



50 Years
1969-2019

South
Saskatchewan
Community
Foundation

50 VITAL COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

2019 REPORT

Uncovering the Challenges, Understanding the Needs and Planning for Change Together

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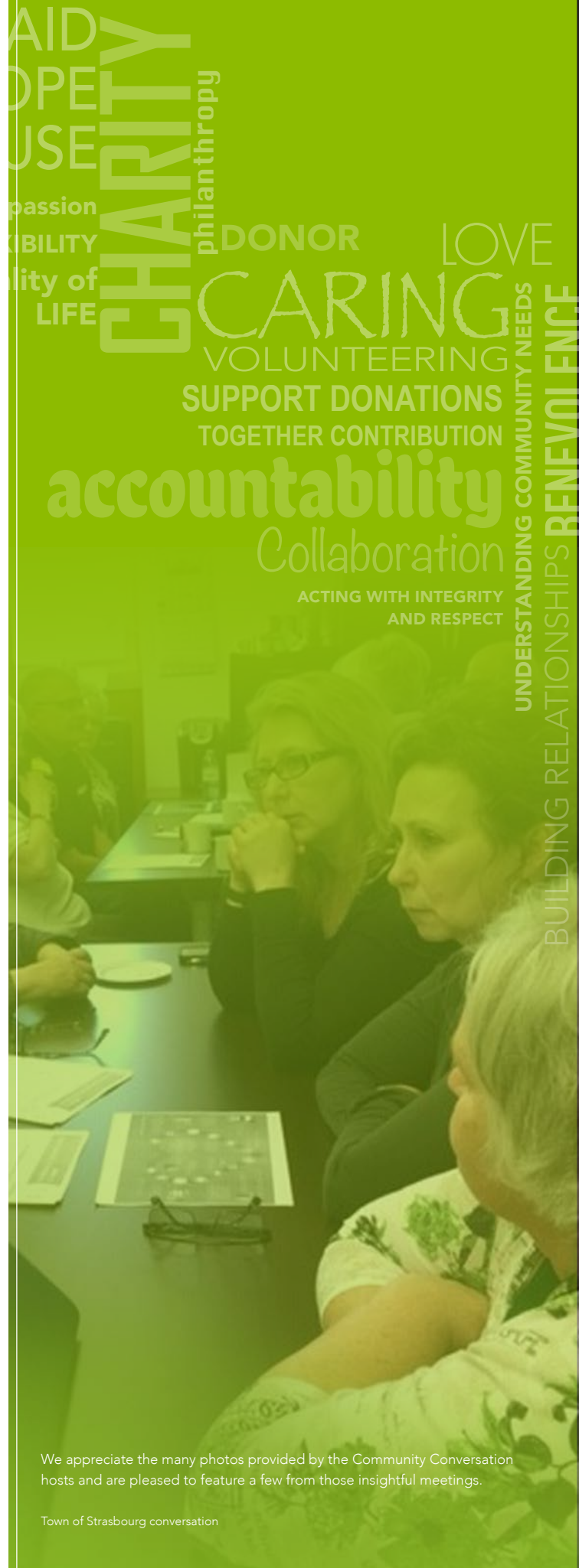
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**"If you want to go fast, go alone.
If you want to go far, go together."**

African Proverb

We appreciate the many photos provided by the Community Conversation hosts and are pleased to feature a few from those insightful meetings.

Town of Strasbourg conversation





Donna Ziegler
Executive Director, SSCF

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MESSAGE

It is a historical moment in time for the South Saskatchewan Community Foundation (SSCF) as we celebrate our 50th anniversary. The Foundation is excited to share the findings of this community-based *50 Vital Community Conversations* report. The results incorporate dozens of gatherings held throughout our area in 2019.

In so many ways, the report underscores the hopes and dreams of the SSCF which is to support a thriving community with a culture of sharing, generosity, and inclusivity at its core.

In 1969, SSCF began to build its mission by acting as a bridge between donors and charities in southern Saskatchewan which would enrich the quality of community life.

