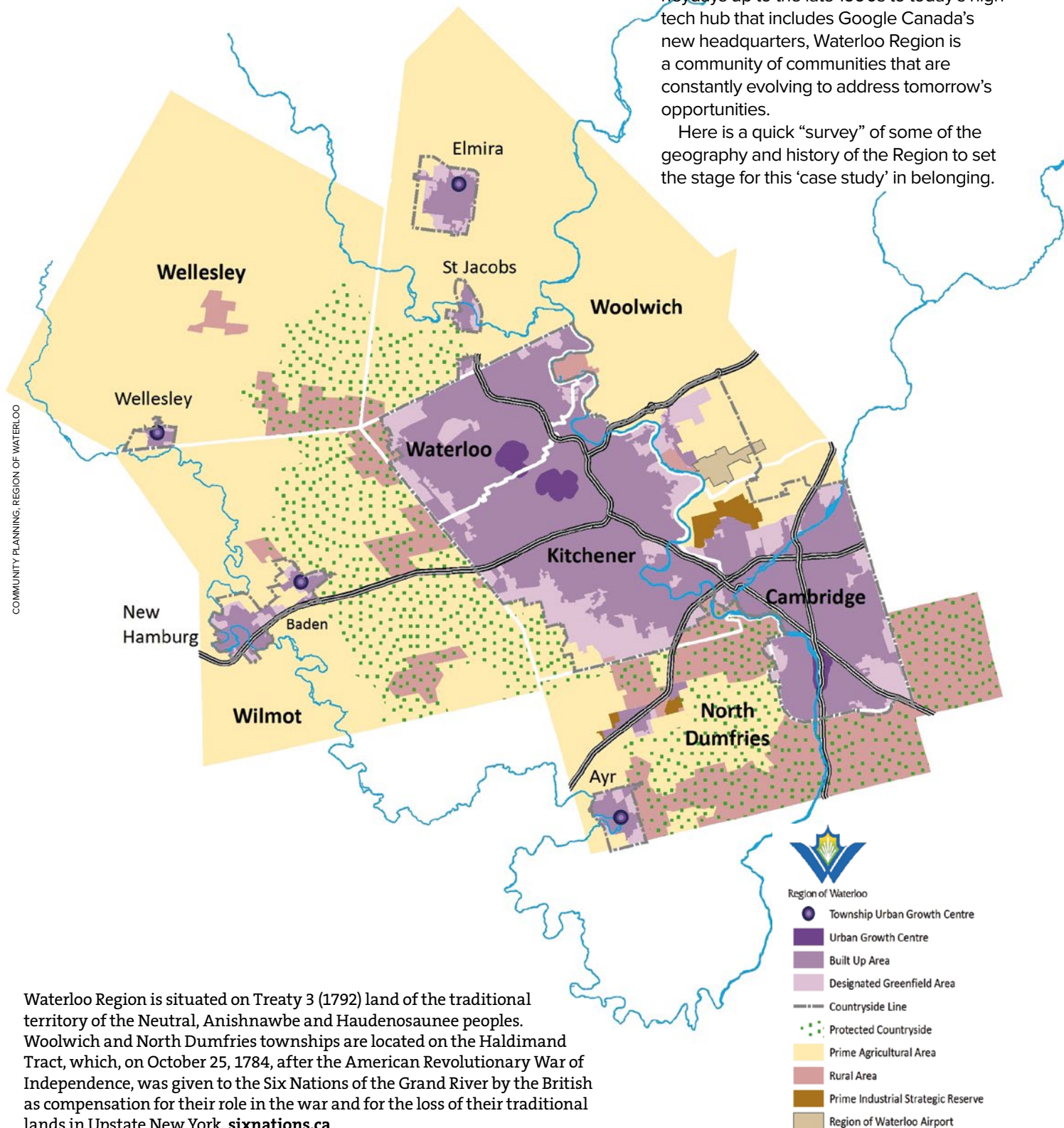


# Waterloo Region

Waterloo Region is one of Canada's oldest communities – and one of its fastest-growing regions, too.

**F**ROM THE farmer-settlers of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries through the manufacturing heydays up to the late 1990s to today's high tech hub that includes Google Canada's new headquarters, Waterloo Region is a community of communities that are constantly evolving to address tomorrow's opportunities.

Here is a quick "survey" of some of the geography and history of the Region to set the stage for this 'case study' in belonging.



Waterloo Region is situated on Treaty 3 (1792) land of the traditional territory of the Neutral, Anishnawbe and Haudenosaunee peoples. Woolwich and North Dumfries townships are located on the Haldimand Tract, which, on October 25, 1784, after the American Revolutionary War of Independence, was given to the Six Nations of the Grand River by the British as compensation for their role in the war and for the loss of their traditional lands in Upstate New York. [sixnations.ca](http://sixnations.ca)

## Building Community

Exploring the historic Town Halls of the Region



Built in 1869 by Jacob Y Shantz at the corner of King and Frederick streets, the **Kitchener City Hall** housed the city council chambers as well as the telegraph and postal offices. It was torn down in 1924. The clock tower remains as a symbol of the City of Kitchener. The second building stood until 1973 when it was rebuilt. A third, and current, City Hall was commissioned through a nation-wide design contest in 1989, with Bruce Kuwabara's design being chosen. The new building would be officially completed in 1993 and still stands today.



The **Cambridge City Hall** is located in what was then Galt. It was built in 1858 following the designs of H.B. Sinclair and was the focus of much controversy. Many of the Galt residents felt the Italianate design was not grand enough for the emerging importance of Galt as a center of industry. Residents even held an "indignation meeting" to protest, but the city went ahead with the design.



The original **Waterloo Town Hall** was built in 1874 on the corner of Albert and Erb streets. The spacious building was designed to be multi-purpose, holding the municipal offices, public library, a farmers market, a stage for putting on events, and even the police in the 1950s. In 1961 it was decided that a bigger space was needed and the building was demolished in 1969. For the next twenty years, different office spaces would be leased until construction was finally completed on the Waterloo City Centre in 1987 where City Hall still remains today.



Built in 1855, the **Wellesley Township Hall** was built when the townsfolk petitioned the council to move the location from Hawkesville to the more centrally located Village of Crosshill. The building still stands today and, after significant restoration work in 1973, it remains an active site for community meetings, church services, as well as a council chamber. //





THE CITY OF KITCHENER

# Dare to Belong

We each have a role to play in our community's success.

**I**N A WORLD facing many social challenges, it is hard to sort through all the “need” and find the right place to start inciting change. It is understood that poverty, housing and food insecurity (to name but a few) are very real challenges.

We see them every day when we go to work, drive to hockey practice or take a walk in the park. The question is: how can we tackle complex issues like these if people are disconnected, isolated and indifferent?

How can we improve the quality of life for individuals in need when we do not address the underlying problems that led to them being marginalized in the first place? In other words, you can't just supply food and housing without working with individuals to realize their value and importance to the community. People need to feel like they “belong” before they are driven to improve their own quality of life or that of others.

But what does “belonging” mean? And where and how does a community start to improve its residents' sense of belonging?

These complex questions have been at the heart of the work of The Kitchener and Waterloo Community Foundation (The KWCF) since 2013. As an organization focused on improving the quality of life in the Ontario cities of Kitchener and Waterloo plus surrounding areas, The KWCF's work is often framed as “Building,” “Investing” and “Leading.” The foundation builds not only assets, but also knowledge of the community and relationships that are integral to getting work

done. The KWCF invests in community for the betterment of community by leveraging their assets (dollars, relationships and knowledge), and they lead, not from the rooftops or the front of the line, but quietly from the back, connecting and collaborating to make change happen.

Underlying this work is Waterloo Region's Vital Signs®.

**A LOW SENSE OF BELONGING IMPACTS US ALL**

People reporting a lower sense of belonging are less likely to participate in community events, are less satisfied with their neighbourhood, and are less satisfied with their local government.

Source: Canadian Index of Wellbeing Community Wellbeing Survey, 2013

“Every day, the world will drag you by the hand, yelling “This is important! And this is important! And THIS is important! You need to worry about this, and this, and this!” And each day, it's up to you to yank your hand back, put it on your heart and say, “No. This is what's important.”

– Iain Thomas from *I Wrote This For You* (2007)

The Vital Signs report is an annual community checkup through which The KWCF measures the vitality of Waterloo Region. It identifies significant trends in key areas critical to residents' quality of life. The report informs all levels of The KWCF's ventures – from the board's work in setting strategy, to helping define and focus grant initiatives. It is also an instrument that the community can use for improving life in Waterloo Region. In 2013, The KWCF began its “belonging” journey because of what The Vital Signs revealed.

Statistics Canada has reported that there has been a declining trend among those feeling a “somewhat strong” or “very strong” sense of community since 2003. This is especially true for those aged 20 to 34.

This means our current and future leaders are feeling less like they belong to this community. Why is this important? Those who do not feel like they belong are unlikely to step up with time, talent and treasure when it's needed most.

To tackle this challenge, The KWCF commissioned a report with the purpose of understanding the current state of belonging and developing an approach for improvements.

Key findings revealed that “belonging” benefits individuals and communities. People generally agree on what it feels like to belong: happy, safe, content, relaxed, supported, valued and accepted. Based on participant input, belonging is associated with good outcomes, such as relationship building, self-growth, helping others, collaborating, being cared for and having fun. In addition, the report revealed the three elements or building blocks to belonging: authentic interactions, feeling welcome and shared experiences.

It is also critical to understand social inclusion and social capital. In a socially inclusive society, all people are able to secure a job, access services, connect with the local community and have their voices heard, regardless of factors such as race, ability, family background, income, age, gender and belief. Social inclusion is an important place to start designing systems for belonging, but it is not where one finishes.

The relationship between social capital and belonging is a close one. In his book *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, Robert Putnam defines social capital as “connections among individuals — social networks and norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them.” Putnam's definition emphasizes social connections, which are also an integral part of belonging.

The effects of social capital and belonging on a community are similar. Putnam provides evidence that in communities with high social capital, children are healthier, safer and better educated. People live longer, have happier lives – and democracy and the economy work better.

A sense of belonging is associated with a better quality of life. Research demonstrates a significant association between a sense of belonging and health. Both belonging and social capital are expressed through higher civic engagement.

In short, a community with high social capital will be a community where most experience a strong sense of belonging, and vice versa.

The KWCF used these findings to guide its community investments. In turn, this has sparked a shift in the local non-profit community. Organizations are infusing “belonging” into their approach, forming better relationships and having greater impact with their work.

But the work has just begun. It is a marathon race in which we all need to keep working until all the racers are across the finish line. We each have a role to play in our community's success. We are responsible for stepping up and making our community one where everyone feels like they belong and can make a difference.

So, when we're asked how dare we focus on a “first world” issue such as belonging? The answer is simple: how dare we not? **👊**

For more on Waterloo Region's Vital Signs®, or The Kitchener and Waterloo Community Foundation's Belonging Report, visit [kwcf.ca](http://kwcf.ca).

**SENSE OF COMMUNITY BELONGING ON THE RISE**

Although improving, those aged 20–34 still report a sense of belonging significantly lower than the community.

Source: CANSIM Table 105-0501 (Data for 45–64 age group was unreliable and could not be reported)





**Grandchildren's Joy** | Pamela Rojas | 2012  
Mural on exterior of Kitchener-Waterloo  
Multicultural Centre

# For the Common Good

The most useful tool and noble purpose in any community is to facilitate a sense of belonging for everyone.

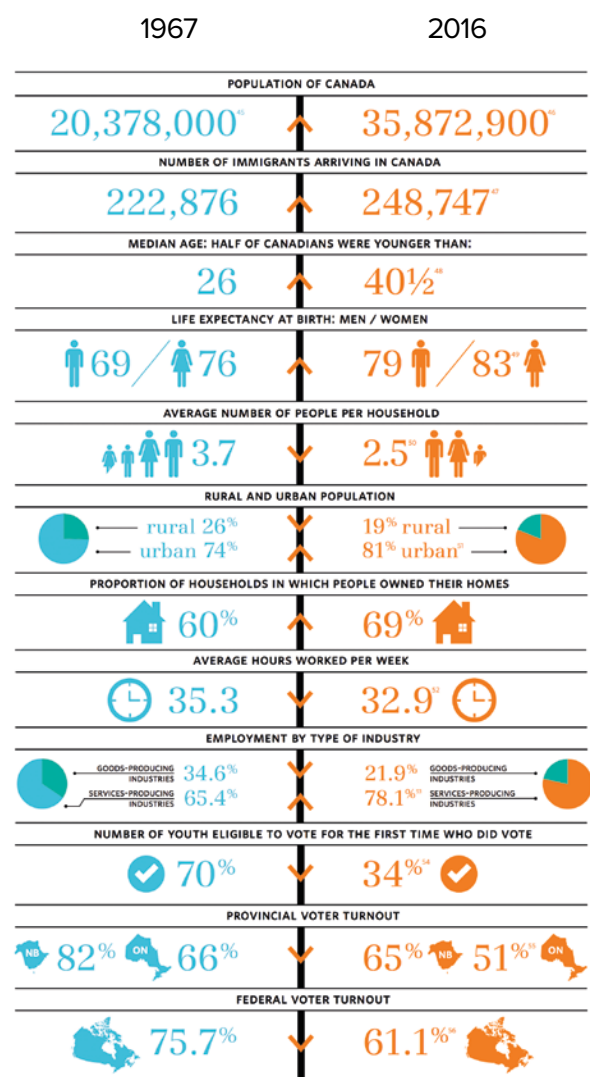
**BELONGING IS BEING PART OF A COLLECTIVE "WE"**. It's about how much we believe we "fit" in a place or group, but it's also about how much that place or group welcomes and includes us.

Connections and engagement are two important elements of belonging. Connections are our relationships with others and the strength of those relationships. Engagement, on the other hand, is our commitment to community and the willingness to take action or participate in activities that make our communities better.



“All young people need to know who they are and from where they come. Aboriginal children and youth, searching for their own identities and places of belonging, need to know and take pride in their Indigenous roots. They need to know the answers to some very basic questions. Who are my people? What is our history? How are we unique? Where do I belong?”

– Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada - Final Report, 2015



Canada - and Canadians - are evolving. Since 1967, Canada has added 15 million new citizens while seeing changing levels of citizen engagement. Source: Community Foundations of Canada: 2015 Vital Signs report.

We know that people who feel they belong to a community are more likely to take action with others for the common good. So how can we strengthen belonging to each other and our communities? Well, it's really a two-way street:

Communities need to send signals of acceptance and inclusion; and individuals need to cultivate connection with other people and engagement in the community.

### Why Belonging?

Belonging is not just a feeling, it's a powerful catalyst for healthier communities and a more cohesive, inclusive Canada.

When we feel a strong sense of belonging and connection to people around us:

- We are healthier: Belonging to social groups and networks is as important to our health as diet and exercise. People with strong support networks tend to have a lower prevalence of mental illness and better overall physical health.
- Sustained employment improves: Extensive support networks provide better opportunities for sustained and secure employment.
- Children learn better: Belonging is a key element in the curriculum for early childhood education across Canada.
- Life has more purpose: When people have a stronger sense of belonging, they perceive life to be more meaningful.

When communities are made up of people who feel they belong and trust each other:

- Neighbourhoods are safer: As connectedness among people in communities increases, so does neighbourhood safety and a sense of community pride.
- Contributions of time and money increase: People who feel they belong are more likely to volunteer, donate to the community, and be involved in community governance.
- Culture and identity flourish: Aboriginal communities that have maintained more elements of their culture and a greater level of self-governance feel more individual and community continuity and identity.

“Let us find a way to belong to this time and place together. Our future, and the well-being of all our children, rests with the kind of relationships we build today.”

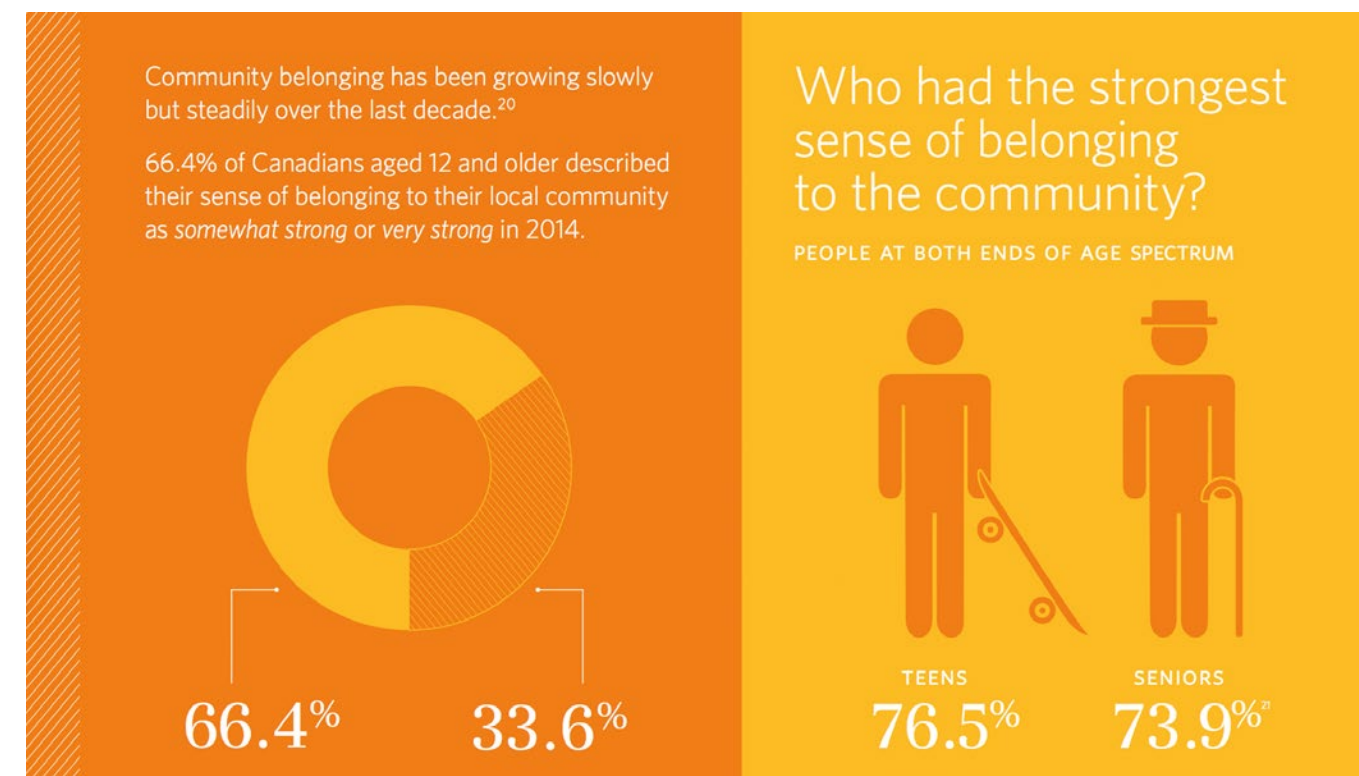
– Chief Dr. Robert Joseph, Gwawaenuk Elder

- Communities bounce back after emergencies: Communities in which there are many social connections are more resilient during emergency events. When people feel a strong sense of belonging to their country:
- Social inclusion improves: Belonging is a common indicator of how well someone has integrated into society, and helps build social cohesion within a country.
- Public health improves: When more people feel connected to others in their community, individuals report higher levels of positive mental health and seek out health services they need when they need them.
- Participation in society increases: Belonging to a community, region or country influences identity and the extent to which citizens participate in society.

### Who Belongs?

Who belongs? The past 50 years show a clear path to protect the well-being and rights of groups of people who have historically been excluded. In each decade, our answer to the question of “who belongs” has expanded. In contrast to 1967, newcomers can now settle in Canada regardless of race — more than 250 different ethnic origins make up our population.

Our communities are home to people with disabilities who are contributing to their full potential. Same-sex couples have raised their families secure in knowing they have full rights. Nearly one in five people in Canada speak both French and English. These are just some of the ways in which inclusion and pluralism have evolved unlike any other country in the world.



Community belonging is increasing across Canada, and is being led by unexpected segments of our society, including youth. Source: Community Foundations of Canada: 2015 Vital Signs report.



