
BELONGING: EXPLORING CONNECTION TO COMMUNITY
FINAL REPORT AVAILABLE
YOUTH INVOLVEMENT AND SHARING STORIES TOP ACTION ITEMS
SMALL GRANTS TO BE MADE AVAILABLE

September 13, 2017– Stratford, ON – Hoping to explore matters affecting sense of belonging and community connection, this past June, along with help from several local organizations (see list below), the [Stratford Perth Community Foundation](#) (SPCF) hosted their inaugural Vital Conversation .

“We chose ‘sense of belonging’ as the topic for our first conversation because it is a fundamental human need – just like food or shelter – and is essential to our sense of happiness and well-being,” shares Tracy Van Kalsbeek, SPCF Executive Director. “We were thrilled with the level of engagement from the community around this issue and, as promised, a final report is available for anyone who’s interested in finding out what we learned.”

Results from the post Stratford Perth Vital Conversations 2017 survey indicated that event participants were most interested in pursuing actionable items that affect sense of belonging for youth with an almost equally as strong interest in sharing stories and communicating with each other through workshops, speaker forums and other community conversations. For further details and to read the full report visit: www.spccf.ca

The Community Foundation plans to provide some small grants to local organizations that are making a difference in these areas. Over the coming months they will be reaching out to have conversations with groups to discuss possibilities. Similar funding may be available from the United Way Perth-Huron and assistance regarding data collection may also be available from the University of Waterloo’s Community, Health, Environment, Communications (CHEC) Initiative.

“By hosting this Vital Conversation we were able to learn more about how connected and/or disconnected people felt in our community and what’s important to them when it comes to impacting sense of belonging – for themselves and for others,” adds Ms. Van Kalsbeek. “This information has provided us with ideas and opportunities and we hope, will help rally our community into action so that we can all be more welcoming and feel more connected.”

Plans are underway by the SPCF to host a Stratford Perth Vital Conversation annually.

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About Vital Conversations

A Vital Conversation is a facilitated discussion with community members to learn more about the social, economic and natural/built environmental trends impacting local quality of life.

Other Vital Conversations partners include: University of Waterloo’s [Community, Health, Environment, Communications \(CHEC\) Initiative](#), [Stratford Perth YMCA](#), [Stratford Public Library](#), [University of Waterloo Stratford Campus](#), [United Way Perth-Huron](#), [Powernoodle](#), [Choices for Change](#), [Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs \(OMAFRA\)](#) and [Facile Perth](#).

The Community Foundation plans to host a Vital Conversation annually about a key topic of importance. The conversations can then be used as starting points to identify local priorities and mobilize citizens into action.

About the [Stratford Perth Community Foundation](#)

The Stratford Perth Community Foundation (SPCF) is an organization for everyone; and unique because donations, large or small, are never spent but are combined and invested. The earned income is used to make grants to local charities year after year to build a vibrant not-for-profit sector in Stratford, St. Marys and Perth County. To make all this work, we share our unique understanding of community needs and help mobilize and guide donors to specific community initiatives. For more information about SPCF please visit www.spccf.ca

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