The Foundation continues to be a catalyst and resource for philanthropy. SSCF serves as a vehicle for generous individuals, families and businesses who want to give something back to their community both during and after their lifetime.

We value collaboration and responsiveness and often act in the capacity as community knowledge broker. By convening diverse stakeholders, we are working to better understand community challenges and encourage innovative approaches to find solutions.

The issues identified in this report are complex and solutions are beyond the scope of any single organization. Our communities are stronger and the lives of individuals can be improved when together we collaborate, innovate and mobilize resources to address these challenges. Ultimately our goal is to learn from each other and explore new ways to build our future.

We thank our Board of Directors for guidance and support, and the hundreds of volunteers who spent time and energy on this noteworthy community conversation. We look forward to talking with you more about what matters in your community.



Iryna Khovrenkov, PhD
Researcher

South Saskatchewan Community Foundation commissioned and appreciates the professional research analysis and documentation by Dr. Iryna Khovrenkov for this *50 Vital Community Conversations* report. Dr. Khovrenkov is an economist with research interests in philanthropic foundations and charitable giving, social finance and applied microeconomics. Iryna teaches core economics classes in the Johnson Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy at the University of Regina and serves as a program lead of the school's certificate in Nonprofit Management.

Methodology:

A total of 56 community conversations were facilitated by 47 organizations in early 2019. During these conversations, participants were invited to respond to seven questions, which are listed on page 2 of this report. While conversations hosted numerous participants, their responses were summarized by the facilitators and the final report, reflecting each conversation, was submitted to the Foundation by the host organization. Responses to each of the seven questions were carefully reviewed and each question was analyzed separately. Where applicable (for example, for question 4, which asks about community's emerging issue), responses were also supplemented with evidence gathered from regional data.

What is a Vital Conversation?

A Vital Conversation is a facilitated conversation with members of a community. Organizations in southern Saskatchewan applied for a South Saskatchewan Community Foundation grant of \$300 to hold a conversation within their community. Conversation participants were the representatives of their communities, be it a geographic community (e.g., City of Melville), a community of interest (e.g., new moms), or a community of culture (e.g., new immigrants). A total of 56 conversations were facilitated by 47 organizations in early 2019. See pages 30-32 for a full listing of these conversations. During these community conversations, participants were invited to respond to the following seven questions¹:

- Q1: *What does community mean to you?***
- Q2: *What are the top three indicators in your community?***
- Q3: *What are your community's key needs/priorities?***
- Q4: *What is an emerging issue in your community?***
- Q5: *What challenges does your community face at the moment?***
- Q6: *What support or resources are required to make the changes needed in your community?***
- Q7: *What kind of community do you wish to have? What are the two or three issues standing in the way of having this kind of community?***

¹ [Q8: What else do you wish us to know about your community?]

Due to limited responses, information from Question 8 (optional) is excluded from the report.



56 Conversations
facilitated by
47 Organizations.

Why we are doing this report?

A community foundation's basic definition is to improve the quality of life for people in a geographical area. Towards this mission, SSCF has participated in a national community foundation program called *Vital Signs*®. Its purpose is to use local knowledge to measure the vitality of the community and support actions towards improving the quality of life.

This year SSCF is celebrating its 50th anniversary. To mark 50 years of SSCF's focus on understanding community needs and working to build stronger and more inclusive communities we launched a grassroots program called *50 Vital Community Conversations*.

Our golden anniversary was the right time to lean in and reflect on what matters most to our community. The conversations were an opportunity to listen to many viewpoints and a unique way for organizations and individuals to share multiple perspectives.

We heard from 1851 participants in 56 conversations across south Saskatchewan, including 32 conversations outside of Regina. What we learned is that people in communities want to talk, they have lots to discuss and they care deeply about their communities.

With **"Belonging"** noted as the top indicator of community, five key issues emerged including:

- **Sustaining rural communities;**
- **Drug abuse and addiction;**
- **Safety in communities;**
- **Racism towards new immigrants and Indigenous peoples; and**
- **Homelessness and affordable housing.**

There was diversity in the types of communities that came together. How these groups gathered also shows that the way we communicate has changed. Gathering formats ranged from town hall meetings to virtual conversations in "real time."