“We are most fully human,  
most truly ourselves,  
most authentically individual,  
when we commit to the community.  
It is in the mirror of our community —  
the street, the neighbourhood,  
the town, the country —  
that we find our best selves.”

— Adrienne Clarkson, Co-chair, Institute for Canadian Citizenship

At the same time, one-third of Canadians report a weak sense of community belonging. This experience is due in part to the persistence of discrimination and social isolation, two factors negatively associated with belonging. For example, 45% of lesbian, gay and bisexual teens and 69% of transgender teens in Canada do not feel a real part of their school. People in minority official language communities still have difficulty accessing services in their language of choice, and only 26% of francophones living outside of Quebec mainly use French in daily life. For Canadians with intellectual disabilities, many continue to be institutionalized and almost 30% of youth with intellectual disabilities go to school in entirely segregated classrooms. A large number of Canadians of visible minority experience racial discrimination when they try to access work opportunities, government services and housing.

#### Toward a Canada where we all belong

Canada is clearly a pluralism in progress. We may celebrate where we have come from, but we must also act with humility and courage about where we as communities and as a country need to go next.

Looking back, we can see that together we have built the foundations for inclusion, not only through laws and policies, but just as importantly, through interactions with neighbours, co-workers, families and friends.

As we look to 2017 and beyond, we might keep in mind that belonging is a two-way street and that we can take action on both sides. As individuals we may ask: “What contributes to my sense of belonging? Am I as connected and engaged in the community as I would like to be?” As communities we may ask: “Who belongs, and who does not? Are we as welcoming to difference and diversity as we can be?”

While we still have far to go, we’re well on our way toward

building communities where we all have a stake, where we all have a voice— and where we all belong.

#### Stories

##### Community Foundation of Northwestern Alberta

Half of the residents of Grande Prairie, Alberta, are under the age of 30 and 15% of them moved in during the last five years, mainly to work in or around high-wage petroleum industries. Local leaders like the Community Foundation of Northwestern Alberta are working hard to make the sense of belonging as plentiful as the job opportunities. In a region where it can snow any month of the year, the foundation got people out enjoying winter during the 2013 Frost Moon Festival. The community has since taken up the torch, creating many new winter events. The Family Mentorship Program, sponsored by the municipality, brings together immigrant and local families, building a sense of connectedness for both. And this year 15,000 youth registered to take part in the local Random Act of Kindness day. This enthusiasm is reverberating throughout the community, and more families that had planned to leave at their end of their work contracts are deciding to stay.

##### Temagami Community Foundation

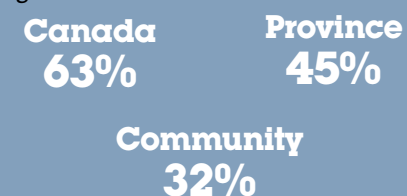
For the past hundred years, three distinct groups have made up the population of Temagami region in Ontario: 10,000 summer cottagers, the small town of Temagami, and the First Nation, whose roots in the area date back more than 5,000 years. The interests of each group were vastly different which sometimes caused them to be wary of each other. Temagami Community Foundation set out to help find common ground. One initiative that has had significant impact is an annual summer art camp that gathers children together from the three populations. Art Camp has become a source of community pride and a highlight of the whole year for

“My definition of community is  
knowing and acting like  
we have a shared fate.”

— Zita Cobb, Founder, Shorefast Foundation

## Facts and Figures

Proportion of Canadians with a very strong sense of belonging to:



**38%** of Canadians **don't feel** like they have a stake in their local **community**.

Community belonging has been **growing** slowly but steadily over the last decade.

**66.4%** of Canadians aged 12 and older described their **sense of belonging** to their local community as somewhat strong or **very strong** in 2014.

**Rural** and remote regions face major challenges but have a strong foundation of belonging to build upon.

Rural residents are more likely to know and **trust** their neighbours, **volunteer** for an organization, and attend public meetings.

Provinces with large rural populations such as Newfoundland and Labrador, Prince Edward Island, Saskatchewan as well as the Northern Territories have the highest levels of **community belonging**.

**61%** of Canadians **do not currently live** in the community where they grew up.


Source: Community Foundations of Canada: 2015 Vital Signs report.

townspeople, cottagers and First Nations families alike. Both children and adult residents, as parents and volunteers, have built a new level of trust and understanding that helps make other community collaborations possible.

#### Vancouver Foundation

In 2011, Vancouver Foundation set out to learn what issue people in the region were most concerned about. The answer was clear: social isolation. The Foundation's research showed that residents were retreating from community life and lacked connections with their neighbours. One of the Foundation's most successful initiatives to counter this trend has been Neighbourhood Small Grants. The program provides small grants for projects created by local residents — such as block parties, community meals, greenspace cleanups — with all grant decisions made by local volunteers. To date, 82% of participants report a greater sense of belonging in their community. Based on this success, the Foundation is currently exploring opportunities to expand the program across British Columbia.

#### Community Foundation of Newfoundland & Labrador

Even for a remote town of 300 people, social connections need to be cultivated. In Branch, Newfoundland, isolation can be most acute in the winter months and for seniors whose children and grandchildren have moved away for work. The Singing Kitchen, however, is changing all that. Parents, kids and seniors get together every two weeks to share traditional songs, stories and a community meal. The Kitchen has built strong connections, not only between neighbours and generations, but also with cultural heritage. After receiving initial support from the Community Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador, the Kitchen is now self-sustaining and welcomes up to 150 attendees at a time. 

Excerpted from the Community Foundations of Canada's 2015 national **Vital Signs** report, **Belonging: Exploring connection to community**, which looks back over the past 50 years at our national sense of belonging, and where we, as communities and a nation, are headed when Canada celebrates the 2017 sesquicentennial.

Community Foundations of Canada (CFC) is the national network for Canada's 191 community foundations. Together the CFC and their members help Canadians invest in making communities better places to live, work and play. [communityfoundations.ca](http://communityfoundations.ca)





# Walk with Me

The first step is engaging at a human level with a compassionate, listening ear.



**T**HE WORDS on the back of the business card say so much: *Belong & Thrive*. For staff at House of Friendship, a social service charity based in Waterloo Region, Ont., these words are much more than an inspirational motto. They are a reminder that helping people in need by providing food, shelter, addiction services and community centre programming is just the beginning. Meaningful change draws from a much deeper well.

This is an agency where the 150 staff and 1,000 volunteers don't talk about fixing problems or delivering services. They talk about "walking with" those seeking help, and about how "everyone has a seat at the table." Now add the agency's list of core values – compassion, inclusion, justice, dignity and hope.

"When someone walks through our doors, we do not engage them as a client, as a number, as an addict, as a homeless person," says executive director John Neufeld. "We engage them at a human level with a name and a story."

"Engage" is another key word in the House of Friendship belief system. With it come "empower" and "equip." Community is the other important component. The agency expresses its vision as "a healthy community where all can belong and thrive."

Neufeld explains: "The minute you start walking with people and enabling them to be part of a community, everything changes because then they belong; then there's purpose, and then they feel like they matter."

He knows from experience that when that happens, people find ways to reach out to others.

"Thrive isn't about making millions of dollars," Neufeld says. "Thrive is quite simply finding what your gifts are and finding a meaningful way to connect those gifts and contribute to the community around you."

House of Friendship was founded in 1939 by a local women's prayer group that wanted to reach out to transient

*On the previous page: Brenda Leis on a bicycle outting on the Iron Horse Trail with a House of Friendship resident.*

men. Today, staff and supporters are diverse, and its innovative programming touches more than 42,000 people each year.

Neufeld is passionate – and compassionate – about the work, and he asks big questions of the rest of us.

"We all need to look in the mirror and ask: what is it about the society and community we have built that would allow individuals to be on the margins and not feel like they belong?"

He also challenges us to consider our own doubts and insecurities – and what it means to be shielded by jobs, material goods or personal support networks.

"The people we serve have been stripped of everything," Neufeld points out. "So their brokenness is so raw, it's right in front of you, it's in your face. And that's threatening to us. So it's easier to say, 'I'm not like that,' 'I'm better than that.' 'I would never do that that.'"

But what if the unthinkable hits our friends or family – job loss or mental health issues, for example. How would we want them to be treated?

For Neufeld, the answer is straightforward. We wouldn't just want them to survive, we would want them to heal, to thrive, to regain a foothold in the community.

For Steve Gosselin, the seeds of healing were deceptively simple – acceptance without judgment; having someone really listen; receiving a supportive hug.

The seeds of addiction were much more complex.

Gosselin is a carpenter, public speaker, respected volunteer – and in recovery from drug addiction. "There are people who no way on Earth would believe I am sober today and doing what I am doing," he says.

He grew up on a military base in an overtly macho world. Hard drinking was common in his home; so was physical, emotional and verbal abuse.

For a boy, one lesson ran deep: "Never, ever do real men ask for help," Gosselin notes. Even when things go horribly wrong.

And things did go wrong at age 13 when he was sexually assaulted. As if the emotional uncertainty of an abusive

home was not enough, now the boy carried a crushing secret. He turned to alcohol – and drank to the point of blacking out.

"I drank because there was nowhere else to run," Gosselin recalls.

Over the coming years, however, he did find another place to run – street drugs, which he abused for 20 years. Even a positive in his life – a passion for carpentry – had a dark side. He was a workaholic. A need for perfection, for control, haunted him, even when he had his own company. He compensated with drug use. Lying and stealing came with it.

When his family finally convinced him to get help, the first rehab opening was at House of Friendship. Gosselin arrived in February 2006 with a dufflebag containing his life's belongings. He was 46, frightened and unsure. "I'd never done anything sober. I'd never talked to anyone in my life sober."

The weeks ahead were not easy as he struggled to find his footing.

A breakdown – and a breakthrough – came unexpectedly when he was assigned a new roommate, a man who reminded him of his father. Gosselin was shocked when the man's simple "Good night, Steve," delivered with kindness and respect, unleashed deep emotion. He cried like he hadn't cried since he was 13.

The next day, when a male counsellor offered support, Gosselin asked for something he had never had – a hug.

"He hugged me and that started the process that has led me to today," Gosselin says simply.

Looking back, he says everything about House of Friendship gave him a place to belong. It was there in the addiction services, which offer residential and day programs to both men and women. But it was also there in the way staff treated him when he relapsed. There was no judgment when he returned to drugs and the street, only expressions of support.

Today, he has put his addictions behind him. He works for a supportive employer and finds numerous ways to give back. He has been a peer health worker at the House of Friendship and continues to be a compelling public speaker for



TOMASZ ADAMSKI

*Dat Tran poses with a basket of the garden's yield at the Sunnydale Community Centre.*

various community initiatives.

"The belonging and the support of the community are for me like a huge acknowledgement," Gosselin says. "I believe I am the only one who needs to acknowledge myself, but it's really nice to have it from the community."

On a more personal level, he and his wife of two years have welcomed people in recovery into their home.

"I don't give advice to anybody," he notes. "The reason is that in all my time going through [the addictions program] not one counsellor gave me advice. What they did was they listened. I believe we all know the answers to our own questions. It's just that men have to stop thinking with their heads and start thinking with their hearts. Which is very difficult for us men."

What drives him to help others?

"I get to see miracles. I get to see somebody inch forward, just like I did. Somebody asked me once, 'Well really, Steve, how many miracles do you get to see for all the work you do?' And I say, 'Well really, how many do you need to see?'"

Retired professor Luke Fusco guides a visitor around the emergency food hampers facility on a quiet Kitchener property not far from the border with Waterloo. We squeeze by other volunteers to peer into freezers and refrigerators; shelves are loaded with everything from canned and packaged goods to breads and fresh produce.

The distribution centre, which House of Friendship plans to renovate, is bare bones at best, but Fusco exudes such commitment he could be unveiling a

trendy Whole Foods market.

"No one should not have food, especially in this community, especially in this country," says Fusco, who volunteers three partial days a week. "It's immoral for people to be without."

The program distributes more than 28,000 hampers a year using food from the Food Bank of Waterloo Region, community groups, farmers, businesses and individuals. Hampers are customized to fit family size and particular needs, including Halal meats and specialized choices for diabetics.

Fusco, who was dean in the Faculty of Social Work at Wilfrid Laurier University before retiring in 2006, sees his volunteer work through both professional and personal lenses.

"Anybody could come here – including you, including me, theoretically, could come here and need food," Fusco points out. "And so there isn't a whole lot of difference and space, in fact none, between the people that come and the people that are working."

Such understanding permeates the food hub. For example, Fusco is impressed that program co-ordinator Matt Cooper does not turn away anyone who arrives just at closing time. Who knows what pressures have held the person up? "It's a huge message without being any message," Fusco says. "It's an attitude. What we do is important."

He looks for unobtrusive ways to reach out. Like the time he approached a person who seemed distraught as she accepted her hamper. "It's none of my business, but I think you're upset ..." Indeed, she was. Fusco listened as she poured out her financial and personal problems; he suggested community resources that might help.

"The beautiful thing is that nobody is going to come out and say to me, 'You're not doing your job; you've got to get back in there – we've got three people waiting for the food,'" Fusco notes.

He has also noticed that those receiving food hampers find ways to give back – to be part of a caring community. Some join the program's volunteer roster.

He recalls thanking a man for





TOMASZ ADAMSKI

*Dat Tran admires a strong stalk with garden supervisor Bill McFaddin.*

gathering carts in the parking lot. “He said, ‘I haven’t worked in a month and I just want to do something.’” Fusco recounts.

A woman picking up a hamper wondered if the extra tomatoes from her home garden could be useful. It was a small donation compared to those from farmers or food companies, but it was accepted with gratitude.

“You see that all around you and it humbles you,” Fusco says. “So what I am doing is OK, it’s good, but there’s a lot of people doing a lot of things, some much better and bigger.”

Fusco reflects on the meaning of giving back: “I’ve learned it is never about you, no matter how good you feel, or how important you think you are, or how wonderful you are for giving your time. If that’s your motivation, then I don’t think you will do it well. And you have to fight that.”

Sunnydale Community Centre has a big presence in its North Waterloo neighbourhood, but you wouldn’t know it from the centre itself. In fact, if you miss the small street-side sign, you’ll drive right by. That’s because the centre occupies what was once a five-bedroom unit in the back of a cluster of ordinary-looking townhouses.

Don’t be fooled. As with the other three community centre programs House of Friendship operates, a wealth of services and connections take place within Sunnydale’s walls. It’s a place of action and it’s a place of welcoming – the area is culturally diverse, with many newcomers.

It’s hard to believe this was once an undesirable neighbourhood with a high crime rate. It’s hard to believe that concerned citizens had to fight to have their voices heard. Finally, in 1999, the Sunnydale Community Association found partners in the House of Friendship and Waterloo Region Housing, and this partnership launched the community centre. It has been growing and evolving ever since.

“In my experience, this community consistently and capably identifies both its strengths and its needs, building and responding as needed,” says Linda Kruger, who has been community resource co-ordinator since 2007. “They do well at identifying the bright spots, or what is working well, and then both building on and celebrating those.”

Today dozens of supportive circles flow in, out and within this facility.

First, there is the actual programming, including children’s activities, English training, and a computer room where

people can get career coaching. Fariba Chaghand, a community outreach worker, connects families to outside services, everything from employment to recreation to counselling. The centre also offers a meeting space for other social service agencies with clients in the area.

A huge circle of support flows in from organizations, businesses, churches and individuals in the community at large. Kruger mentions a six-year-old boy who asked for donations to the centre’s “gift cupboard” rather than birthday presents. Volunteers donate countless hours in countless ways, including teachers who offer tutoring and a small group of men who refinished the centre’s basement.

Equally important is the support the centre’s participants give each other. Kruger recalls a woman bringing in a new neighbour to introduce her and translate for her – just as a neighbour had done for her. When a participant told the sewing group about young women in an Ethiopian village who were unable to work or attend school during menstruation, the group sewed 200 washable sanitary napkins to be distributed on the woman’s next trip.

Some people – Dat Tran for one – help with the centre’s weekly food distribution to about 60 families.

Tran’s family fled Vietnam’s war and political upheaval in 1979, among refugees known as “the boat people.” Neighbouring nations turned their boats away. There were pirate attacks, hunger, death and malaria.

“It was a hard time,” Tran recalls. “We thought we would not survive.”

Still, in the first few years after they were accepted into Canada, Tran says his family constantly reflected on life in their homeland. Since then, he has returned three times. “Now when we go to Vietnam, we want to go back to Canada,” he says with a smile. “We don’t want to stay there for long.”

Why? No question his family’s sponsorship by First United Church in Waterloo paved the way. So did finding work, including at a carpet company and most recently a garden nursery. But the Sunnydale centre has also played a vital role.

Tran came to Sunnydale in 2004 to brush up on his English and stayed

for the friendship. He has introduced others to the tastes of his homeland through friendly cross-cultural cooking sessions. He reaches out to newcomers facing familiar struggles. “They don’t know how to live in Canada,” he says. “They don’t know the law in Canada. Sometimes they make mistakes. If I know anything, I tell it all.”

Each year Tran also signs up for one of the 23 community garden plots the centre oversees in two sections of adjacent parkland. Here Tran grows garlic, squash, peppers and green mustard in a carefully tended plot surrounded by bunny-proof fencing.

The garden program is co-ordinated by Bill McFaddin, who has a Bachelor of Science and a keen interest in horticulture. He divvies up the plots, 16-by-16-feet each, and is on hand to offer advice as needed. He muses about adding a different kind of community plot – a herb garden anyone can use.

He and Kruger compiled a list of homelands for the community gardeners and it’s like a mini United Nations. Some are Canadian born; others are from Pakistan, China, Iraq, Bangladesh, Somalia, Laos, Belarus, Russia and Vietnam.

Still, as with any community, things are not always perfect.

Like the time someone – perhaps a passerby from the adjacent sidewalk – smashed all of Tran’s squashes just as they were ready for harvest.

“He brought the pieces of squash to the community centre to show me and share his story,” Kruger recalls. “I was heartbroken for him.”

But Tran took the incident in stride – and then some. His next stop was the centre’s kitchen where he cleaned the squash, cut it up and bagged the pieces for the weekly food distribution.

“I was speechless,” Kruger recalls, “and those who received squash were truly moved.”

Providing supportive, subsidized housing is another integral component in House of Friendship’s mission. Individuals live in apartment-style units in Eby Village (64 residents) and Charles Village (22 units). The nine men at Cramer House have individual

bedrooms and shared common space.

Allison Dunn, supervisor of the supportive housing program, says the residents have various backgrounds. Some are still working, some have disabilities, and some have dealt with addictions or mental health issues.

Staff and volunteers encourage independent living, but also a sense of belonging through regular programming such as games and outings. There is a community garden; a tenant council works through suggestions and problems. From there, it’s up to the residents.

“Yes, we can support in building community, which we do every day,” Dunn says. “But the coolest part about community here is the relationships they make with each other.”

Individuals become good neighbours through pet-sitting, cooking a meal for a neighbour with health concerns, visiting a fellow resident in hospital.

“When that stuff happens, we know we have created a positive environment for people to thrive,” Dunn notes. “And if we can help build capacity with the individuals that don’t depend on us but depend on each other, that’s a metric of success.”

Enter retired nurse Brenda Leis, who has been volunteering at the three supportive housing facilities since 2014. She does not do hands-on medical treatment but will help residents navigate the health care system or interpret results of diagnostic tests. Mostly, Leis uses her weekly visit to build relationships – to just be there.

The day of the interview, she had brought her bike for an outing with a resident, partly for recreation and partly just to check in with him. Sometimes she goes for walks with residents, or maybe for a coffee.

Sometimes she goes further. One day a resident with terminal cancer mentioned that he loved ice fishing.

“So I called my brother who is a fishing fanatic and they went out fishing,” Leis says. “Strangers, total strangers, but neither of them had a problem with that because, they said, if someone likes to fish. ...”

Leis tells the story matter-of-factly, as if this were an ordinary situation, something anyone would do. She

talks about how every volunteer stint makes for a good day. “I come with no expectations and always go home feeling full.”

But she also expresses concerns about the stigma attached to mental health and poverty issues. “Nobody asks for that,” she says.

She describes a man whose career plan was sidelined by schizophrenia, and how important House of Friendship’s support can be. “His one goal in life is to stay out of the hospital and he’s reaching that,” Leis says. “There are a lot of us that don’t reach our goals. So when you look at it that way, he is doing really well living on his own.”

Through her nursing career and her volunteer work, Leis has built a deep empathy for those living on the margins.

“As a society, we can’t expect those people to ever care about nutrition or their mental and physical health and wellbeing if they don’t have a place to sleep -- and to be,” Leis says.

The last word about House of Friendship’s commitment to belonging, thriving and community goes to supportive housing supervisor Allison Dunn:

“I think there is a common understanding among people who work here and participate in the programs that we have a common humanity, and it’s a humility that people come to work with every single day.”

“Our philosophy is ‘walk with;’ ‘do with, not for.’ And I think when we really believe that and take that to heart, that’s when it really happens,” Dunn says.

“And I think everyone that is part of this community – participants, volunteers, supporters, community partners and staff – we all believe that and so we are all working together as humans, just helping each other out when we need help.”

**Kathryn Storrington is an award-winning journalist with over twenty-five years experience covering breaking news and in-depth stories from the Waterloo Region.**

**The House of Friendship envisions a “mighty flood of justice, a torrent of doing good.” Find out the ways that you can be part of that vision. [houseoffriendship.org](http://houseoffriendship.org)**





Andrea Maier uses an exercise machine at the Freeport hospital in Kitchener under the supervision of Dr. Doug Dittmer.

# Health Care Meets High Tech

New med-tech hub would give entrepreneurs a place to shine and hospitals new ways to heal.

**SOME DAY**, for reasons big or small, everyone ends up using services at a local hospital.

With that in mind, Dr. Doug Dittmer, Medical Director of Rehabilitation at Grand River Hospital in Kitchener, Ontario, began asking, “Why shouldn’t it be the best experience possible?”

Today, thanks to Dittmer’s curiosity and insights, medical professionals,

academics and entrepreneurs are exploring that concept with a shared sense of purpose. If plans fall into place, the next step will be a med-tech innovation hub in a heritage building with deep roots in Waterloo Region.

Dittmer’s journey of discovery began at Communitech, a not-for-profit tech-innovation hub just a few blocks from the hospital, where university grads,

entrepreneurs and other companies harness technological innovations, many of them modernizing health care.

“It struck me that there was this huge abyss between engineers and computer scientists and kinesiologists and doctors and nurses and therapists,” Dittmer says.

“As I began to look into it more, I began to understand how powerful

the University of Waterloo, Laurier and Conestoga College are here – and that (the hospital) really never had the chance to work closely with them.”

He started going to tech seminars where he was “blown away” by research being done – especially inventions the hospital could adopt to improve the overall patient experience.

“Then, one of the presenters was talking about prosthetics, and he was talking about people overseas who step on a landmine and lose a leg,” Dittmer recalls.

“He said they don’t have prosthetics there, but they do have CAT scans at the hospital, so they were able to make an image of the opposite leg – the leg that survived the bomb blast – and he would then send that (image) back to Canada.”

“They would re-jig it so they could actually – with a 3D printer – build a prosthesis for the other side that would exactly match,” he says.

Dittmer was both amazed and bewildered that in the heart of Canada’s tech sector, his rehabilitation department wasn’t utilizing this modern technology.

He then learned how other companies were sharing data with cloud technology, and still others were downsizing traditional medical devices using nanotechnology to make them more mobile and efficient.

“Doctors and nurses and therapists are pretty smart people within our field, but we’re not aware of all the wonderful things in the technology world. So by teaming us up with computer scientists and kinesiologists, you get a whole different perspective,” he says.

“We just didn’t know these tools existed... You feel like a schmuck, but really, the answers are there; we just didn’t know how to tap into it.”

So Dittmer – who says he is known for his “crazy” approach to tackling seemingly impossible challenges – spearheaded the hospital’s technological movement by building on and creating new relationships within the community.

Last spring, he chaired a daylong symposium called Waterloo Region Med Tech: Bridging the

Gap 2016, organized through partnerships between the hospital and Communitech, the Centre for Biotechnology and Bioengineering at the University of Waterloo, and the Waterloo Wellington Local Health Integration Network.

Now Dittmer is immersed in plans for a med-tech innovation hub in an empty heritage building at Grand River Hospital’s Freeport Campus. By fostering those relationships made at the conference last spring, he has launched a working group to obtain a range of perspectives on how to move forward and best sort out all the details.

“The group consists of the entire community,” he says. “There are

enhance and modernize health care technologies, all on site. Innovators will not only have access to technical resources but also valuable medical insights from patients and health care workers who will be using the new technology. Those perspectives, along with the proximity to others working on medical technology, will be key to understanding a product’s functionality and, ultimately, how it will help health care progress. Access to that kind of feedback and testing on real patients is not currently available.

Dittmer is hopeful the centre will receive provincial funding since Ontario’s Chief Health Innovation Strategist William Charnetski has

praised the way Waterloo Region’s health care and technology professionals have come together to collaborate with a clear endgame in mind.

“It’s a matter of putting the pieces together through grant applications and then nurturing the growing partnerships,” Dittmer adds.

“I don’t think we’re going to be struggling for people knocking on our door,” he says. “I think it’s going to be the other way around. I think there’s this pent-up demand in the community, that as soon as we get this thing up and running, I would be shocked if we’re not pretty busy.”

The med-tech innovation hub will be located in what was originally a residence for nurses-in-training when Freeport opened as a sanatorium for tuberculosis patients 100 years ago. These days Freeport not only houses Dittmer’s rehabilitation department but also services that range from long-term



Dr. Doug Dittmer operates a sonogram transducer on his arm.

representatives from the university, colleges, politicians, engineers, and more.”

While it’s still a working concept, Dittmer’s goal for the med-tech hub is to invite locals – students and professionals – to bring tech ideas and inventions to Freeport, to



mental health and complex continuing care, to mammography and a satellite dialysis unit.

“We have this old building here – about 9,000 to 10,000-square-feet – that was empty, and it was a heritage building, so we couldn’t knock it down,” he says. “It provided some unique space.”

Dittmer, accompanied by a cross-disciplinary range of deans from local post-secondary institutions, did a walk-through to see if it was a good place for medical trials and technological experiments. “We walked through it and our eyes popped out of our head, and we said, ‘This is it,’” he recalls. “They said, ‘I think the grad students would love working here.’”

The group was pleased to find an existing structure, saving them the cost of building a new one. They also liked the fact students could learn, work and create in an environment they will someday be benefiting.

And then, rather quickly, it all started coming together. Once the med-tech innovation hub is up and running, Waterloo Region will have a unique environment where multidisciplinary teams of medical doctors and med-tech creatives will work together with patients who can provide immediate feedback. The feedback loop gets bigger when the entrepreneurs and other companies become involved.

For Iain Klugman, Communitech’s Chief Executive Officer, the region’s boom in medical-health startups comes down to local businesses’ achieving their triple bottom line.

“People build companies based on their understanding of value chains,” Klugman says. “One of the things that’s happening in our country is that there’s an opening up and a greater understanding of health care as a platform, as a value chain.”

With better understanding of the health sector, tech professionals now understand there are opportunities to make money and create, while adding value to the industry and society as a whole.

“I think the other thing we’re seeing is that a lot of the interest in companies who are starting right now have a triple bottom line,” Klugman says.

That triple bottom line framework typically includes a social, financial, ecological or environmental gains, which are often closely intertwined. In the case of Waterloo Region, Krugman says that socially, med-tech companies are working to better society through access to better health care. There is money to be made, and if successful the third profit is that it better the environment – or in this case, may extend or better the life of the user. Klugman adds, “You see a lot of people who are building products which are about reducing infection from operations, or being able to identify diabetes earlier, or being able to do eye-testing in rural Africa.”

He says the local tech sector is also seeing a lot more hardware companies with a focus on bettering the medical world.

“Almost 50 percent of the companies we’re working with these days that are coming up are hardware companies. Really, hardware is the intersection,” Klugman says, citing wearable technology as an example of that merger.

Other local examples include Intellijoint Surgical’s hip placement device, which ensures accuracy during replacement surgery, or Avenir Medical’s orthopedic medical instruments.

“There are also these programs at the University of Waterloo that are at the intersection between disciplines,” he says. “So you look at bio-mechanical engineering; you look at mechatronics, which is mechanical-electrical; you look at nano, which is chemistry; and nano materials, engineering. So you see companies at the intersection of things, which are tied in the world between hardware and software.”

It’s that niche crossover between disciplines that has students and young professionals excited to put down roots and collaborate with local institutions such as Grand River Hospital.

While there’s still plenty of work going on behind the scenes to get the med-tech innovation hub from the bench to clinical trials, Dittmer says he’s optimistic it will be up and running within five years.

Though the health care sector

doesn’t have a lot of money to throw around, Dittmer says there is a return on investment for hospitals implementing technological innovations, even small ones.

One example, he says, occurred in Chatham, when the hospital purchased mobile phones for their cleaning staff.


Before the purchase, beds could remain empty for a full day while administrators tried to reach cleaning staff – and patients waited. With mobile phones, administrators were able to have the room cleaned immediately, improve speed of service and increase overall productivity – all, Dittmer says, because of a small investment in technology.

By embracing technologies, hospitals can find efficiencies while the broader community gains new jobs, Dittmer says.

“We’re about to do something that has not been done anywhere in Canada,” he says. “There are tech centres around Canada, but the concept we have – the opportunity that we have to bring together universities, Communitech, accelerators, colleges, politicians, hospitals – that is really unique.”

Of the 1,000 companies linked to Communitech, about 20 per cent – 200 companies – are working on health care products.

“So if we were working with that many companies, imagine what we could do. Imagine,” Dittmer says.

“Put that together with the engineering minds and computer sciences and kinesiologists and nanotechnologists. Now these industrial companies have access to that kind of brain power, and you say, ‘Well, we’d like to do a clinical trial. Can you facilitate that?’ It’s magical.” 

**Laurie Snell is a political science graduate from UBC and a journalism graduate from Conestoga College. She has extensive experience with multimedia reporting and is currently working as a freelance copywriter.**

Follow the progress of Dr. Dittmer’s project by visiting the website of the Grand River Hospital:  
[www.grhosp.on.ca/news](http://www.grhosp.on.ca/news)



# Surviving looks a lot like thriving

Breast cancer flipped Katherine’s world upside down. But in the five years since she underwent treatment, Katherine’s been doing some flips of her own.

Thanks to research to discover new treatments, women like Katherine are having their lives put right side up after a cancer diagnosis. That’s why Stand Up To Cancer Canada and Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation have teamed up to accelerate the pace of research done by collaborative teams of scientists working to develop new treatments faster. Giving more women, like Katherine, their lives back.

To learn more about advances in research, clinical trials testing innovative treatments, and how to get involved, go to [standup2cancer.ca/breastcancer](http://standup2cancer.ca/breastcancer) and [cbcf.org](http://cbcf.org).

**Stand Up To Cancer** Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation 

Kim Catrall, Stand Up To Cancer Canada Ambassador  
Katherine Chan, Breast Cancer Survivor

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**We Are All The Same** | Pamela Rojas | 2010  
Details from mural on exterior of Kitchener-Waterloo Multicultural Centre

# Community Medicine

Surprising insights surface when local health care leaders collaborate and connect.

**AS THE** Chief Executive Officer of the Waterloo Wellington Local Health Integration Network, I spend most of my time working with health care leaders and front-line health professionals to improve the health care local residents receive. I also spend a significant amount of time with community leaders and residents discussing the need for a “whole-of-community” approach to health.

As a result, I am often asked two questions: what is a Local Health Integration Network (LHIN)? And why is the leader of the health care system talking about things like high school graduation rates and early childhood development?

Most of the time, the first one is easy. The second, I'll explain in a moment.

LHINs were created in Ontario in 2006 with the idea that no one knows better what services are needed in a community than the people who live, work, receive and provide health care services there.

Today, the network covering Waterloo Region, Guelph and Wellington County is among 14 LHINs across the province.

The “local” in LHIN is the foundation of who we are. We are a group of local health and business professionals – doctors, nurses, allied health professionals, planners, accountants, technology experts, etc. – tasked with planning, funding and integrating services in the local health care system, from those delivered by hospitals to mental health and additions to community-support agencies.

A crucial part of our role is community engagement. We work with residents, families, health-service providers, community organizations, local

government and other community partners to build a better health care system. We are passionate about putting residents first in everything we do. We listen, we build partnerships, we act and we lead – and we do it all together with dedicated professionals across the system.

When developing our most recent strategic plan, we also updated our mission, vision and values. As a result of engaging with our community and examining the characteristics of the highest performing health systems in the world, we realized we needed to look at more than just health care to improve the health of our community. We launched a single core value: to act in the best interest of our residents' health and well-being. That led us on a journey to get to the root causes of poor health outcomes.

## Determinants of health

While the health care system is an important contributor to overall health, the reality is that it only impacts a person's overall health by about 25 percent. A person's biology is another 15 percent. But income, education, employment, housing and community belonging have the biggest impact.

Take income for example. Research has shown that, overall, in a given population, individuals in the lower income category have an increased risk of engaging in unhealthy behaviours, including a more sedentary lifestyle, lower consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables, and higher rates of smoking. With this come higher rates of chronic diseases and lower rates of adherence to care plans to effectively manage illnesses. Those with lower incomes are also less likely to feel a

sense of belonging and connectedness to their community. Overall, they are almost twice as likely to visit an emergency department for mental health and addictions concerns.

In looking at this data, we must be cautious not to stigmatize. There are individuals in all income groups who have these risks and many in the lower income group who do not. But overall, a higher proportion of risk exists in the low-income population.

While we have increased funding to help people who get sick – health care funding in our community alone has increased by more than \$300 million in the last nine years – wouldn't we be better off in the long run to tackle those things that impact what makes you sick in the first place?

## Belonging and health

So, what can we do about this? Because we have better data, we're better able to understand why some individuals and some groups have certain health outcomes. A number of factors can be traced to early childhood circumstances, rather than recent events. Factors such as growing up in poverty, having less-than-optimal childhood development, a less-than-optimal sense of community belonging, and limited access to high-quality food and regular meals can play a large role in a person's health down the road.

Locally, 11.5 percent of the population lives with low-income. That's more than 82,000 people.

The good news is that there are many things communities can do to get upstream and support these individuals to improve their health today and for the future. For example, Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of



Health has indicated that women with low income and educational levels are more likely to have low-birth weight babies. So through effective public health strategies – encouraging healthy eating, breastfeeding and non-smoking – plus good access to primary care, we can better support families before children are even born.

Connecting women with supportive networks and a strong sense of community belonging is also crucial for their mental health in what can be a challenging and stressful time.

Next comes early-childhood development – programs through early learning centres, community centres and preschools. Research from the Council for Early Child Development underlines the importance of such programs: Fewer than five percent of children of every socio-economic level are born with clinically detectable limitation in their development but, by school age, vulnerability in developmental health has grown to more than 26 percent. And profound socio-economic inequalities in development emerge.

We know that early education, which leads to higher educational attainment, has been shown to improve the socialization of children and increase health literacy.

Once children are in school, combating these socio-economic inequalities is vital. Our community foundations, municipalities and community organizations serve a key role through breakfast programs, literacy programs, community sports and more.

Adding community hubs in schools and community centres – things like drop-in youth programming and subsidized sports and exercise classes – brings youth and families together to build that sense of belonging. It also contributes to an increased likelihood of staying in school, forming better habits around activity levels and healthy eating, and it builds a stronger community – benefiting health, economics and social services.

In high school, innovative initiatives to keep kids in school also make a big difference. Not every student is the same – a one-size-fits-all approach doesn't always work. Students who live in poverty have greater barriers to graduating and need more flexibility

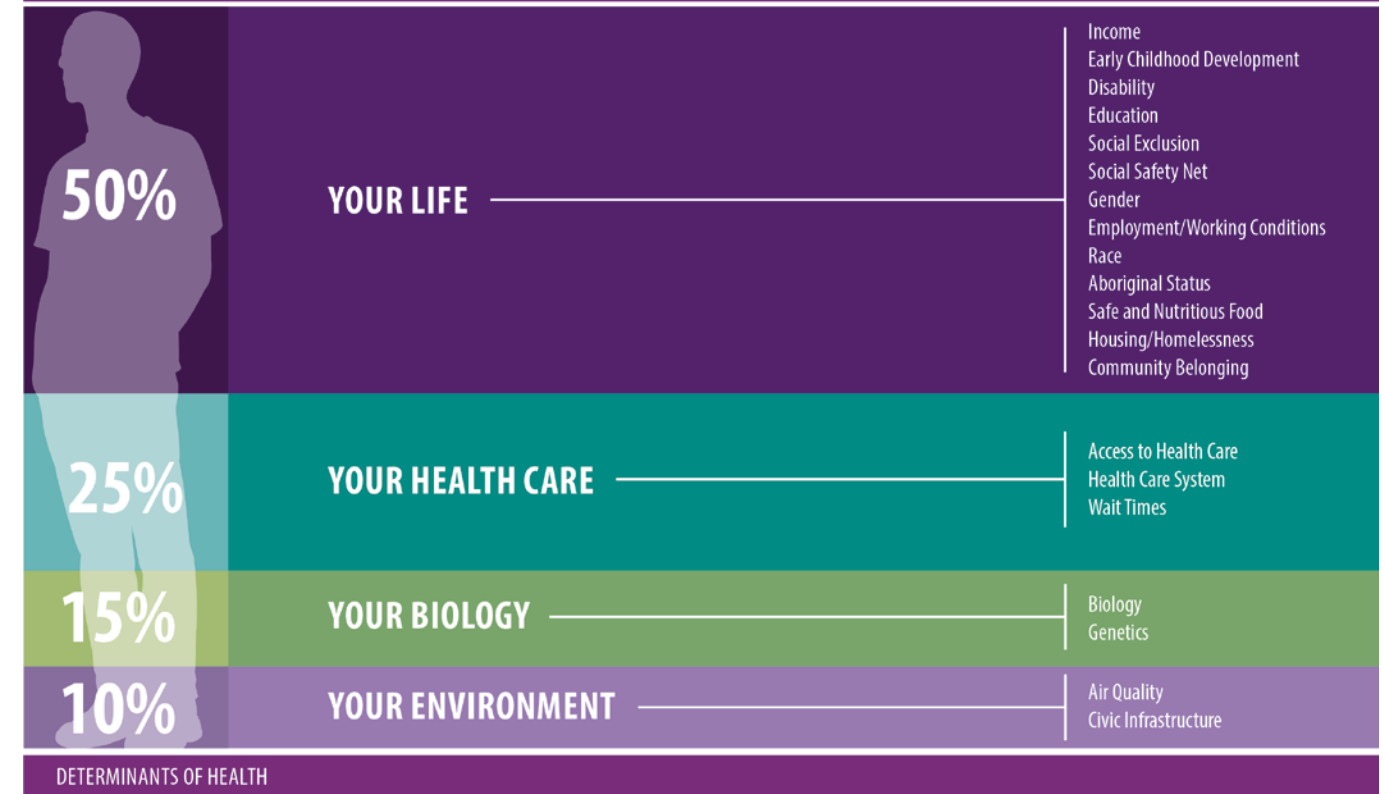
and support. It's hard to focus on your studies when you're hungry, or you're tired because you worked a night shift to help support your family.

Some young people also struggle with mental health and addictions – issues that cannot be solved by any one sector, program or organization. They require a “whole-of-community” approach. This means mental health and addictions providers, educators, social workers, crime prevention professionals, municipalities, community supports, all need to come together to look at how to keep these kids in school.

From an education perspective, we know that co-op programs, trades programs, alternative schools, programs such as Pathways to Education, and many others are all supporting young people who might otherwise leave school early. This is important, not just because it's the right thing to do, but also from an economic perspective. Statistically, those who don't graduate from high school can cost the Canadian health care system, on average, an additional \$211,471 over a lifetime. That's \$10.2 billion in Waterloo Wellington alone.