What is evident from the results is that there is a vast complexity to the challenges that exist within and across communities.

What we have learned is that solutions start with understanding and collaboration; and that a holistic,

innovative, and flexible approach with a long-term focus is needed. Importantly, we cannot forget change begins with understanding the needs of the individual and by getting involved personally.

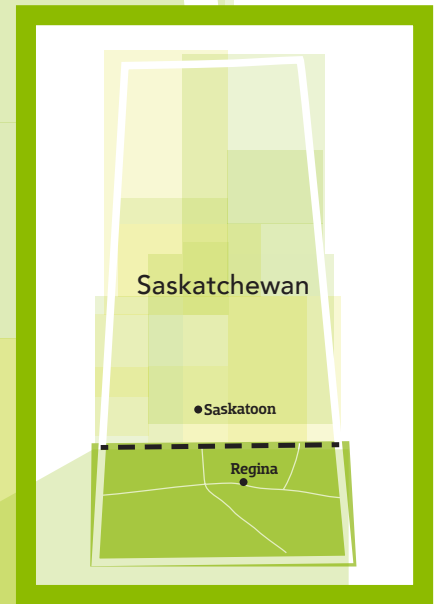
The report provides evidence to support the issues identified by communities and highlights inspiring examples of collaboration and new ways of finding solutions. Our goal is to use this local knowledge to measure the vitality of a community and support actions towards improving the quality of life.

After 50 years of being in the community, we know that when we understand and support each other, we can make a difference and enrich the quality of our community life right where we live. **We welcome you to work with us to help meet that goal.**