While we're trying to have a greater

## WHAT MAKES PEOPLE SICK?

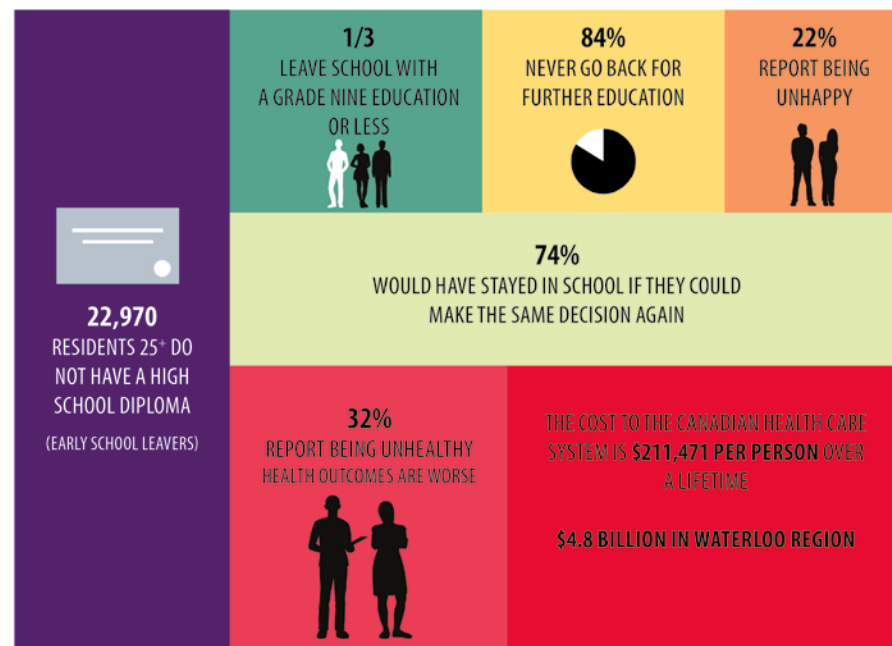


*The quality of your life is linked to your health and wellbeing.*

Source: Waterloo Wellington LHIN Community Report 2015-16.



## EARLY SCHOOL LEAVERS - HEALTH



*The high costs of leaving school early.*

Source: Waterloo Wellington LHIN Community Report 2015-16.

impact earlier so that 10 and 20 years down the road we have a much healthier population, the reality is that we can't go back in time. We have a number of residents today who grew up in poverty. Who didn't graduate high school, had a less-than-optimal childhood, who don't currently have a strong connection to their community. And they are in crisis.

That's why we have supported initiatives like Mobile Crisis Teams, which partner mental health nurses with police services to directly support these residents. We also have Connectivity Tables (see “Proactive Intervention, page 40) that bring front-line professionals from different organizations in policing, education, social services, municipal supports and health together every week to work directly with our most at-risk residents.

Such initiatives make a huge difference today. They are also making a huge difference tomorrow as family members, especially young children, are connected to vital supports that

will address the determinants of health – like belonging. These are models that are being looked at and adopted across the country as a result of innovations in Waterloo Region, Guelph and Wellington and other like-minded communities.

### A call to action

Recently, Adrienne Clarkson, former Governor General of Canada, spoke in Waterloo about belonging. She shared her concern for the health of children in Waterloo Region as a result of the latest report on community well-being issued by the Kitchener-Waterloo Community Foundation.

We, at the Waterloo Wellington LHIN, share that concern. We also share the belief that in order to have a sense of belonging, one must have a sense of ownership. No one person or organization is responsible for the health of our community. We all are.

We are blessed in Waterloo-Wellington. Municipalities, community foundations, crime prevention councils,

breakfast programs, early literacy programs, neighbourhood groups, police services, faith groups, chambers of commerce and more all anchor their work in creating a welcoming, warm community where everyone has a better chance at a healthier, more prosperous life.

We have had many successes over the years through partnership and I have no doubt that by working together we can also improve the sense of belonging and overall health of residents in our community.

**Bruce Lauckner is CEO of the Waterloo Wellington Local Health Integration Network.**

Pathways to Education is found in various communities across Canada. The organization has a great track record for helping low-income students stay in high school and transition into postsecondary education. [pathwaystoeducation.ca](http://pathwaystoeducation.ca)



# Proactive Intervention

At the Connectivity Table, health and social services agencies pool their expertise to provide immediate and innovative response to acute high-risk situations.

**THE PEOPLE** who gather around the Connectivity Table each week represent various health and social service agencies. Some are executives; some are front-line workers. But when they come together, it's to collaborate and pool expertise. And to take action.

The situations brought to the Table involve individuals and families facing elevated risk – in immediate need of support.

Connectivity Waterloo Region, which has initiatives in Kitchener and Cambridge, Ont., tailors its solutions to the person or family in front of them. Every situation is unique and requires a unique mixture of social services.

The risk factors being weighed by Connectivity partners are complex and numerous – 26 categories have been identified. Often they are related to mental health, criminal involvement or substance abuse. Housing, suicide risks and physical health are also major players.

The Kitchener group has noted a striking number of situations involving young adults (under age 24), teens and children. Issues such as mental health, addiction, poverty, precarious housing and the negative effects of peers all can place young people in a situation of elevated risk.

Kelly Niall, a physician's assistant working with K-W 4 Health Links, who has been a member of Connectivity for almost two years, says it is fascinating to see how the group's different perspectives focus on the various problems. "It feels like meaningful work," she notes.

Niall's employer, K-W 4 Health Links, works with people who have "medically complex" situations. Other partners at the Connectivity Table draw from various aspects of community services, from police to hospital services and from education to housing support. The Kitchener-based Table has about 30 partners and Cambridge about 25.

The model for Connectivity comes from Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, where the Community Mobilization Hub has been taking a multidisciplinary approach to problem-solving since 2009. Prince Albert credits the initiative for a decline in violent crimes as well as decreases in child-protection caseloads, emergency room visits, mental health interventions and a variety of other social concerns.

After seeing the ingenuity and successes of the Saskatchewan program, the idea was brought to Waterloo Region through the Waterloo Wellington Local Health Integration Network, Waterloo Regional Police Service and the Waterloo Region Crime Prevention Council. Together they created a Connectivity Table for Cambridge and North Dumfries in January 2014.

Later that year, a Kitchener Table was launched by Carizon Family and Community Services in partnership with the police. This initiative serves the cities of Kitchener and Waterloo plus Wilmot, Woolwich and Wellesley townships. It recently received a Smart & Caring Community Grant from the Kitchener and Waterloo Community Foundation.

Connectivity Waterloo Region has garnered international honours. In September 2015, it was a recipient of the IACP/Motorola Webber Seavey Award, given by the International Association of Chiefs of Police. The award honoured the Waterloo Regional Police Services' collaboration with the community partners. It was presented at the IACP conference in Chicago followed by a Kitchener celebration.

## How Connectivity works

Any one of the member agencies can bring a situation to the Table, someone they've come across during their front-

line work who is experiencing "acutely elevated risk." The police bring about half of the cases to the Table.

Confidentiality is one of the highest principles of Connectivity. Situations are first presented without key identifying factors.

The Table partners then vote on whether the situation meets their threshold of "acutely elevated risk" to warrant immediate intervention. To fully understand this threshold, it is key to remember that many of the people accessing social services already live a life with varying levels of risk, some even quite severe, but for their case to come to Connectivity, something had to have happened that has elevated that risk. Connectivity is focused on that element and is designed to specifically address that factor.

If the case meets the threshold of elevated risk, further details about the individual are presented, such as name

and address. Agency representatives with relevant information put up their hands, but give no details. Other agencies that might contribute to an intervention are identified. These agencies then meet away from the rest of the Table.

Next, all the organizations at the Table say whether they feel they can contribute to the case at hand. For any situation, four to six service organizations are usually involved.

These organizations then immediately meet, discuss the case, and develop a unique crisis plan to address the acute risk factor.

Obtaining consent is a priority that allows the process to move swiftly. Over 90 percent of people accept the help provided by the Connectivity Table.

Each table meets weekly and a key part of that is checking in with previously discussed cases. A week after a new situation is brought to

them, the service organizations who volunteered to become involved give a report. If the crisis plan has been put into place and one of the organizations has taken the lead, the case is considered closed by the Table, though the work will continue, sometimes for years after the risk element has been mitigated.

Connectivity collects data in order to measure results, none of it identifiable. They keep track of the ages, genders and other statistical elements as well as the risk factors involved. This helps them track trends, notice patterns of violence and crime, as well as identify what new risk factors are emerging as the region changes, such as social isolation, which the Table and its member agencies have seen slowly increasing in their front-line work.

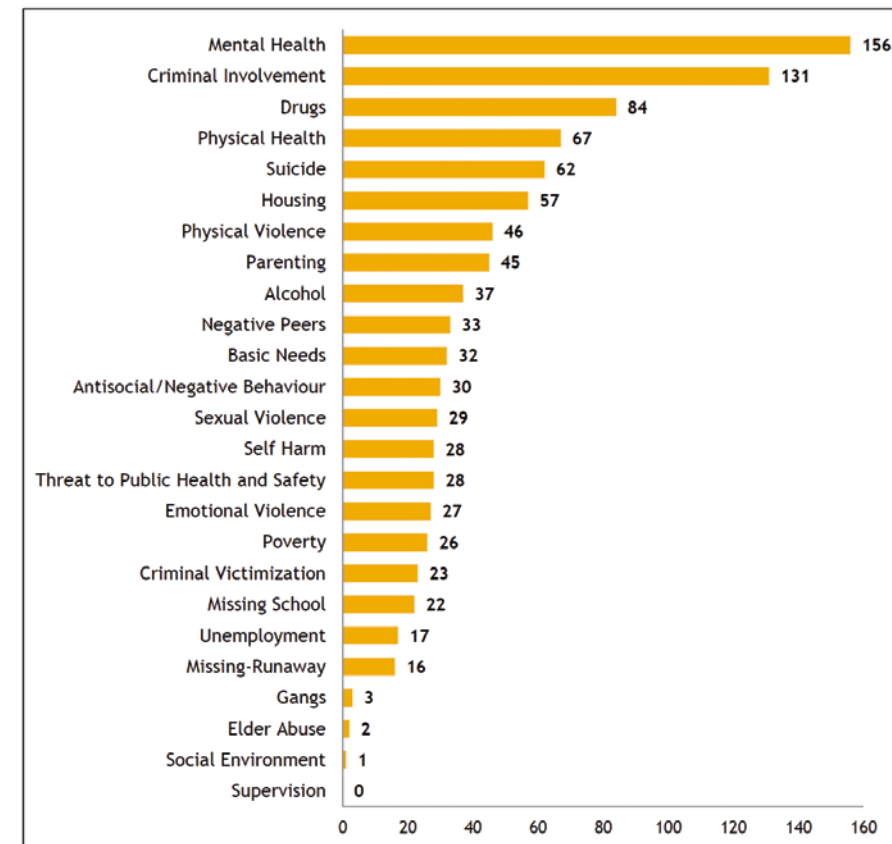
An 18-month report released in March 2016, showed 133 cases brought to the Kitchener Table. Of that, 121 were deemed "acutely elevated risk" and were opened as cases; 118 of those were fully concluded by the Table with three situations remaining still open. The 12 cases that were not seen were rejected because the individual was already connected to a service provider able to mitigate the risk.

Connectivity has seen a growth in the number of member and adjunct organizations involved as well as seeing more situations come before the Table. While an increase in cases could be seen as a negative statistic, instead it is positive one, indicating that more people are becoming aware of the initiative and, more importantly, more situations are able to be mitigated before an escalation occurs.

The Connectivity Table is an innovative and unique approach to policing, to social justice, and to delivering care. Its collaborative design instills a sense of community among its members, fostering relationships across all the social services. [AJ](#)

Teghan Barton is an assistant editor with [AJ](#).

## Kitchener's Connectivity Table

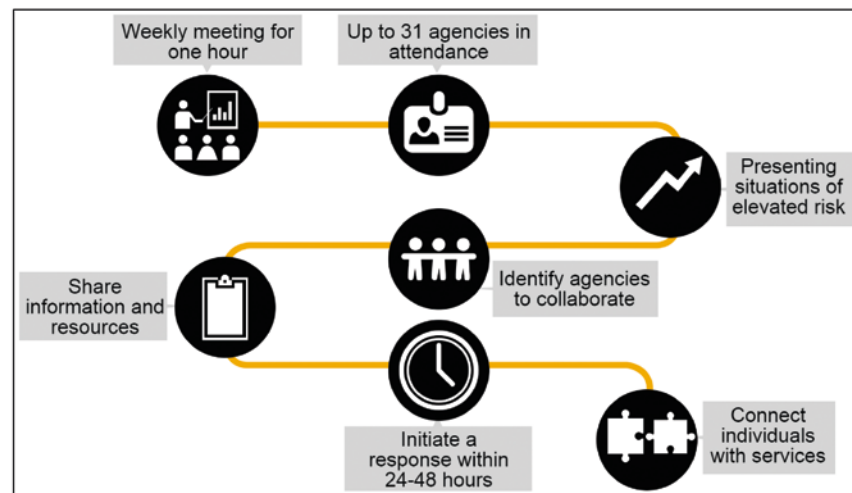


Each Connectivity Table accumulates data during every weekly meeting as each situation of an individual or family at an "acutely elevated risk" is assessed. The data fits into 26 defined categories, under which there are up to 102 risk factors. This data is a reflection of the category breakdown of the Kitchener Connectivity Table at its 18-month Report (October 2, 2014 to March 31, 2016).

Source: Carizon Family and Community Services.

Find lots more on Connectivity in Waterloo Region at [carizon.ca/community-services/connectivity-kitchener](http://carizon.ca/community-services/connectivity-kitchener).

## Roadmap of the Connectivity process



Confidentiality at the Connectivity Table is paramount. There are four filters that occur at various spots on this flow chart of the Connectivity process. This allows the partners at the table to screen situations without using personal information of the individual or family's risk assessment.

Source: Carizon Family and Community Services.



# State of Belonging

No one can better explain the value and necessity of belonging than Canada's 26<sup>th</sup> Governor General Adrienne Clarkson.

“Society isn't built upon people liking each other.

It is built around the fact that everybody is a human being and deserves the same treatment and respect that you do.”



“That’s what democracy really means; it’s speaking out, it’s taking your place in the world, it means leaving your own private self and entering the public world and of course it means taking a risk when you do that.”

**I**S IT EASIER for us to embrace “belonging” if we know who doesn’t belong? Can we respect someone – let them belong – even if we don’t particularly like them?

Enigmas such as these run through an interview with Adrienne Clarkson, but so does her optimism. Canada’s former Governor General is passionate about her message that the state of belonging isn’t a finite concept – we’re not going to run out of it if we build a country where all of us feel we truly belong. And practicing inclusion is not about liking someone.

“Society isn’t built upon people liking each other,” Clarkson says. “It is built around the fact that everybody is a human being and deserves the same treatment and respect that you do. They have the right to live just as you do, and therefore life and society has to be organized around them just as it is around you.”

At the time of last spring’s interview, Clarkson was preparing for her lecture “Belonging: Diversity, Community Capacity and Contribution” at the University of Waterloo. Clarkson, a humanitarian, award-winning journalist, and scholar, has a deep understanding of her subject. For one thing, she knows what it is like to develop a sense of belonging as an immigrant – her family came to Canada from Hong Kong in 1942 when she was just three years old.

In fact, that’s part of her recognition of the surface layer of belonging – the numerous cultural touchstones, stereotypes if you will, that we think make us truly Canadian. These include Timbits, “beaver tails”, hockey, wearing toques, apologizing for everything, good beer, and, of course, that we are an open, welcoming society. Clarkson believes these touchstones “play an integral role in how we feel about our role in our communities and our country.”

They can be a foundation on which we connect. For new immigrants, embracing these cultural touchstones is part of a transition into a new social home.

But Clarkson is also intrigued that we frequently build our national identity by defining what we are not – specifically how we are not like the United States. This concept has so grafted itself onto who we are that we are unable to see the cultural forest for the trees. We seem to feel more secure in our own belonging when someone else does not belong – as if there are only a few spaces at the table and we want to ensure that we have one.

Clarkson speaks frequently of “the other” and “othering,” a process that happens when we engage in behaviour that seeks to exclude. This involves us, as individuals and as a social collective, attributing negative traits (such as violent, untrustworthy, etc.) to a

specific group of people; anything that highlights how their differences are too great for us ever to get along.

We start to see them as a threat to our society and the very ideals we claim to value. It comes down to saying: “We don’t want you; you don’t belong,” Clarkson says. When someone is “othered,” they become “less than” – less than a person and if someone isn’t considered a person, it is easier to excuse and justify their exclusion and marginalization from society.

Clarkson laments that “we are always being faced with people who have no idea whatsoever of what the ‘other’ is – and don’t care and couldn’t make any effort whatsoever to see what the ‘other’ is like.”

And that needs to be corrected. Our membership in Canada is “dependent on us reaching out and embracing the other,” she says.

She also points out that there is an element of “knowing” people that subtly underwrites the idea of belonging, that somehow you should know all the people in your community and that it is the knowing that means they belong.

“But you can’t be actively involved with everybody,” she points out. “There are simply too many people in world, let alone in our own communities for us to have a genuine relationship with each of them. There is always going to be people who you don’t know.”



This illustration created during Clarkson’s talk at the University of Waterloo summarises her most important concepts.

As individuals we have a spectrum of how many people you can be actively involved with – there are roughly 110 people on the outer edge of any one person’s engagement circle. Considering people are a spectrum, that’s anywhere from 30 to 150 people you’re both willing and able to “put the work in for,” she comments.

And Clarkson understands that it’s unreasonable to expect that you’ll have an effective relationship with everyone in that circle. “We don’t have the human capacity to remember all of the details of more than that.” If the idea of belonging is dependent on a having an effective relationship with everyone, than that model is flawed and deeply unachievable.

For Clarkson, the secret to belonging is straightforward: “To be able to look at one another and actually see one another.”

#### Call to action

Clarkson highlighted two significant ways in which we can make an

impact, one a societal act and one an individual act.

She argues passionately about the importance of public institutions (such as schools, community centres, swimming pools, arenas, libraries): “Our institutions help craft people and communities into the type of people we want to be. They play an active role in building who and what we are, so they become fundamental in this way. We need to respect those institutions and steer them with kindness, for they shape the future.”

It is in these spaces that we learn to reach out across social divides and see each other as unique individualized people. We start to build relationships, and build commitments to each other and to our macro and micro communities. We then take these building blocks and bring them with us when we enter other spaces.

But if we don’t act as stewards for our institutions, they can become the very things we don’t want them to be.

When publicly funded institutions

are eradicated, we get a strictly divided society based on class and race.

These institutions then set up the strict guidelines for who are the “right” kind of people to mingle with, ensuring that the “right” people know each other and by keeping out any “undesirables.”

Public institutions counteract that. Canada still remains a nation of immigrants and Clarkson believes that “public schools and institutions create a mixture of every type of person in society, every background and that helps create who you are as a human being.” We become citizens through this mixing process.

Clarkson believes we should be happy to know our taxes go to support such fundamentally important work. “Don’t begrudge property taxes and the like because it goes to schooling ... to your children, to your grandchildren, to other people’s schooling, which is important because what are we if we’re not part of a society that contributes to the well-being of others.”

The second call to action is of a





TOMASZ ADAMSKI/ THE KWCF

Adrienne Clarkson speaks about her book "Belonging" at the University of Waterloo.

personal nature, the one where you begin to make the changes in your own life. Clarkson asks that we each be "present in the willingness to act and to speak by inserting yourself into the world." That when we see injustice, acts of racism, homophobia, misogyny, ableism, etc., we have the courage to stand up and speak.

"It takes a lot of courage" to do that, Clarkson says, but "it is very important to speak out. That's what democracy really means; it's speaking out, it's taking your place in the world, it means leaving your own private self and entering the public world and of course it means taking a risk when you do that."

But that risk will be worth it. If being a welcoming society is a key element to who we are as a nation, than we ought to be working hard to make sure it's true. Each of us has a role to play, as individuals and in our communities.

As Clarkson reminds us, "Canada is a project to which we are all contributing to, and that we have a role in the world to play."

Teghan Barton is an assistant editor at A.J. She interviewed Clarkson in June of 2016. Watch Clarkson's public lecture to the Waterloo community at [kwfc.ca](http://kwfc.ca)

ON MAY 25th, 2016 WE HOSTED

The Right Honourable  
*Adrienne Clarkson*

WHO INSPIRED US  
WITH HER LECTURE ON

**BELONGING**  
DIVERSITY, COMMUNITY  
CAPACITY & CONTRIBUTION

EVENT PARTNERS:



**Belonging Explored**

A review by Teghan Barton

**ADRIENNE CLARKSON** is one of Canada's most forward-thinking individuals and a leader in the fight for a better Canada. One of Clarkson's greatest gifts is her ability to enthrall an audience, whether that is with her voice or through the page. If you ever have the chance to listen to her speak, do yourself a favour and go; you will not regret it.

Luckily, we all have the ability with her seminal work *Belonging: The Paradox of Citizenship* which is available both in print and in the original CBC Radio Massey Lecture.

*Belonging* is at once a sweeping tale of human history, weaving in elements from the ancient past to the events of today, and a microscopic look at our very nature as human beings. Her work reminds us that belonging begins at home and its something we take with us everywhere we go. It is a remembrance of the past, a check-in for our present, and a call to the future.

And in a time of increasing xenophobia and exclusionary politics, her words are even more poignant and important. *Belonging* is accessible, written for every Canadian to hear it's message; but it's not an easy read. It asks you to look deep inside yourself and examine your beliefs and behaviour. She speaks for all of us and she's asking you to be the change.

Thanks to the over 450 community members from around Waterloo Region that joined us in the Humanities Theatre at the University of Waterloo.

The full lecture is available online.

GET INSPIRED! Visit [WWW.KWCF.CA](http://WWW.KWCF.CA) to view the video today!

THANKS!

THIS EVENT WOULDN'T  
HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE  
WITHOUT THE SUPPORT OF:



THANKS!





Priyanka Lloyd, Managing Director, and Mike Morrice, Executive Director of Sustainability CoLab, share the stage at the CoLab Connects 2016 event in Toronto.

# Stronger Together

Nudged by a major funder, four organizations unite to form The Low Carbon Partnership – to help Canada deliver on its climate commitments.

**I'M ALLERGIC** to coalitions.” That’s what a prominent Canadian environmental leader once told me.

It was 2012, and the organization I was working with at the time had broached the idea of uniting several groups in an effort to disrupt the entrenched “jobs versus nature” narrative.

Unfortunately, the would-be partner wasn’t into it. The proposed assembly would be too unwieldy, he said, and his group’s specific interests and messages would end up diluted and lost in the crowd.

We want people to point to us and say, “This is a best-in-class example of how you can do more together than apart.”

Partnerships and coalitions can be powerful. But the truth is, they do take effort. If it is to succeed, a coalition has to “feel right” on several levels. There needs to be trust and some basic rules of engagement. The whole thing rides on a continuing shared conviction that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

In the case of The Low Carbon Partnership — a new alliance of organizations helping Canadian businesses and communities take action on climate change, increase profitability, and grow the low carbon economy — all the pieces came together.

It took a funder to strike the match, says Mike Morrice, Executive Director of Sustainability CoLab, one of the three initial founding partners alongside The Natural Step Canada and Climate Smart. (A fourth partner, QUEST (Quality Urban Energy Systems of Tomorrow), joined the group later.)

That funder was the JW McConnell Family Foundation.

Morrice says each of the three initial groups had applied for funding for work that had similar objectives around advancing the low-carbon economy. Sensing there was an opportunity for the groups to do something special together, the foundation approved the funding requests, but topped up the grants with additional funding to seed a collaborative effort that would span the country.

Elizabeth Sheehan, who is based on the West Coast — far from Ontario, where the others call home — says that without McConnell’s initiative, they would still likely be competing for resources. “I don’t know if I would have had the time to make that move without the foundation’s support,” she says

In late 2014, Sheehan, the President and co-founder of Climate Smart, flew to Ottawa to talk about a possible partnership with Morrice and Chad Park, then the Executive Director of The Natural Step Canada.

From square one, something just clicked.

“It was fantastic,” Sheehan recalls. “I was having a conversation with others doing similar work, and figuring out how we could support a different narrative about the role that businesses and communities needed to play in the climate fight, because I knew we couldn’t do that alone.”

“We all understood that this energy and economic transition was underway, and that businesses and communities were already playing a role, and that we needed to ramp up their involvement beyond the early adopters,” Sheehan adds.

But with a then-indifferent federal government, the three struggled to find a platform to really light a fire under Canada’s low-carbon economy.

## The new crowd in Ottawa

Everything changed, of course, in October 2015, when a new government took the reins on Parliament Hill and shuffled climate action to the top of its list. Freshly minted Environment and Climate Change Minister Catherine McKenna assumed a leading role in the Paris Agreement negotiations.

Post-Paris, the partners realized that they were ideally positioned to help the government deliver on its COP21 commitments. Between them, they had enormous reach and expertise.

They had links to more than 1,200 businesses — from Bay Street firms to the mom and pops — that collectively generated some \$100 billion in

revenue. They also had deep ties with more than 200 communities, having helped dozens of local governments imagine a low-carbon future and put in place the initial steps they need to get there.

In short, combined, they had the relationships, networks, tools and track record in the trenches of low-carbon transition. To help fill geographic gaps, the partners brought QUEST onboard. QUEST, which has a similar mission, has representation in every province except PEI, Newfoundland and Labrador, and Saskatchewan. The group also has a North caucus covering the three territories.

Park, Sheehan, Morrice and Brent Gilmour of QUEST gathered around a whiteboard in early March at the GLOBE Sustainable Business Leadership Summit in Vancouver to talk next steps.

They were literally across the street from the First Ministers Meeting, where Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and his team were assembling the initial pieces of a national climate and clean growth framework.

The first order of business was a submission to Minister McKenna’s Let’s Talk Climate Action portal, timed with an early-July public launch that included endorsements from a raft of political, business and civil-society leaders. These included a mayor, a provincial environment minister and representatives of banking and energy sectors, among others.

The four Low Carbon Partnership members now understand the human dimension to building the trust that underscores collaboration. It’s a mix of seeing one’s colleagues following through on commitments, and building on the common empathy that people





Mike Morrice engages the audience at the CoLab Connects 2016 event.

who are working toward the same goal share. Weekly video conference calls help, too.

#### The winning recipe

To Sheehan, the foundation of an effective coalition is about having “really genuine conversations around your goals, your way of working, your preferred approach to running projects. Do you like a messy kitchen to create a beautiful meal or do you do the dishes while you’re cooking?”

“If you get a lot of that out on the table at the front end, then you have more insight to help you navigate difficult discussions.”

Morrice employs another culinary metaphor to explain the underlying tension between four organizations that are used to competing for funding now sharing resources.

“Each of the individual partners needs to feel like the juice is worth the squeeze,” he says. “I keep checking my gut on this, and I know that I’m stronger as part of this network than

I am working solo, even if I’m giving something up to be part of it.”

David Hughes, who assumed leadership of The Natural Step Canada just prior to the launch of the Low Carbon Partnership in July, is similarly excited by the potential and looks forward to finding new synergies, to reduce duplication and have a bigger impact.

“The Natural Step’s expertise in convening and facilitating difficult discussions on complex subjects, married with Climate Smart’s software and approach for measuring GHGs, CoLab’s ability to engage the private sector in taking action on climate change, and QUEST’s leadership in working with utilities makes for a powerful combination that is sure to make us stronger together,” Hughes says.

“We want people to point to us and say, ‘This is a best-in-class example of how you can do more together than apart. We want government to be citing us an example of a group that got it

right, and left their egos and logos at the door and went beyond their self-interest in order to serve a greater cause.”

To Gilmour, executive director of QUEST, the aspirations of the individual players are as important as their mission statements. “In the case of the partnership, each of us realized early on that we share very similar values. We are, and want to be seen as, impartial, nonpartisan and level-headed. We don’t advocate, we provide highly credible information and support concrete action of others with proven strategies.”

By any measure of success, this low-carbon quartet is well on its way. And later this year, as Canadian businesses and communities work to implement a new Pan Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change, its expert assistance will be close at hand. **EW**

**James Glave (@jamesglave) is the principal of Glave Communications**



An artist rendering of the future Centre for Sustainability Excellence building in Waterloo.

# Psychology Of Green

In an upcoming Waterloo building, sustainability belongs to everyone.

**IT'S NOT EVERY DAY** that a building plan seeks input from an associate professor in community psychology. But then again, this is not an everyday building.

For one thing, it has ambitious goals to hit top benchmarks for net-positive commercial construction. The building, with about 115 square feet on three floors, is expected to generate more energy than it uses, treat wastewater onsite, harvest rainwater and naturally purify its indoor air.

When it opens in 2018, the Waterloo, Ontario, building will not only house multiple tenants with aligned values, but it will also include an innovation hub, with an incubator supporting green economy and clean-tech concepts for startups, corporate partners and academia.

But the building, with a working title of Centre for Sustainability Excellence, is also unusual for its intriguing collaborations. The project

leader is Sustainable Waterloo Region (SWR), which has a proven record in helping local organizations convert sustainability interest into action.

SWR’s partners for the project include The Cora Group (developer), David Johnston Research + Technology Park at the University of Waterloo (the landowner) and EY Canada, which will be an anchor tenant.

The planning process stretches beyond boardrooms. SWR believes many high-performance buildings don’t live up to their potential because the people-factor is not adequately considered in reaching performance targets through design and operation. So “citizens” connected to this building – everyone from the landlord to the tenants and even those just passing through – will play an important role.

And that’s where Dr. Manuel Riemer comes in. Riemer, Associate Professor of Community Psychology and the Director of the Centre for Community

Research, Learning and Action at Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo, has a leading role in this project, engaging the building’s “citizens” in the sustainability strategy from start to finish. Additional research, including focus groups and surveys with prospective tenants and people working in the surrounding area, will also target key concerns and help tailor strategies to fit within existing organizational and social structures.

In other words, SWR not only envisions a building that will achieve ambitious performance targets, but also a behavioural model that supports a sense of belonging through authentic interactions between people of different backgrounds, skill sets and experience.

Along the way, SWR will consider how pride of place, values alignment, individual action and measureable results contribute to an overall sense of belonging. When people’s values align,



it brings them together as a community.

This, in turn, feeds into SWR's belief that sustainability is more achievable when people – both individuals and organizations – care about the collective well-being of the building, its surroundings and its other citizens. By building trusting, mutually beneficial relationships, each party “owns” the project.

Finding tenants who buy into the project's collective values is an important part of the process. And early collaboration facilitates shared experience and seeds the cultural structure on which SWR's goals are dependent. EY Canada is the perfect fit as an anchor tenant. Company officials have been working with SWR for years to reduce their environmental impact and have been heavily involved in planning the new building.

The vision for an innovation hub takes shared values and purposes to a new level, creating a sustainability ecosystem where people can pursue environmental innovation and research either independently or as part of a larger organization. Plans call for a 20,000-square-foot incubator plus a collaborative space that includes various types of workspaces and a 3,500-square-foot event space.

The research going into the overall plans for the building won't stop once tenants move in and the innovation hub is active. As well as developing recommendations for building management, SWR will work with Riemer to explore how lasting sustainability habits are built.

The World Green Building Council reports that employees who work in buildings that prioritize both physical and psychological well-being are more productive. The same report states that sustainability happens at the “sweet spot” of good design, good technology and good behaviour. For the SWR project, the “good behavior” will come from engaged citizens who contribute to a positive, connected community.

“Individual well-being is not really just about individuals,” Riemer explains. “It requires group well-being, and to understand what that is, we must also consider the context of the situation. For [this building] to be sustainable, we

need to find a way to achieve individual and group well-being.”

As Tova Davidson, Executive Director at Sustainable Waterloo Region, says: “Change starts with people. When people realize that they have the power to change the world, amazing things can happen, and we want the people in this building to feel that empowerment.”

As for the building itself, plans include a solar wall covering most of the south face of the building; a three-storey green wall and performance displays prominent in the atrium; solar panels covering the entire roof and a significant portion of the parking lot; permeable paving for hard surfaces; and green roofs.

To demonstrate its environmental impact, metrics will be tracked and shared publicly. With every action made, citizens contribute to the sustainability of the building, and measurable results will allow them to take ownership for their actions.

The building's location in the David Johnston Research + Technology Park, part of the University of Waterloo's North Campus, is also significant. This park, which has nine buildings housing more than 75 companies, has already created a community of belonging, which will be used as a strong foundation for the SWR project.

The park joined SWR's Regional Carbon Initiative program in 2014 with a 40-per-cent greenhouse gas reduction target across multiple buildings and multiple tenants. This commitment was set thanks to a cross-company green team, something that had never been done in the Regional Carbon Initiative. This is the same type of inter-organizational collaboration that the new building is striving to produce.

Carol Stewart, Business Development Manager of the R+T Park, says she is pleased that the building will be part of the R+T Park. “It strongly aligns with our environmental and cultural values and will be a great addition to the community we have created here.”

Sustainability is more attainable when people feel like they belong to a larger community. To make a real change, people have to alter their behaviour and habits, and there has

to be innovation in the environmental sector.

Creating a strong sense of belonging in an environmentally forward community may start with SWR's plans for this new building, but it doesn't end there. It doesn't end with Waterloo Region or Canada. It ends when everyone realizes that their actions are part of something much bigger, and that individuals play an important role in creating a shift in our society and for a more sustainable world. **EW**

**Lexi Halley is the Public Relations Manager for Sustainable Waterloo Region. She has a history of dedicated volunteerism and deep roots within the Region.**

Keep up to date on the progress of SWR's new building project and all their other important initiatives by visiting: [sustainablewaterlooregion.ca/news/](http://sustainablewaterlooregion.ca/news/)

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# Seeds of Change

Join an environmental group in your community. Here are four (of so many) in Waterloo Region.

**H**UMANKIND is an inherently social species. Not only do positive relationships reduce stress and feelings of loneliness, but they also result in long-term happiness and good health. A sense of belonging plays an important part in this social phenomenon.

When we feel we belong within our group of friends, our family or community, we believe we can comfortably contribute and share. What ends up happening is that more is accomplished than what is possible by one's self.

However, in our ever-changing, fast-paced world, it can be easier to disconnect than to belong. This poses a challenge for social justice and environmental organizations alike – how do we foster a sense of belonging within new and old community members, and how do we make it last?

With this in mind, AJ asked four Waterloo Region organizations for their thoughts on belonging and how they integrate it through their projects and programs. Here's what they had to say.

## rare – Charitable Research Reserve

"The key to belonging is a connection to place and space, the lands we live and work on, the foods we grow on it, [and] the communities and relationships we build on it," says Dr. Stephanie Sobek-Swant, executive-director of rare.

You'll find these kinds of connections at rare's 900-acre Charitable Research Reserve in Cambridge, Ontario. Research and education play key roles in its mission to preserve, protect and restore the environment of its lands. Numerous programs engage the public, everything from the Every Child Outdoors program, which helps train and inspire future environmentalists, to the Turn the Map Green Campaign, which gives individuals a sense of ownership by letting them adopt a square of land.

The Springbank Community Garden at rare also creates a sense of home. "Giving [people] space to connect with the land, and grow the foods they know, is a great learning and

sharing opportunity for everyone and really accomplishes a sense of belonging," says Sobek-Swant. It's comfort food – straight from the garden.

What may be most important for solving the environmental and social issues in this land is to listen, Sobek-Swant says. To illustrate the point, she passed on a quote from First Nations writer Lee Maracle, who lived in rare's North House as the 2015 Eastern Comma Writer in Resident: "No one in Canada has their original landscape." So as "newcomers," we need to work together on strengthening our bond to the land while being open to doing things differently.

"All of us working together to protect what we have or trying to bring it back to what it should be, through ecological efforts as well as through reconciliation – that to me, is what our work can really contribute to belonging," says Sobek-Swant.

<http://raresites.org>

## The Working Centre

From its conception in 1982 in downtown Kitchener, the Working Centre has been a sanctuary for those seeking help and advice. The centre offers countless opportunities for workers and volunteers to engage in the community.

The Working Centre's Market Garden, located at Kitchener's famous Hacienda Sarria, has more than 100 volunteers and is currently training five interns. Another project called Recycle Cycles repairs worn-out bikes – and teaches people to repair their own bikes. Last year Recycle Cycles took in about 1000 bikes and resold a little over half of them.

Joe Mancini, the director of the Working Centre, says they follow a "Community Tool Philosophy."

"Firstly, we ensure that those using the tools can do so in a way that best expresses their skills and abilities" he says.

"Secondly, we shape the tool so that a community need is addressed such as helping fix a bike, recycle furniture and build a market garden. Thirdly, this work is enhanced when the experience builds social co-operation. All together this approach develops a culture of shared tools."

"The projects grow when a spirit of hospitality and neighbourliness are at the center of the work," says Mancini. "Community Tools aim to reduce isolation by teaching the benefits of using tools in a shared environment. Organizationally, we are not trying to protect our space, but rather we open up and welcome people to share the resources and make them their own." In the end, this strengthens belonging in their community.

[theworkingcentre.org](http://theworkingcentre.org)

## WREN – Waterloo Region Environment Network

When asked about belonging, the first thing Stacey Danckert, the Co-Director from the Waterloo Region Environmental Network (WREN) did was quote a proverb: "If you want to go faster, go alone. If you want to go further, go together."

Indeed, one of WREN's main goals is to create a web of connections among environmental organizations in Waterloo Region.

Danckert says WREN's strategy "combines the use of 1) an online "hub" where the community can easily access relevant information, volunteer recruitment, as well as share projects and skills; 2) a physical space that can be shared by members; and 3) event opportunities that provide shared learning,

mentorship and collaborative opportunities."

In the past, WREN has hosted project-sharing events where others can share ideas, as well as make connections with similar projects, volunteers and skills. Currently they are in the midst of refining and expanding their reach, however WREN makes it clear that a community can't survive without a sense of belonging.

"When people take part in a solution," says Danckert, "they are more likely to feel connected to it... WREN creates more ways to connect amongst members and with the community, increasing the network of support and improving the collective success and the sense of belonging within Waterloo Region."

[wrenvironetwork.ca](http://wrenvironetwork.ca)

## REEP – Green Solutions

For REEP – Green Solutions, belonging means feeling pride for where you live and having a sense of ownership.

To accomplish this, REEP has a number of projects. For example, The Rain Ready Neighbourhoods project aims to help homes in two neighbourhoods to become more flood-resistant, sustainable and beautiful. Homeowners will feel a sense of accomplishment as they form a plan with REEP.

Another project is the Front Yard Makeover contest. This is a fun and friendly contest where neighbours can compete for the best-looking yard. Mary Jane Patterson, the executive director at REEP says, "Something like this gets neighbours talking to each other... It builds community."

In an email, Patterson and her team described their work this way: "Our goal is to foster collective action. When people work together they naturally share their ideas and experiences, which strengthens their relationships, and

contributes to an environmental ethic. By participating in incremental improvements in their neighbourhood, we hope people will develop a sense of contribution and genuine pride in what they accomplish with their neighbours."

REEP is a part of the greater environmental movement. As more people join the movement, they amplify the impact. It's this collective action that strengthens social bonds and builds community at the same time.

In the end, when people feel like they belong, it can inspire environmental action. "The hope is that there's a domino effect, strengthening the sense of belonging that participants feel as they take action," says Patterson.

[reepgreen.ca](http://reepgreen.ca)

Veronika Szostak is a student in the School of Environment and Resource Studies at uWaterloo and a fine intern at AJ.





Denise "Momma D" Philip and a colleague serve a YMCA member.

# Our Team

From accessible rehab to ESL classes, the YMCA has become a highly social safety net for our community.

"The YMCA-CKW responds to our community's needs — and we have been doing so since our founding."

**V**ISITING the AR Kaufman Family YMCA in Kitchener, Ontario, is a bit like dropping into an idealized version of the old family homestead. The young and old, quiet and noisy, confident and shy all gather there — many generations under one roof, working together to build for the future.

Add the motto of the YMCA of Cambridge/Kitchener/Waterloo (YMCA-CKW) and the image is complete "Dream, Grow and Achieve Together."

The motto is also a very good synopsis of the benefits of belonging. That doesn't come by accident for this organization or for the people who bring that motto to life every day in Waterloo Region.