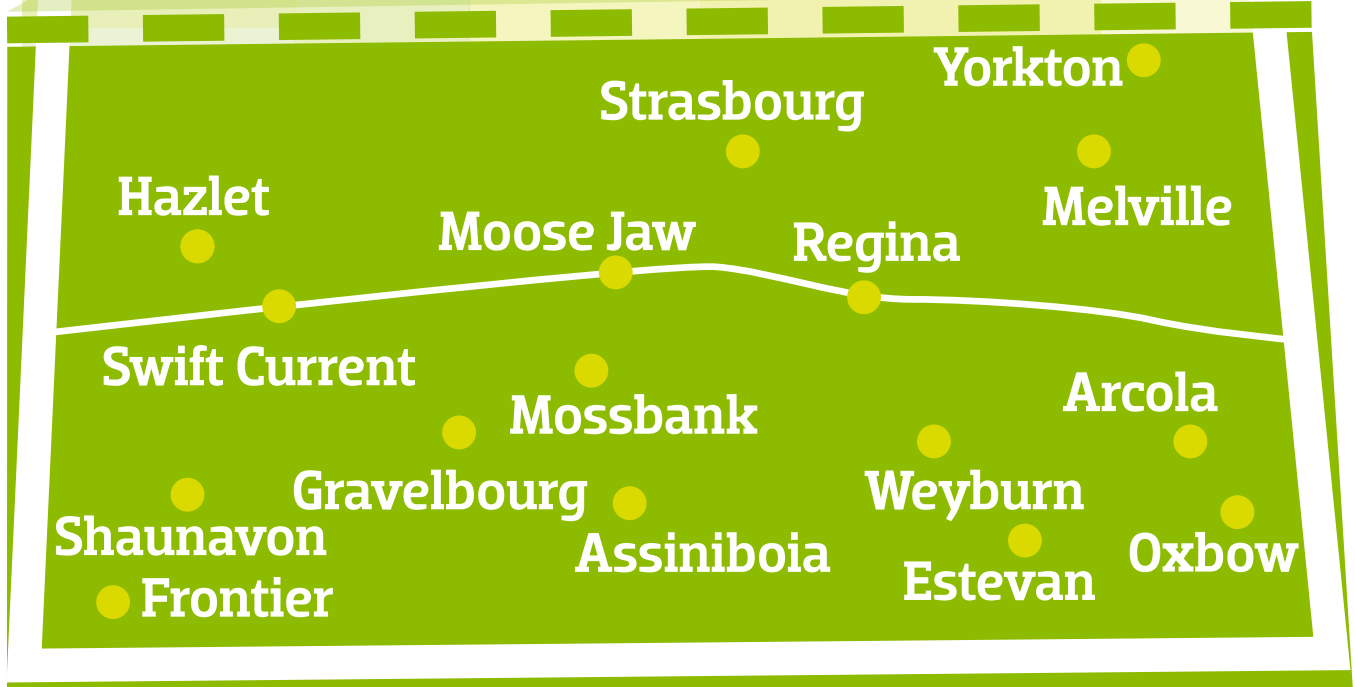
A proud member of the



Saskatchewan



South Saskatchewan



Where were the conversations held and who facilitated them?

Arcola - conversations 1

- Saskatchewan Natural History Society - participants 57

Assiniboia - conversations 1

- Town of Assiniboia - participants 40

Estevan - conversations 3

- Estevan Humane Society Inc. - participants 8
- Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD Canada) – Estevan Chapter – participants 30
- Southeast Advocates for Employment Inc. - participants 32

Frontier - conversations 1

- Village of Frontier - participants 30

Gravelbourg - conversations 2

- South Central Regional Immigration Partnership in partnership with Moose Jaw Multicultural Council Inc. - participants 15
- Town of Gravelbourg - participants 10

Hazlet - conversations 1

- Village of Hazlet in partnership with Hazlet Community Development Committee - participants 40

Melville - conversations 1

- City of Melville - participants 20

Moose Jaw - conversations 5

- City of Moose Jaw - participants 61
- South Central Regional Immigration Partnership in partnership with Moose Jaw Multicultural Council Inc. - participants 77
- Spinal Cord Injury Saskatchewan Inc. - participants 10
- The Canadian National Institute for the Blind - participants 9
- YMCA of Moose Jaw Inc. - participants 9

Mossbank - conversations 1

- Town of Mossbank - participants 40

Oxbow - conversations 1

- Southeast Advocates for Employment Inc. - participants 7

Regina - conversations 24

- Carmichael Outreach Inc. - participants 45
- Civic Museum of Regina - participants 30
- Heritage Community Association Inc. - participants 21
- Ignite Adult Learning Corporation - participants 32
- Mental Health Association Regina Branch - participants 13
- Munch Cafe and Catering Inc. - participants 20
- New Canadian Integration Society in partnership with Heritage Community Association Inc. - participants 20
- Oxford House Society of Regina Inc. - participants 6
- Rainbow Youth Centre Inc. - participants 21
- REALM Ripplinger, Ehmann and Laborde, Mang Foundation Inc. - participants 28

- Regina Early Learning Centre Inc. - participants 12
- Regina Early Years Family Centre, a program of the Regina Early Learning Centre Inc. - participants 12
- Regina Region Local Immigration Partnership in partnership with Regina Open Door Society Inc. - participants 10
- Regina Symphony Orchestra Inc. - participants 200
- Regina Transition House Inc. - participants 10
- Saskatchewan Council for International Cooperation in partnership with Righting Relations Regina - participants 25
- Saskatchewan Hospice Palliative Care Association Inc. - participants 288
- Schizophrenia Society of Saskatchewan Inc. - participants 14
- Spinal Cord Injury Saskatchewan Inc. - participants 8
- The Big Sky Centre for Learning and Being Astonished Inc. - participants 20
- The Canadian National Institute for the Blind - participants 7
- The Caring Place Regina Inc. - participants 10
- Young Men's Christian Association of Regina - participants 21
- Young Women's Christian Association of Regina - participants 15

Saskatoon - conversations 2

- Saskatchewan 4-H Council in partnership with Saskatchewan 4-H Foundation - participants 170
- The Nature Conservancy of Canada - Saskatchewan Division - participants 23

Shaunavon - conversations 1

- Organization of Saskatchewan Arts Councils in partnership with Saskatchewan Arts Alliance - participants 12