"Here, it's just not about you," explains John Haddock, recently retired CEO of YMCA-CKW. "You're part of a meaningful whole. Be it through the promotion of a healthier lifestyle via our health and fitness programs or via our social programs for children, seniors, newcomers and families to help them feel more connected, we need each other to get things done. Our job, as stakeholders and caretakers of the YMCA legacy, is to find ways to float all boats (of need in our community) and to figure out ways how others can win."

"Winning" is an interesting (read "non-traditional") goal for a social service provider, but with Haddock encouraging his team to always do what's best for the community, the YMCA-CKW has grown five times larger over the past 15 years. It is a wonderful testament to the leadership of the soon-to-be-retiring Haddock and the dedicated work of staff and volunteers who have delivered these remarkable results at a time of decreasing resources.

The YMCA-CKW's wide range of services is particularly important for those seeking to find their place in a new community, a new country or even just upon entering a new life stage. One

of the greatest threats to mental and physical well-being is loneliness and social isolation. Research has shown that lacking social connections is as damaging to our health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day. And we also know that lonely individuals are more prone to depression. So a community that ascribes to the philosophy that "we're only as strong as our weakest link" understands the importance of providing friendly and welcoming support infrastructures.

The YMCA builds those bridges.

Haddock reminds us that the YMCA-CKW was initially empowered by benefactors representing the titans of industry in 1920's Waterloo Region. The Kaufmans, the Dares and the Breithaupts — each family a driver of the Region's historic legacy as a manufacturing hub — "felt a responsibility for the broader community," says Haddock. That ethos lives on today even as the Region's burgeoning tech sector (and the new titans-of-industry) takes over the civic leadership previously held by their manufacturing-centric corporate ancestors.

"Whether it's providing ESL classes for new Canadians or providing settlement services and confidence-building programs to refugees, the YMCA-CKW responds to our community's needs — and we've been doing so since our founding," says Haddock. "So when, today for example, we as a community need to support a new wave of Syrian refugees, we can count on our experience in helping Vietnamese boat people in the '70s and '80s, or our work in helping to settle thousands of displaced people after World War II."

The YMCA-CKW, and the broader YMCA movement, has been instrumental in building both a personal and community-wide sense of belonging for more than a century. And the tools they use extend far

beyond the equipment in today's centres. In fact, that noble purpose of building communities was embedded in the organization's founding beliefs and infuses each team member's actions today. And it continues to play the central role in strategizing the organization's most-appropriate roles for the future.

*"... And just go there, to the Y-M-C-A. I'm sure they can help you today."  
— Lyrics from YMCA, The Village People*

Ubiquity can be both a blessing and a curse. When something has been around for seemingly forever and is in just about every small town and major metropolis, we can take it for granted and/or come with preconceived notions of its value. The YMCA is much like that. We've all got ideas as to what services the YMCA provides — and many of those ideas are informed by the historical interactions we may have had with the institution.

For some of our oldest Canadians, the YMCA may have been the only address they had when moving to a new community. Branches sprouted up as our country developed, in many cases hand-in-hand with the development work of building railways or pioneering new regions.

Sports fans may know of the founding role of the YMCA in creating the sports of basketball and volleyball. Or we might remember our youthful swimming lessons and sports teams fostered by YMCAs across this country.

For others, the connection is more tangential, from walking past the YMCA buildings in our communities to dancing like a fool at some family wedding when that famous song plays. We're aware of the YMCA but, chances are, we don't have a full appreciation of its historic role in building a sense of belonging — and its current work (and future plans) for helping more



# “This here is my family.”

— Denise Philip from the YMCA of CKW

Canadians dream, grow and achieve.

The YMCA story began in London, England, over 170 years ago with one man who had an idea about how to make his community stronger. George Williams, a 22-year-old draper, started the YMCA in 1844 in response to unhealthy social conditions brought on by the Industrial Revolution.

The idea quickly caught on, and soon associations were springing up in cities throughout England and Europe. By 1851, the idea travelled across the seas. When the first YMCA in North America opened in Montreal on Nov. 25, 1851, a grassroots effort to help people and communities to grow and thrive was set in motion.

The YMCA helped grow the Canadian Pacific Railway in the late

1800s. YMCAs were built along developing railway lines, providing recreation, literacy programs, reading rooms and accommodation to workers who were otherwise limited to visiting saloons during their leisure hours. Several of today's Ys can trace their roots to a railway YMCA.

As Canada's population increased at the turn of the 20th century, the Y's role expanded. In 1906, Toronto YMCA staff member George Corsan introduced a radically different kind of swimming instruction. It was taught to groups rather than individuals and before going into the water, students learned basic movements through a series of land drills. These new swimming classes quickly became popular. In 1910, Canadian William Ball launched a

national YMCA swimming instruction program.

Supporting families has always been a key role for the Y, especially in Canada. Beginning in the first half of the 1900s, many YMCAs and YWCAs operated day nurseries to serve working families, although no licensing agencies existed at that time. As more women joined the workforce in the 1960s, many YMCAs began offering licensed child-care programs.

And the YMCA continues to support families. The YMCA Playing to Learn curriculum helps children up to age six discover learning through creative play that works with a child's natural curiosity and development. In 2006, the curriculum was rolled out to licensed YMCA Child Care Centres across Canada.

And in 2016, the YMCA of Greater Toronto launched its curriculum for before- and after-school programs, YMCA A Place to Connect. This makes the YMCA the first organization in Canada to have a curriculum for school-age programs.

As a charity, the YMCA provides vital community services that have a positive impact on some of Canada's most pressing social issues — from chronic disease to unemployment, social isolation, poverty, inequality and more.

Central to the Y success are:

- The people who unite behind their mission and bring their many talents to work;
- The safe and welcoming places the YMCAs provide — from health facilities to classrooms to newcomer centres;
- The comprehensive community-based programs that provide extra skills and opportunities.

These three critical resources — people, places and programs — come together to create a sense of belonging to a supportive network that helps members and program participants achieve personal development goals, be they physical, mental, social and/or emotional.

For those of us living in Waterloo Region, there is no better way to gain an appreciation of the YMCA-CKW's role in building a sense of belonging than by visiting one of its many locations, speaking to staff and volunteers, and soaking up the laughter and smiles that seem to emanate from every corner of the building.

I noticed Denise Philip (affectionately known at the Y as Momma D) when

I stopped by the AR Kaufman Family YMCA on a hot summer day in July. She was at the front desk, answering questions, giving and receiving hugs, and generally acting as a combination bouncer and greeter. She's fiercely proud of her YMCA family and does her best to keep watch over her charges, be they guests or team members.

As someone who had used the YMCA-CKW's services in the past, she has an intrinsic appreciation of its importance to building a stronger Waterloo Region. So the Kaufman Y was an ideal place to volunteer when she became an empty-nester. Now she spends her days helping others, connecting visitors with the wide array of programs and services on offer. And

with services running from 8 a.m. and to 11 p.m., there are a lot of visitors to manage and a lot of programs/services to deliver.

For example, the Kaufman Family YMCA delivers innovative health care programs effective in combating diseases like diabetes and cardiac complications, the effects of aging like osteoporosis and arthritis, and in helping patients rehab from surgery or debilitating injuries or illnesses like strokes. Not only are the fitness instructors on hand to help devise and deliver these programs from a physical health perspective, but there are also ample community-based and other social supports to ensure that peace-of-mind comes along with health-of-body.

And with the peer-to-peer work of encouraging compliance with “doctor's orders” or to simply keep up with the program, it is not unusual for participants to migrate from the gym to the common area, continuing the conversations that may have started hours previously with the first pushup. In fact, as I waited to speak to a particular guest, a woman in her 80s keeping fit in the gym, there was a delay due to her deep conversation with Philip at the front desk. When she was finally able to speak with me, she apologized with a “We got visiting.” Then she proceeded to tell me that, at the YMCA-CKW, “this is where I belong.”

From the looks — and sounds — of it, the YMCA-CKW is a place where citizens belong during all stages of their life journey. On the day of my visit, there were young day-campers excitedly getting ready for an afternoon's trip to the Waterloo Region Museum. These children, from diverse backgrounds and experiences, shared the common language of curiosity and were eager to explore and learn. There was a Caregiver Support group meeting in session, a critically important service that supports individuals who give care to those most in need. The pool was packed, the racket courts busy, the gym a place of sweating bodies and clanging metal.

And as we look to the future, we can see an important role for YMCAs in building stronger and more vibrant

## What's in a Name?

**THE YMCA WAS FOUNDED** as the Young Men's Christian Organization in response to a perceived need for social services to support the young men rushing to new communities during the early days of the Industrial Revolution in Great Britain. As workers migrated to big cities from rural communities, their well-being — mental, physical, social and spiritual — could be adversely affected through dislocation, lack of belonging and, in some cases, the temptations that accrue when away from the family.

This desire to help a changing society was grounded in Christian principles like charity, compassion and empathy — and spiritual services were a YMCA pillar in its formative years. Today, the organization serves all members of the community, regardless of race, religion, gender, orientation, ability or age. On any given day as you walk around your local YMCA, you'll notice that women generally outnumber men by a fairly wide margin.


“We serve all members of our community,” states John Haddock, CEO of YMCA-CKW. “And we honour our past by continuing to behave as governed by the tenets and teachings of the Judeo-Christian spiritual tradition while embracing new inspirations and teachings each and every day.”

How do the YMCA and YWCA connect?

Despite having similar acronyms, sharing the same abbreviated nickname (the Y), and the fact that several local YWCAs and YMCAs have merged, these are two distinct organizations with different origins and missions. They are separately incorporated, each established more than 150 years ago.


The YWCA was founded as the Young Women's Christian Association, but like the YMCA it has experienced a similar spiritual evolution, from Christian-centric to a broader, more ecumenical approach and an “all-are-welcome” mindset.

Today, the YWCA is a movement of women working for changes related to social and economic fronts around the world. The YWCA works for the promotion of young women's leadership and justice. It also plans programs that pave the way for peace and human rights at the grassroots level.

“The YWCA of this region does great and important work and we look to collaborate with them whenever it makes sense,” states Haddock. “The YWCA has a more singular focus on women's issues, specifically seeking to play a crucial role by helping women through challenging times and other turning points throughout their lives.” 

## YMCA Score Card

**IT'S AN ORGANIZATION** you think you know, but these 2015 statistics might help reboot your understanding of the vital roles Canada's YMCAs play in such important areas as physical fitness, social support networks and healthy child development. As well, YMCAs offer skills development, education and learning opportunities.

- More than 120 YMCA Health & Fitness centres across the country help 1.2 million Canadians make physical activity a part of their regular routine;
- Nearly 50,000 staff and volunteers make the Y a welcoming place where people feel a sense of belonging. Volunteers contribute 1.32 million hours;
- 1,700+ locations across Canada;
- 168,300 people participate in YMCA employment programs;
- 72,400 children are nurtured in YMCA child care programs and 139,300 children and youth in YMCA overnight and day camps (1,700 with disabilities). 



“The YMCA movement will continue to help Canadians achieve their potential.”



TOMASZ ADAMSKI

A fitness coach watches her client at the YMCA gym.

communities. With an unparalleled 170-year history of helping people feel like they belong combined with leading-edge and in-demand solutions in such important areas as childcare and seniors' health care, the YMCA movement will continue to help Canadians achieve their potential.

Best of all? While the YMCA may be ubiquitous, the team at YMCA-CKW isn't self-satisfied. Despite all of the incredible work being done today, they understand that they'll need to explore new partnerships and new programs to address new problems and goals, be they local or international.

As I'm readying to depart the AR Kaufman Family YMCA after an inspiring visit, I shared my thoughts (and kudos) with director of philanthropy Beth King.

“While we've got a long way to go,” King says, “I'm confident that, together with our community and with the help of our programs and services, we'll get to a point, not too far in the future, where every resident feels like they truly belong in Waterloo Region.”

A worthwhile mission, and from the smiling faces that I saw and the laughter that I heard, I'm pretty sure that Canada's YMCA – and the YMCA-CKW in particular – will continue to be a centre of growing communities for the next 170 years and more. **AJ**

David McConnachie is publisher of **AJ**.

Find your Y today!  
 YMCA Canada locations:  
[ymca.ca/Locations](http://ymca.ca/Locations)  
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**Welcome** | Pamela Rojas | 2011  
Mural on exterior of Kitchener-Waterloo  
Multicultural Centre

# Paying It Forward

Lessons learned from Syrian resettlement can prepare us for the future waves of climate change refugees.

**L**IKE A LOT of people, I cried when I saw the photos of three-year-old Alan Kurdi who drowned in the Mediterranean during his family's attempt to find safe harbour from the horrors of the Syrian civil war. My sorrow, my grief was real, and I was moved to tears ... and then to action.

My response was not unique. Many Canadians channelled their grief, sorrow and tears into positive action, including record monetary donations and an unparalleled commitment to settle Syrian refugees. By late August, Statistics Canada showed 29,970 Syrians had arrived in Canada.



“I deeply appreciate and highly commend such a compassionate leadership and generosity as shown by the Canadian government in accommodating 25,000 refugees.”

– United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon (2016)

Waterloo Region is one of six Ontario reception centres, and about 1,275 Syrian refugees have settled in our region since the fall of 2015.

The response, quite frankly, is impressive: Waterloo Region accommodated almost 4.74 percent of the 29,970 Syrians arriving in Canada into a community with only 1.4 per cent of the nation’s population. This ability to punch-above-the-weight reflects a tradition of service and a groundswell of urgent, citizen-led engagement.

Arif Virani, a Toronto MP and the parliamentary secretary to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Minister John McCallum, praised Waterloo Region’s efforts during a recent funding announcement. “That’s a testament to this region and its capacity and its willingness to participate in this project and welcome newcomers,” said Virani, himself a refugee who arrived in 1972.

The event itself was noteworthy. The \$175,000 in funding for affordable

housing for Syrian refugees came from the Welcome Fund: a partnership between the Community Foundations of Canada – and Manulife, CN and General Motors.

The Welcome Fund gift formed only part of the funding that has been raised to support Syrian Newcomers to Waterloo Region. Local community foundations stepped forward to handle the financial contributions from the community and formed The Immigration Partnership Fund for Syrian Newcomers. A matching program was announced by The Kitchener and Waterloo Community Foundation. Leveraging both The Foundation’s Community Fund and fund holder support, the result was over \$693,000 in donations raised to support the settlement of Syrian newcomers in Waterloo Region. The region’s coalition of the good-hearted includes long-time community-supporting stalwarts like

the Mennonite Central Committee and the K-W Multicultural Centre. But it also includes several new organizations that came together, fundraised and helped Syrian families make Canada their new home.

Meanwhile, the Mennonite Central Committee is partnering with other organizations, including Wilfrid Laurier University, the City of Waterloo and the City of Kitchener. The Kitchener Neighbourhood Association, Reception House (Waterloo Region), Mennonite Coalition for Refugee Support, Uptown West Neighbourhood Association and Erb Street Mennonite Church are a few of the groups that have held information sessions and/or encouraged private sponsorships. Organizations like the YMCA have opened their door to the newcomers by expanding support, access and settlement services.

It certainly is praise-worthy to see the efforts put forth by an eclectic mix of community organizations. But as you dig deeper, you see that Waterloo Region has a long history of extending a hand to refugees, the dispossessed and the displaced.

Not all of that history is good, mind you; there have been periods of injustice and intolerance. In fact, as this issue goes to press, police were investigating a possible hate crime after racist graffiti defaced a street muralist’s work in a civic art project.

But there’s been a lot of good done over the years – and lots of reasons why the soil seems to be extra nourishing for newcomers, fuelled by a generosity of time, energy, money and spirit.

#### Roots of generosity

Much of this generosity is rooted in an understanding that only comes from experience. For some, that experience

“None is too many...”

– The purported response from an unnamed immigration agent when asked how many Jews Canada would accept after the war (1945)

is centuries old, but remains ever-present. Many of Waterloo Region’s first immigrants were German Mennonites from Pennsylvania who fled to Canada in the 1700s and 1800s in the aftermath of the American War of Independence, and in search of greater religious freedoms.

The legends of their Conestoga wagons linger on in civic names and city crests. Their barn-raising ethos of communal support extends far beyond local barns and, thanks to the influence of Mennonite-affiliated founding civic leaders, continues to imbue a “we can do it” mentality when it comes to fostering more effective collaboration between government, organizations and citizens to combat urgent crises, far away and close to home.

Our roots of generosity reach even further back, as we must acknowledge the Anishnawbe, Neutral and Haudenosaunee peoples, whose traditional territory Waterloo Region is built upon.

For others, that experience is more recent. The individuals and groups represent first-, second- or third-generation immigrants – and they are equally eager to give back and get involved. The Immigration Partnership is one of the more recent groups, founded in 2011 with a conviction that successful settlement and integration is a mutually beneficial process that involves both immigrants and the broader community engaging in a process of learning and inter-relatedness. Their definition of “immigrants” includes people who immigrated a long time ago or more recently, refugees and refugee claimants, immigrants who are and are not Canadian citizens.

Others include Frances Tse, a supporter of The Kitchener and

Waterloo Community Foundation, who immigrated to Canada in 1975 from China. She shares how her experience informs her volunteerism: “The major challenge [was] a culture shock, and people. At the time, we did not have many ethnic groups and we had a really hard time establishing [here]. If I can help others overcome this challenge that I faced, then I’m repaying everyone who ever helped me in my worst moments.”

When Mo Elgadi came across a volunteer opportunity in December 2015, he never could have imagined the ripple effect it would have. He first started helping Syrian newcomers in Waterloo Region by volunteering his Arabic language skills to help families adjust to their new lives in Canada.

“Watching this humanitarian crisis unfold, I felt compelled to help in some way,” Elgadi says. “For me, this is about people helping people in our community. Being a first-generation Canadian myself and coming from a war-torn country, I could relate to the challenges facing the refugees from Syria.”

His passion for this cause soon drove him to think bigger. Elgadi, a manager in quality control engineering at the Cambridge Toyota plant, garnered support from senior leadership at Toyota Motor Manufacturing Canada. The result? A donation of \$26,000 to the Immigration Partnership Fund for Syrian Newcomers held at The Kitchener and Waterloo Community Foundation.

The journey of Canada – and Canadians – in moving from callously refusing to accept Jewish refugees fleeing Hitler (and near-certain death) in the past to our new role in providing compassionate leadership in welcoming refugees from the Syrian

civil war is the story of a migration of national consciousness. We’ve moved from a mindset of exclusion, fear and xenophobia to a willingness to embrace our responsibilities as a people and as a country, one blessed by abundance, peace and prosperity, to look after those less fortunate in times of dire need.

And when we look at the collective work of governments, groups and citizens across Waterloo Region – and come to appreciate their Herculean response to helping settle Syrian refugees – we can learn from their experiences, emulate their intentions and replicate the actions (and action plans) to assist all communities in better welcoming newcomers, regardless of the circumstances of their arrival.

The collective response was formal, structured and top-down – and also informal, eclectic and grassroots-up.

#### There will be climate refugees

However, as gracious as we Canadians – and the residents of Waterloo Region in particular – have been in opening our arms and our hearts to Syrian refugees, another pressing concern looms in our near future: climate refugees. And we need to be prepared.

*Refuge Magazine*, an interdisciplinary journal based in Toronto, estimates that by 2050 about 200 million people will be forced out of their homes due primarily to the impacts of climate change like rising sea levels, droughts, extreme weather and disasters not yet foreseen. As seen by the government of Kiribati’s recent purchase of land in Fiji, these impacts are already happening.

If these projections hold true, Canada, as a country with ample space and resources, will become one of the most desirable destinations for climate



WFP/DINA EL KASSABY

Lebanon, Bekaa Valley March 31, 2016: A young Syrian girl enjoys her studies while awaiting resettlement.



refugees from around the globe. And yet, in spite of such high projections, the lack of existing Canadian regulations and infrastructure is truly alarming.

A 2013 report from the Library of Parliament states that the “lack of provision in Canada’s current immigration system for the admission of people displaced for reasons directly related to climate change is consistent with international law, which does not recognize such people as refugees.”

The current federal government website identifies refugees as “people who have fled their countries because of a well-founded fear of persecution, and who are therefore unable to return home.” This excludes climate refugees.

Regulations like these need to change.

As the Library of Parliament report concludes, “Best estimates suggest that hundreds of millions of people could be on the move in the coming decades due to the impacts of climate change. Canada has an opportunity now to plan an orderly and effective response to the coming crisis.”

We know that climate change is a real and present threat whose impacts can (and in all likelihood will) make it impossible to return to homes

submerged by rising sea levels or abandoned due to extreme drought and heat conditions. We know there are more and more climate refugees each year. We know these people need help. And we know we can help.

The Canada we know today owes its identity to everyone who has called this land home. From the Aboriginal peoples, to the millions of migrants who came from all over the world, each adding to the mosaic of this nation.

We have a moral obligation to help our fellow humans in a time of significant need. Climate change and refugee migration are a twinned and looming concern. We need to incorporate this into our conversations. It needs to be integrated into our regulations – locally and globally.

Two of the underlying causes of the Syrian civil war are drought and famine, both directly related to the impacts of climate change. In many ways, little Alan Kurdi is not only a symbol of the strife in Syria, but also of the dangers of climate change – an innocent martyred like some canary in a coal-mine to awaken us all to the coming dangers.

We Canadians have a capacity to help and the Region of Waterloo has demonstrated the power of

collaborative action. The power of many coming together and helping out is much more than we can possibly imagine.

We are not dealing with refugees from climate change yet. I don’t know when we will or who will be responsible for creating and implementing a plan to address this urgent concern. But I do know I’m ready to help – and I’ll be helped by the lessons I’ve learned from the Region of Waterloo and its work to welcome 1,275 Syrian refugees within the last year. [AJ](#)

**Semini Pathberya is a graduate of the Environment and Resource Studies program at the University of Waterloo and a former AJ Editorial Intern. She currently works as an Assistant Project Manager at an environmental analysis firm.**

To learn more about the work of Waterloo Region to resettle Syrian refugees, please visit: [www.welcomesrefugees.ca](http://www.welcomesrefugees.ca) You can learn more about the government-supported, Canada-wide efforts by visiting: [www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/welcome](http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/welcome)



WFP/Dina El Kassaby

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*WFP is the world’s largest humanitarian agency providing food assistance to some 80 million people in 80 countries.*



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Volunteers paint Pamela Rojas' outdoor mural titled "We Are All The Same" (2010). See details of the finished piece on page 36.

PETER LEE/WATERLOO REGION RECORD

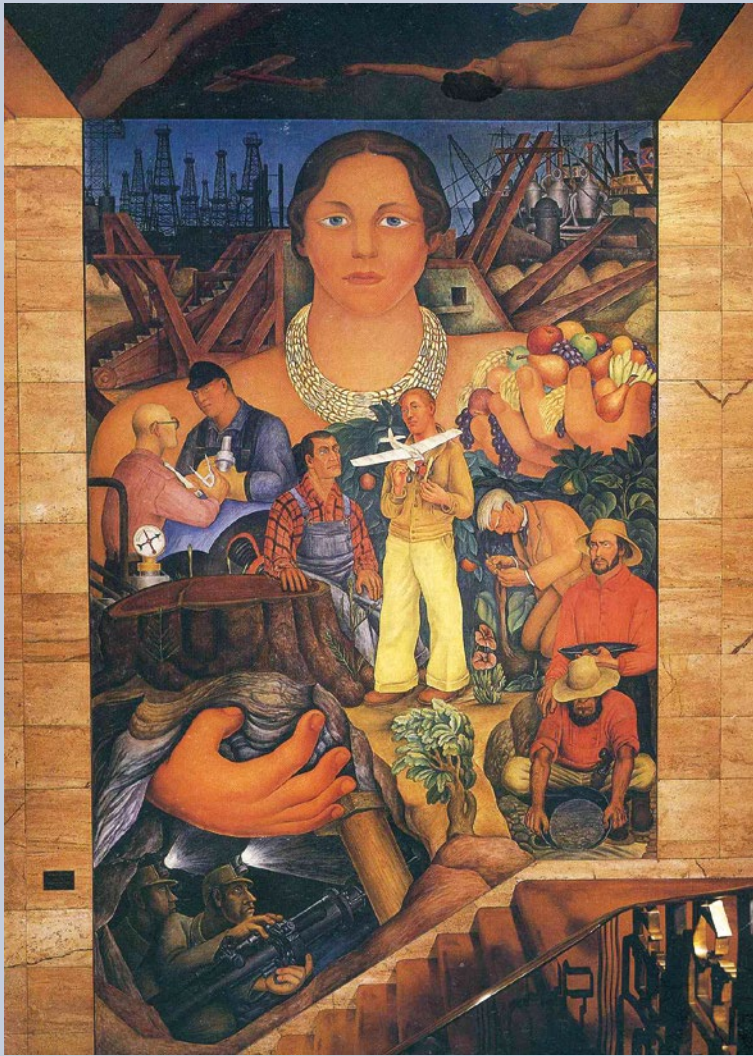
# Power of Art

The Pomegranate Mural Collective shows that anyone can help paint a vision for a vibrant community.

Imagine standing on a street corner in a Canadian city in the middle of February, and every wall that surrounds you is covered in a bright, colourful painting. Vibrant images reflect our diverse culture and relationships with nature. Imagine walking past these illustrations every morning as you start your day. You probably wouldn't care as much that the wind is whipping at your cheeks, or that the ground is covered in brown slush, because you would always be looking up, anticipating more colour as you go.

You will find murals in other cities – and some are celebrating the muralism movement with events. The Vancouver Mural Festival happened this past August and brought together 35 new murals, 20 artists and plenty of music and local business to celebrate. Waterloo Region's own Cambridge International Street Art Festival happens in August as well.





Diego Rivera | *Allegory of California* | 1931

## A Short History of Muralism

**ARTISTS, RESEARCHERS AND HEALERS** have known for centuries that colour can have transformative and restorative effects on human health.

If being surrounded by large colourful images can improve our mental well-being, then murals have the power to generate more profound connections to our surroundings. As the art form becomes more accessible, there are more opportunities to participate in the beautification, which translates into more connections with other community members.

Since the first cave paintings 40,000 years ago, murals have become a way to unite people, celebrate differences, protest war and injustice and communicate hope.

The spirit of muralism reached a pinnacle in the 20th century through the works of Mexican artists like Diego Rivera and José Clemente Orozco, whose influential works often distressed right-wing sympathizers and dictatorial regimes.

From the 1920s to the 1980s in Central and South America, the muralism movement powerfully expressed socialist and nationalist sentiments, sometimes as propaganda.

In times of industrial revolution and civil war, it was a way to communicate with everyone, from the illiterate to the educated.

While controversial, the popularity of this art form can be attributed to its accessible nature. Anyone can share the ownership of the creative process, the message and the final product as a colourful landmark.

— LJ

In the US, Philadelphia has implemented a city-wide mural program, supported by a network of artists and volunteers, to beautify its downtown core. Detroit artists are using all forms of public art, including murals, to engage community members in the city's revitalization.

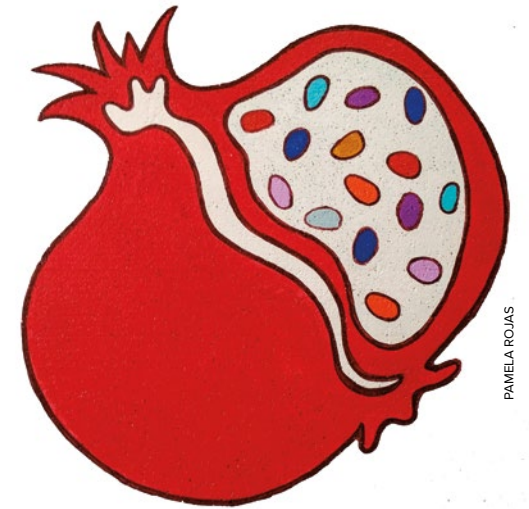
But there is also something just a little different bubbling in Waterloo Region. In a tiny creative studio, in a former Kitchener factory space, visual artist Pamela Rojas is surrounded by colourful canvases large and small, sculptures and other creations in preparation for her next exhibit. What you cannot see are the murals that she has created around the community, although if you look hard enough, there are small-scale models and sketches for some. The stories behind these murals demonstrate a new level of artistic civic engagement and have sparked the creation of the Pomegranate Mural Collective. More about that later.

Rojas grew up in Santiago, Chile where people, politics and murals intertwined to reflect the stories of Santiago's history, turmoil and celebration. In Chile, participating in mural painting equates to civic engagement. As a young adult, Rojas moved to Spain and studied at the prestigious Della Robbia in Seville, specializing in sculpture and ceramics. Later in 1996, she worked in Seville as an assistant to muralist Ximena Ahumada de Avila, also originally from Chile.

Ahumada shared stories of times when political turmoil would spark mural collectives to form and take action. Rojas recounts, "She had to paint in the night, clandestinely. She would have one part of the mural to do. They had an organized collective, so a few guys drawing, another group colouring, and another do the retouch – the black lines." The murals had to be completed in the dark in one night.

Rojas moved to Canada in 2005, landing a settlement work position at Kitchener's Reception House, helping newcomers settle in the community. Reception House assists families of many languages, and you can just imagine how physically and culturally disoriented many would be as they try

The objectives are simple. Involve artists, engage other members of the community, and colour up this town!



PAMELA ROJAS

Logo for the Pomegranate Mural Collective.

to settle in their new community. "For a few of the newcomer children, it was their first time having an art class. They were a blank canvas. I got to teach them to mix colours and apply paint."

Now, on some evenings during the week, you'll find Rojas working with children and youth at The Family Centre, which is the newest addition to Family and Children's Services of the Waterloo Region. Let's just say that since Rojas met their acquaintance, the white walls in the halls are starting to fill with colour, pictorial story, and even some youthful portraits. They are muralizing the halls, one session at a time, but the influence and effects go deeper on a personal level. "When we started creating the mural, at first the kids were scared, like 'I can't do that,' but once we finished, their ownership and pride is high, because they've completed something huge and they understand the concept of teamwork. Each kid has different personalities, and so I've found which of their traits or strengths can best add to the creation of the mural."

Wanting to bring that same personal transformational power of art to a community level, Rojas collaborated earlier this year with Eric Van Giessen, a street art enthusiast and master's candidate in Social Justice and

Community Engagement, to create the Pomegranate Collective. "We called it Pomegranate because the fruit inside is like little pieces. All of us can be represented by that," Rojas says. "I am the artistic director. Eric is this creative administrator."

The objectives are simple. Involve artists, engage other members of the community, and colour up this town! But the full intentions are yet to be realized. Rojas shares her vision "In the future when we have more people to join us, we can have different committees inside the collective. And we can have more artists helping to design the murals. I want the fusion between my mural and another. I want to see that – how two artists, or three or four can work in partnership."

Van Giessen explains that "Community is central to this collective. Our hope is that people will say, 'if I want Kitchener to be this sort of place, then I need to step up and make that happen.'"

Rojas makes the painting process easy for community members with little or no experience. Community murals are simple in design, and Rojas maps out every colour and shape, like a giant paint by numbers. "When you do it with guidance you are not set to fail."

Pomegranate welcomes other skills

as well. For example, volunteers can apply to help with the collective's social media efforts.

Forming collectives around artistic initiatives can increase efficiency (more heads are better than one) and inspire a sense of belonging and connection to care for community. The Pomegranate Mural Collective intends to blanket the Region of Waterloo in colour by uniting artists and community members. At the heart is diversity and togetherness.

The collective's next project is a mural for the Welcome Home Refugee Housing Community in Waterloo Region. Rojas brings her experience as an immigrant to this project.

Now imagine yourself as a recent newcomer to Canada, standing at an intersection of a Canadian city in February, and every wall that surrounds you is covered in a bright, colourful painting. And when you discover that you are welcome to join in with other creations like this, just imagine how that will make you feel valued, more connected to this new community – like you belong. [EN](#)

Lauren Judge is chief change maker and project manager specializing in innovation strategies, design thinking and storytelling at [abstractpm.com](http://abstractpm.com). She interviewed Pamela Rojas in August 2016. [pamelarojas.com](http://pamelarojas.com).





Details from Pamela Rojas' creation of the "Stories of new beginnings" mural in 2014.  
Photo courtesy of the artist.

# Creating *Belonging*

It takes many tools to create a masterpiece.

**T**HIS ISSUE PUSHED US out of our comfort zone while at the same time making the process easier; proximity can be a blessing. But we challenged ourselves to look beyond what we thought we knew about belonging in Waterloo Region as we embarked upon developing this issue. We wanted to explore this topic as a case-study about community building, and here's our take (and our takeaways) on Creating Belonging.

## Key Takeaways

**ASI WAS** preparing the story on the YMCA, it struck me that the key lesson for environmentalists is to look at the role your organization currently plays in addressing the problem or situation, examine the role that needs to be played, and then determine if an adjustment and/or adaptation to your offerings are in order.

Public service or serving the greater good - in our case, working on behalf of the environment - requires a review of how you can best serve that greater good in what you do today AND tomorrow. Always make time to think about how you can best serve future needs while delivering today's services.

David McConnachie, publisher, on "Our Team" (pg. 56)

**PAMELA ROJAS'** experience with muralism in this region inspires me to be open to learning from other people's experiences in addition to my own. We like to think that we know best, but it's probable that there are better practices in action across the world.

It is important to strive for solutions that work for many categories of people, rather than the homogenous group. Alternative perspectives are so critical to success. These lessons would be valuable to employees in businesses of all sizes across many industries.

Often the best creations belong not to an individual, but to a community.

Selina Vesely, graphics assistant, on "The Power of Art" (pg. 70)

**WHILE WRITING** "Seeds of Change" I realized just how important it is for environmental groups to support diversity in their community. Canada is known for its multiculturalism, and with thousands of diverse groups it's easy to see how some may feel isolated. Encouraging everyone to be involved in the growing environmental community builds trust and strengthens the environmental movement.

Veronika Szostak, intern, on "Seeds of Change" (pg. 54)

**COMPASSION**, inclusion, justice dignity and hope – these are the core values of Waterloo Region's House of Friendship. The words offer superb guidance for engaging with anyone walking through the organization's door. The House of Friendship admirably works with the most marginalized of our community and these values in combination with their motto "Belong and Thrive" can have a universal application in any interactions on any level in society. House of Friendship staff "walks with" (not for) people to enable them to become part of our community; to help people find a meaningful way to connect and contribute. The results are rich. Those who receive, soon find ways to give back.

Marcia Ruby, publisher emerita, on "Walk with Me" (pg. 26)

**ORGANIZATIONS** in the environmental movement are often very idealistic - this is not a bad thing, but it can result in a disconnect between activists and funders. It was nice to see the JW McConnell Family Foundation find a constructive solution to their problem by forcing the funding applicants to get along; many other funders would have simply said 'no' to each organization. Conditional funding like this will be a big tool funders can use to make the negotiation table a home to negotiation instead of ransom.

Jack Parkinson, intern, on the "Low Carbon Partnership" (pg. 48)

**I HAD THE HONOUR** of interviewing Madam Clarkson for this issue. I've been a student of this country for a long time now so having the chance to speak with one of the most foremost people who is working to shape this country was an experience I will never forget. Madam Clarkson's passion and unyielding optimism for this country is inspiring and will be something I try to mirror in my own activism.

Teghan Barton, editorial assistant, on "State of Belonging" (pg. 42) //

### Top 10 Tips for Environmentalists to build 'belonging' in our community

1. Do the hard work, every day, as the devil is in the details.
2. You don't have to like everyone to respect them.
3. There's a need to make room for new voices and new participants. Understand how to welcome newcomers to our community.
4. Be open-minded and open-hearted when exploring new opportunities.
5. Collaborate and create with unlikely partners.
6. The power of listening and informed conversations.
7. Adrienne Clarkson's ice-cube metaphor: *Everyone in Canada is an ice cube, we melt into one another, creating something new, but we each retain our shape and our individuality.*
8. Check your ego at the door...there's no such thing as a small contributor or contribution. Each step, however large or small, is important.
9. Embrace technology that helps you do more good, from donor management systems through to 'big data' empowered research and development.
10. Ensure that you have the resources to power the work – or how to 'sell' building belonging to your stakeholders. //



# #CreateChange

## Are you an issue swimmer or a changemaker?



TZEPORAH

### WHEN I FIRST

started campaigning there was no Twitter, no Facebook, no Instagram ... no Internet. Good organizing happened around your kitchen table, in cafes and

by phone. I still remember when we figured out how to broadcast fax to multiple numbers from the Friends of Clayoquot Sound office in my friend Val's living room. It was revolutionary and saved us hours standing over the fax machine. Today in organizing it is easier to get the word out and quicker to engage hundreds if not thousands of people. I worry though that the art of self-directed issue-based campaigning is dying out with the flood of information and connection we now have.

All too often we get to our desks in the morning, turn on our computers, and follow the flow of the news. Read this article, react to that article, post this article. Maybe you hear of a meeting taking place to discuss the issues you're following in the news ... You attend that meeting and perhaps write a blog post on your opinion of that particular issue.

Occasionally you participate in organizing a rally or drafting a report. In my experience, today the majority of people who think of themselves as organizers and issue campaigners do some version of this pattern every day. The bottom line is that we are becoming issue experts but not campaigners. We are "issue swimming" instead of driving change. Responding instead of creating.

Following an issue, knowing it inside out, participating in a

conversation about the issue is simply not campaigning. Good campaigning is about driving the conversation, it's about creating a dialogue that can lead to a specific outcome. Good campaigning means outlining a strategy that is anchored in events and key moments that you

Good campaigning is about driving the conversation, it's about creating a dialogue that can lead to a specific outcome.


create, that engage decision makers and force a response.

Events are the stuff of politics and news. They drive change and conversation – reports, panels, marches, rallies, direct actions, debates, legal action. Events set the pace and give you a foothold for planning. You must make the world respond to you. Making change means doing something, it's not just about getting the information out and explaining your opinions. Your opinions are not necessarily news but coming out of Neil Young's mouth they are; if you are swinging off a building they are; if you can show 100 scientists or 10,000 people share your opinion ... you can make it news.

Good campaigning is about creating a strategy, charting a critical pathway. It is about setting long-term goals and then shorter

term objectives that you will meet because of your activities. The key to a good strategy is marrying your knowledge of an issue, your goals and your capacity/resources to create a plan that moves an issue forward (creates dialogue, engages decision makers and ensures

outcomes that change the status of the issue). In a good strategy you find a point of leverage that can crack open the issue. That point of leverage is what you build your campaign around. You don't build your campaign around issue analysis. This is a common mistake. You analyse your issue and the power dynamics in order to understand where your point of leverage is that can create a vehicle for coalition building and debate.

The bottom line is we need to go back to planning and organizing rather than just responding. If we want to make change we need to make real things happen – not just make arguments. 

Tzeporah Berman has been designing and running environmental campaigns in Canada and beyond for over 20 years.

## CONNECTIONS BETWEEN THE UNCONNECTED

### Boundary Layer: Exploring the Genius Between Worlds

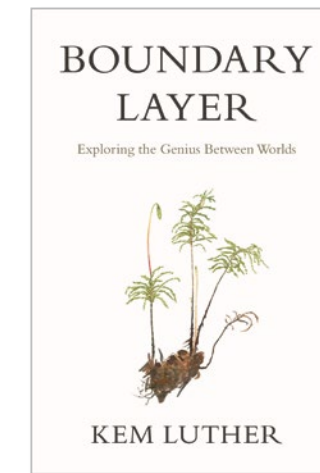
Kem Luther, Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2016, 186 pages.

Reviewed by CHERYL HENDRICKSON

The attractive book with the moss watercolour on the cover caught my eye in the new AJ office. The back cover promised an "exhilarating mix of natural history, botanical exploration and philosophical speculation" of interest to, among others, botanists like me. Intrigued, I picked it up thinking, perhaps *Boundary Layer* will give me a fresh perspective on the way I do botanical surveys and reclamation work in Alberta.