Strasbourg - conversations 1

- Town of Strasbourg - participants 28

Swift Current - conversations 5

- Multicultural Council of Saskatchewan Inc. - participants 15
- Saskatchewan Abilities Council Inc. - Swift Current Branch - participants 18
- SaskOutdoors in partnership with Saskatchewan Natural History Society - participants 8
- Spinal Cord Injury Saskatchewan Inc. - participants 8
- The Canadian National Institute for the Blind - participants 8

Weyburn - conversations 2

- Organization of Saskatchewan Arts Councils in partnership with Saskatchewan Arts Alliance - participants 16
- Southeast Advocates for Employment Inc. - participants 7

Yorkton - conversations 4

- Big Brothers Big Sisters of Yorkton and Area Inc. - participants 31
- SaskOutdoors in partnership with Saskatchewan Natural History Society - participants 18
- Society for the Involvement of Good Neighbors Inc. - participants 100
- Yorkton Women in Need Inc. - Shelwin House - participants 6

How will the Foundation use this report?

At SSCF we strive to understand community needs so that we can mobilize citizen responses in a collaborative, engaged and meaningful way. The wealth of information collected from the *50 Vital Community Conversations* initiative will be used to understand what's important to the communities, how community issues intersect, and how we should work together to find solutions. The communities that participated in the initiative reported on specific challenges, and the resources and supports required for change. By being involved, SSCF is able to take the pulse of the community and understand where the needs are. This opportunity allows us to gauge how

and where to direct our discretionary resources and provides us with front line information that we share with others that can help build inclusive, proactive communities right here in south Saskatchewan. These conversations may redefine how we interact with our communities and what capacity we can generate by working together with donors and community members. SSCF will use information gleaned from this report to help build a blueprint for action with individuals, community leaders and donors, and build on the power of being involved right where you live. We want to build community together.

How can communities use this report?

This report illustrates numerous complex challenges faced by the communities and identifies some of the resources needed to address them. These challenges are often interconnected. For example, if a community is reporting drug abuse as its challenge, issues such as homelessness and higher crime may be present as well. This report brings awareness to community needs, and can be used as a tool for identifying the commonality of

issues across communities. By learning about various challenges that are shared by multiple communities (geographic, cultural, sharing a common interest, etc.), partnerships and collaborative opportunities can be developed for solving similar problems together. The stories of various programs give hope and identify how together overcoming obstacles can lead to a better future.



"Some support or resources required are outsiders' opinions who have had similar struggles in their communities and how they have overcome those challenges."

from the Village of Frontier conversation

A safe place to live with plenty of events, programs and activities that encourage participation from all ages

A group of individuals from all backgrounds, cultures and ages who need support

People enjoying nature and sharing ideas

A collection of people where diverse points are accepted, respected, where people belong and are heard, where the needs are understood

To feel you belong, to feel hopeful, respected, loved, to feel you have friends, to be yourself

Unity and equality, a place where people work together to make everyone's life better

A place where you belong, share similar beliefs, values, where you feel safe, included, where you work together, where there is food and housing

A foundation where Indigenous and non-Indigenous people are working together and listening to one another

A safe place, a place of home, "where kids can be kids," where one is welcomed, where one belongs, is included and supported

Safe and comfortable, welcoming and supportive, social and spiritual, and financially viable

"Working together to create a better" space for everyone to enjoy, to live and to thrive

A place with opportunities for personal growth and connections with those in the community, a place where people belong

An all-inclusive and diverse place, where people help each other, raise children, grow old, where people belong

A place where people are open to difference, care for each other, work together toward common goals

A place of gathering to talk about life, to learn; a system of support, where beliefs are shared, where needs are met, where people thrive

Group of people living together who share similar interests, who serve the needs of each other and work for a common cause

A place where people are part of the family, fully accepted, living life together

A place where people are bound by shared beliefs and values, connections to land and to similar livelihoods," a place where one belongs

Inclusion, acceptance of differences, understanding, a place that brings people together, where people care and communicate