It does not, but that doesn't mean I didn't enjoy parts of this book. The "boundary layer" as a concept is first revealed as a physics phenomenon. As a metaphor, it is expanded to include the layer of diminutive mosses, lichens, and fungi (collectively referred to as non-vascular plants) that occupy the boundary between earthly and atmospheric strata. Then Luther looks at the in-between places of ecosystems at different scales, for example, the rare ecosystem on BC's West Coast that lives between active and stable dunes. Finally, he applies the metaphor to the undefined place between the humanities and science that Luther says, "is my own deepest rift." *Boundary layer* is a construct that ties these otherwise unconnected topics together.

To fill this rift, philosophical speculation makes about a



quarter of the book. We understand why, when Luther reveals in the epilogue that he is a graduate of philosophy at the University of Chicago. So if you enjoy the larger sweep of thought about the origins of ecology, or of the definition of wilderness and the ramifications this has had on past and current policy – to name two examples – you may find these sections and chapters thought provoking. If, for a feet-on-the-ground practitioner like me, you are not, or if you fill the rift in other ways, such as with art or spirituality, there will be a chunk of this book that will be skimmed or passed over.

Luther does take a naturalist's look at the mosses, fungi and lichens that occupy the terrestrial boundary layer, and it is a good introduction to these often overlooked plants. In these

chapters there are meta-facts that are engaging and read-aloud worthy. For example, 90 percent of forest plants are estimated to have secretive, below-ground fungal partnerships that are essential for some plants (such as orchids), and for others, gives them access to increased nutrients and contributes to their success.

While Luther correctly identifies the paucity of specialists able to identify mosses, his list of practitioners only includes academics and their students. There are moss specialists working in Alberta who are not connected with any university, and there is a surge of enthusiasm to learn to identify mosses and lichens among some professional and amateur botanists.

Besides saying there are not enough trained specialists to identify non-vascular plants, Luther also mentions the difficulty that single-year baseline surveys pose for fungi, which do not all produce identifiable mushrooms annually, but might only do so every five years or more. As well, he raises the difficulty in understanding and categorizing a symbiotic organism such as lichen, the result of a partnership between fungi and algae, where the fungal partner provides structure for the alga, and the alga photosynthesizes and provides food for the fungus. The two organisms combined express not as either, but as a new organism: lichen. Both the timing of surveys and botanic complexities underscore why efforts to survey pre-development communities to reduce environmental impacts, or protect rare species, are so imperfect. It poses the question, as James Kay pointed out in this journal 20 years ago: do we only count wildlife that are attractive and easy to see?

Luther examines each boundary layer species or ecosystem through best known BC researchers. Some of their personal journeys as relayed by Luther are more engaging than

Continued on page 78...

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# Global Citizenship

*Civis Mundi Sum* is a thirty-year project to empower a movement for positive global activism.

**A**S I APPROACHED Matt Foster's house in a Cambridge suburb, I realized that it didn't look like the house of a political revolutionary.

In fact, it was an altogether unremarkable Cambridge house: quaint and nicely maintained, but not doing much to stand out against the backdrop of the neighbourhood surrounding it. When Foster answered the door and invited me inside, my thinking continued this way: nice furniture, an expansive kitchen, but not the hubbub of activity most people associate with political movements. Foster himself was a friendly man well into his senior years, very soft-spoken and polite. Despite this, he had a firm handshake - I got the impression there was a lot beneath his surface, and I was about to be proven right.

We said hello before Foster and I walked upstairs to the room where he had been working towards world citizenship for three decades. Like the rest of the house, it was plain. Two desks, two chairs, two moderately old computers. A filing shelf filled with books and binders of notes. From this room, the organization *Civis Mundi* began.

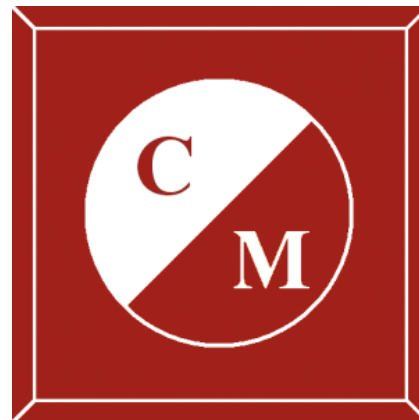
Foster's idea of a world citizen is more or less what you'd think it is. There are many problems with the world, and many of them affect the entire world. Thus, if the human race wants to effectively fix these problems, we need a way of reaching out to each other and working across national borders.

"All change comes from the bottom up," Foster told me, paraphrasing one of his favoured quotes from Chomski.

Foster's goal is quite literally to change the world - most people would

scoff at the idea, but he gave me an example which helped translate it into practical terms.

There are many international activist groups, Foster reasons, but there are also many groups who also work within a single country only. National focus can help a lot of groups in terms



*The Civis Mundi logo.*

of narrowing down their actions, but it can also mean a lot of repetition is necessary for worldwide progress.

"It's all fine and noble, but they're working within a single nation, within a single legislative process," Foster said.

If Canada wants to outlaw the production and sale of an environmentally hazardous substance, for instance, then all the effort to get that through Canadian legislation will need to be repeated for dozens of countries around the globe. It only makes sense for the world's people to have some common banner under which to unite and speak up in favour of positive change.

That's where *Civis Mundi* comes in: the organization presents 26 fields of problems (ranging from plastic particles

in the world's oceans to democratic voting reform) with the world, and some ideas to get started on a solution. There is no membership application process, and there is no card to carry. The most identifiable trait of a *Civis Mundi* member would be a tie or sewn-on pocket coloured terra cotta - the group's signature colour, readily available in any country, and Latin for "burnt earth."

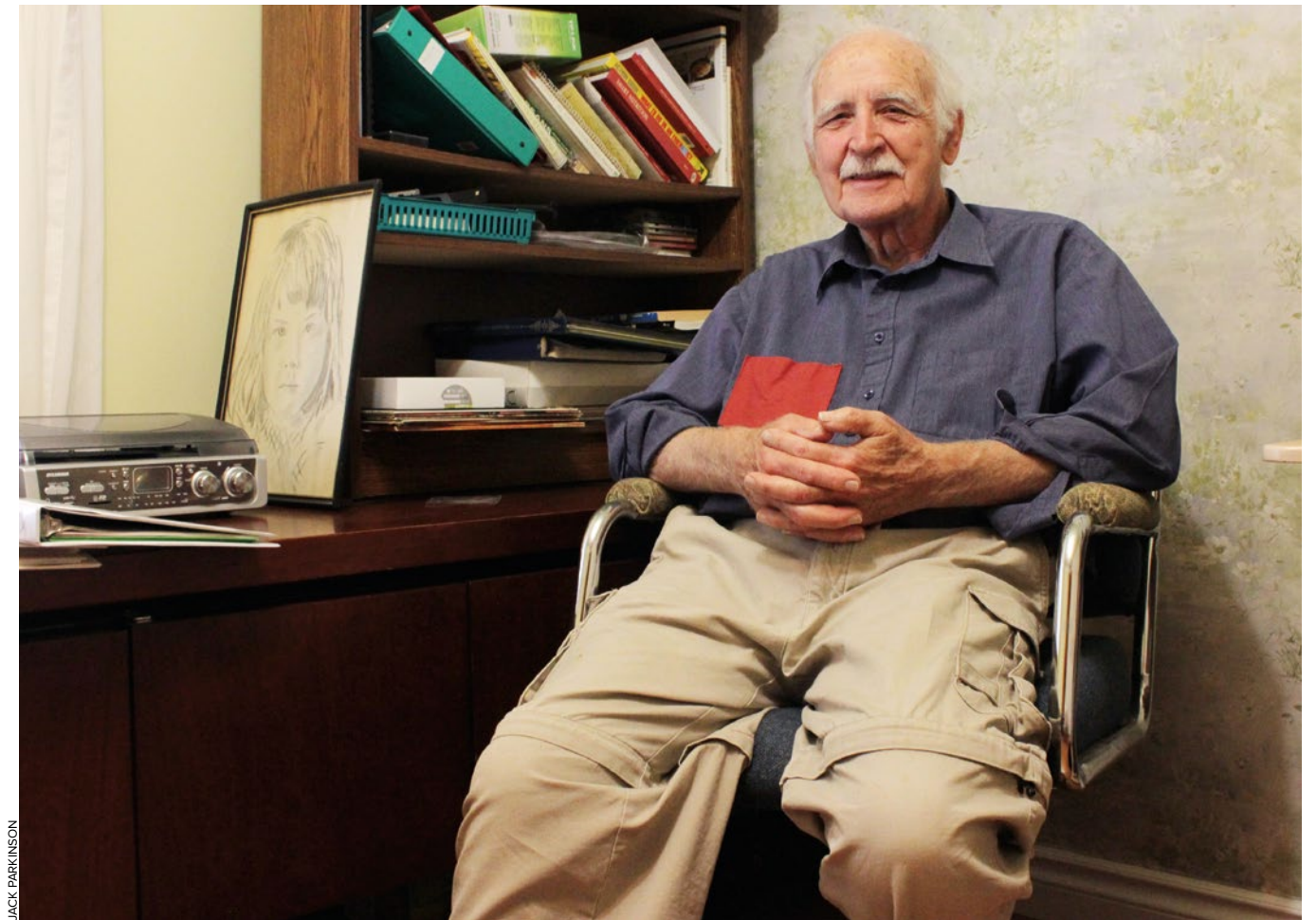
Citizens could introduce themselves as John Q. Public, *Civis Mundi* or say "*Civis Mundi Sum*" ("I am a world citizen" in Latin), in order to signify their commitment to international communication and progress.

Communication is the name of the game in *Civis Mundi*. Foster specifies that he wants people to talk to each other and figure out problems for the unique ways world problems affect each country. Given the advancements in international communication in the last 10 years, *Civis Mundi*'s goal is more attainable than it has been at any previous point in the organization's history.

"I don't think this would've been possible without the changes in communication," Foster said.

Foster's mission to build *Civis Mundi* has been a long and mostly invisible one (it's a safe bet to say the average reader will not have heard of his cause before reading this article). He dropped out of high school in grade 10, joined the military, and served in the UN forces in Egypt. Upon his return, he finished high school, then studied unsuccessfully at Conestoga and Waterloo before finding an opportunity to work as a poultry incubation engineer.

"Poultry incubation was my passion.



*Matt Foster in his home in Cambridge, Ontario.*

Going to work was like working on a hobby you loved," Foster recalls.

As part of his work, he travelled internationally to see the newest technology and techniques for poultry incubation. Foster's travels took him to China, India, and many countries in Europe.

"China had just opened up - everyone was still wearing their Mao suits."

While in India and China, Foster could not help but notice how poverty-stricken some places were. He would walk by people whose shelter was a plastic bag stretched across two sticks in the ground, then go back to his marble-floored hotel.

Something had to change.

Foster initially founded the group with some of friends and colleagues, to modest initial success - most notably the hosting of Dutch professor Paul Lucardie during the early 1990s for a series of speeches in Cambridge and

other Ontario towns about proportional representation, a topic back in the news today. Foster was able to accomplish this as a gesture of faith from one nation to another, and there were many other, smaller community events in Cambridge where *Civis Mundi* has a presence.

While I would like to say the future looks bright for *Civis Mundi*, as we move into an age of global information and communication, that would not honestly be the truth. Foster is aware of the elephant in the room: given the sheer scale of what Foster wanted to do, progress is tough to measure and even tougher to make.

"At my age, if I write to university papers, I'm ignored," said Foster.

"If I write to environmental groups, they're swamped. There is seldom a chance for conversation."

And there is the matter of Foster's age; he's no spring chicken anymore. *Civis Mundi*'s website ([civismundi.org](http://civismundi.org))

could use an update. Frankly, he could use some help ensuring his vision of world citizenship and an aware global population is seen by more - which may be more likely than you'd think, given how much the millennial generation prioritizes global communication and citizenship.

The difference one man or woman makes is more than likely going to be felt by people in that person's community rather than around the world - so doesn't that make the whole idea a wash?

But, then again, that's all *Civis Mundi* wanted to do: encourage global citizens who are making positive change. If that happens to be on a community centre stage instead of the world stage, so be it. **AV**

**Jack Parkinson is a graduate of Conestoga College's print journalism program and is an editorial intern with AJ.**




From page 75...

others, like the Czech mycologists who chose not to return to their homeland in defiance of their government and stayed in Canada to build new careers in British Columbia. Or the lichenologist who overcame severe depression, now lives and studies in park-like seclusion, and says, "news to me is where the snowline on the mountain is today". Both character sketches come as a welcome relief when my interest starts to fade with the less captivating

government employees and academics who carry the narrative for ecological-scale stories.

Although all of the people, species and ecosystems are in British Columbia, the processes described happen globally and shouldn't stop anyone anywhere from getting something out of this book, philosophically, historically or scientifically.

Ultimately, Luther opines that, "Unable to see the processes of nature

at work in our daily context we will stop recognizing these processes. Eventually we will stop valuing them." The converse is also true: when we understand and recognize the processes of nature at work, we will value them and become engaged. 

Cheryl Hendrickson is a consulting biogeographer who lives in Alberta's boundary layer of foothills. She is a long-ago managing editor of **AJ**.

## 75 YEARS OF FIGHTING

### Community Vitality: From Adaptation to Transformation

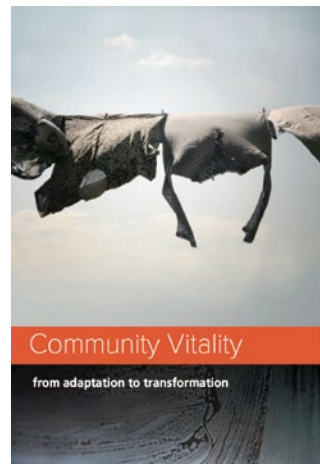
Ann Dale, Rebecca Foon, Yuill Herbert and Rob Newell

Reviewed by SALLY LERNER

**AJ** readers are familiar, perhaps to the point of saturation, with the discourse around sustainability. Community Vitality is a valuable addition to the conversation primarily because it explores the myriad connections among the environmental, social and governance aspects of sustainability.

"Vital communities are characterized by strong, active and inclusive relationships between residents, private sector, public sector and civil society organizations that work to foster individual and collective wellbeing. Vital communities are those that are able to cultivate and marshal these relationships in order to create, adapt and thrive in the changing world and thus improve well-being of citizens." (7)

What makes the difference between surviving and thriving? In 2009, respected academic Dr. Ann Dale (Royal Roads University) asked her research team to explore the notion of community vitality, seen as a key concept underlying the question of why



"some communities are resilient, adaptive and innovative in the face of change and others are not?" (1). The aim of this accessible book is to "translate" such research into a straightforward yet sophisticated primer for anyone interested in that question.

Each community has its own unique set of values, problems and goals. Community Vitality offers a conceptual framework that allows people in very different places to begin discussing how to map their community's path to satisfying sustainable living. There is no cookie-cutter model here. One of the book's central points is the necessary role of 'homegrown' participatory governance in designing for and achieving community vitality.

"Part of the transition to new forms of governance is expanding the base of decision-makers to allow for ongoing discussion – essentially expanding what we define as government and

governance. This requires a move from traditional consultation to dialogues, where governments are mandated to educate people as well as solicit feedback on existing and new government policies and programs. Fundamental to expanded decision-contexts are principles of participation, both face-to-face and virtual." (81)

To meet the varied 'wellness' needs of the elderly, children, youth and a variety of other groups, consideration must be given to creating the all-important social capital that underpins quality of life in any community. The evidence-based research summarized in many of the book's chapters calls attention to the need for integrated thinking that clarifies the links between the built environment, green spaces and human contact. For example, parks are (usually) good, but how can they be made more welcoming for parents and toddlers, for walkers seeking company or peaceful solitude? It is the answers to these kinds of questions that must come from all of the people who live in any particular community.

This compact, well-researched book suggests coherent ways of thinking about how to develop thriving sustainable communities as well as renovate existing ones. As such, it is a valuable contribution to the contemporary sustainability conversation. 

Sally Lerner is professor emerita at the Faculty of Environment, uWaterloo.

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Today, environmental education has grown beyond the classroom to incorporate a world of experiential learning tools, from open-access lectures to hands-on ecotourism. In the next issue of **AJ**, we begin to explore this new age of environmental education, including:

### The Evolution of Environmental Education

Linda Skilton dean of Fleming College's Frost Campus, explores the changing nature of post-secondary environmental education in Canada and how colleges and universities are collaborating to empower more opportunities for students.

### Experiential Learning via Ecotourism

Akansha Halbe is our travel guide as we learn about on-the-ground learning experiences that support conservation and responsible travel.

### The 2016 Environmental Education Guide and Directory

It's back and it's bigger than ever! **AJ**'s 2016 Environmental Education guide/directory is jam-packed with helpful insights and insightful profiles to help you make the most of your environmental education experience.

+ Lots more news, notes and reviews as always.

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# Acceptable

Many approvals of controversial undertakings rest on an obsolete standard marked by an imaginary line.



ROBERT

**DILBIT** could be a good name for a goofy dog. Instead it is short for “diluted bitumen,” the serious mix of light petroleum diluent and the oily tarry sandy goop that the hydrocarbon industry wants to ship from Northern Alberta to foreign markets.

Unlike bitumen, dilbit flows in pipelines and several new or expanded dilbit pipelines will be built if the industry gets its way. The proposed pipelines – most notably the Northern Gateway and Transmountain pipelines from Alberta to British Columbia’s Pacific coast, Line 3 across the prairies, and the Energy East pipeline to New Brunswick and the Atlantic – would facilitate big increases in bitumen extraction, transportation, processing and eventual combustion.

The main attraction is jobs and revenues, presuming the price of oil rises. However, bitumen extraction is already an environmental horror. Spilled pipeline dilbit is a clean-up nightmare, and bringing more bitumen to market is difficult to justify in a country committed to doing its part to prevent climate warming beyond 1.5°C.

Inevitably, then, proposals for more dilbit pipeline capacity have faced determined opposition.

For much of the past decade, the designated lightning rod for these conflicts has been the beleaguered old National Energy Board (NEB) – an old school regulatory body with a staff of technical experts and a board of appointees sensitive to industry and government concerns.

Formally, the NEB’s job is to determine whether each major pipeline proposal “is and will be required by the present and future public convenience

and necessity.” In practice that has meant judging whether (and under what terms and conditions) each proposed pipeline is acceptable.

The “acceptability” test is a relic from the days when private sector resource exploitation ventures were a mostly

Acceptable to whom? For how long? Assuming what circumstances? Relative to what other options?

unquestioned Good Thing, and just needed to be checked to ensure the engineering was sound and the results would not offend national policy. In those days it was possible to imagine an identifiable line between unacceptable and acceptable. Technical analyses by specialized experts and close relations with government and the regulated industry could reveal whether or not a proposed project met the accepted standard of established practice.

Unfortunately for the NEB, the imagined line between acceptable and unacceptable has faded. Established practice is now widely associated with imposing local sacrifices, disregarding Aboriginal rights and ignoring climate change. The available information is always incomplete, the simplifying assumptions are always debatable, and acceptable is always a matter of choices and preferences.

Even when acceptability decisions are coated with technical analyses and buttressed by entrenched expectations, they always rest on assumed answers to the big choice questions – acceptable to whom? for how long? assuming what circumstances? judged against what criteria? relative to what other options?

In the dilbit pipeline cases, these

questions have been central. Interests and experts have disagreed, often forcefully and fundamentally – not only about the likelihood of particular effects from individual projects, but also about what bigger issues should be on the table, what happens if all the

pipelines are approved, what would be a fair distribution of benefits and risks, and how might any dilbit pipeline fit in a viable plan to meet Canadian climate commitments.

The old NEB has doggedly persisted in trying to identify a line between acceptable and unacceptable for the individual projects of an unsustainable agenda. So far, it has succeeded mostly in undermining its own credibility. Its approval of the Northern Gateway proposal met a wall of Aboriginal and public interest opposition, high court rejection and political abandonment. The other proposals may fare no better.

For the dilbit pipelines, the relevant question is not whether this or that old economy project is in some narrow technical or political sense acceptable, but whether such projects will move us to a more promising future. That is a question about options and objectives. It rejects imaginary lines and faces the big choices.

An approval test based on best options for a viable and desirable future is demanding but realistic. Settling for less is unacceptable. **AV**

Robert Gibson is the chair of AV’s editorial board and a professor in the School of Environment and Resource Studies at uWaterloo.



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