A place to belong, make a contribution, be valued, have a choice, provide support and be supported

A place to enjoy each other's company, share ideas, make new friends and relationships, feel valued, and earn a living

A safe place to live in and participate

COMMUNITY



UNITY IS



- A place to belong, make a contribution, be valued, have a choice, provide support and be supported
- An inclusive place to be, where like-minded people share and support each other through difficult times, recovery and suffering
- Connection to each other, but not only physically
- A strong family, that belongs, feels safe, supports, accepts, educates, engages, and forms a unity
- A feeling of being during the last moments of life, working together to provide good end of life care
- A diverse group of people of all ages that "develop common goals and work collectively for the benefit of all members"
- A great place to live because jobs are available, it provides good education and health care, it is safe, inclusive, people work together, respect each other
- A safe and secure place with opportunities and a sense of belonging
- Helping one another, sharing and caring. Going the extra distance to help and give back to whomever that is in need
- All-inclusive to all living beings within that district and surrounding areas and is everyone's responsibility
- Family and friends working together, providing support and sharing ideas
- People are engaged with one another and "doing life" together
- A way of working together to find ways to include everyone
- Being part of a "family that helps one another," a place to grow
- A place that offers an opportunity to connect with each other, help each other and be open to diversity
- A place of diversity, strong sense of including, respect and shared values
- A social network with personal support, with everyone there for each other; community is tight, with acceptance of gender, mental health issues, race and other aspects
- Belonging to an area and group of people that are like-minded, supportive, active and work together
- A place where people can lean on one another during bad times, celebrate each other during good times and work together always
- A feeling of home, a place of support and collaboration and a non-judgmental and inspiring environment
- A welcoming group that provides friendship and is accepting and inclusive of both artists and non-artists, a safe place of self-expression
- A place where health assistance can be provided
- Connecting, including, bringing people closer together, being a family, educating, celebrating differences
- A safe place, a home, a place to grow

Photo: Saskatchewan 4-H Council Inc. in partnership with Saskatchewan 4-H Foundation (Saskatoon) conversation

Key indicators of our communities (Q2)

Indicators are relevant measures that can help with community assessment. As community groups gathered and discussed their issues and needs, we asked them to also identify the top three indicators of their community. To assist with the discussion, some examples were

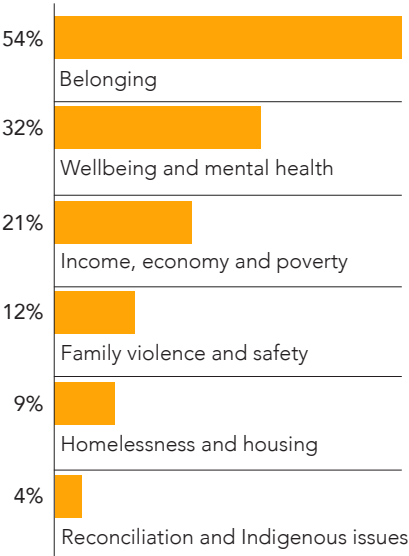
provided from SSCF's 2018 *Vital Signs*® report including: sense of belonging; unemployment rate; voter turnout; visits to libraries; crime rate; charitable donations; vacancy rates; volunteer rate, and sense of satisfaction with life.

When thinking of the health of their communities, each community reported three of their top indicators, which were organized into six categories:

- 1 Belonging
- 2 Wellbeing and mental health
- 3 Income, economy and poverty
- 4 Family violence and safety
- 5 Homelessness and housing
- 6 Reconciliation and Indigenous issues

The summary of findings is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Top Community Indicators



Source: Survey responses
Notes: One community could report more than one indicator

What does belonging look like?

Figure 2: Dimensions of Belonging



54% of participating communities identified **BELONGING** as the top community indicator. Belonging encompasses various dimensions as expressed by community participants and is illustrated in Figure 2.

32% of participating communities identified **WELLBEING AND MENTAL HEALTH** as the top community indicator. Typically, communities refer to a lack of adequate services that would be necessary to promote physical and mental health.

21% of participating communities identified **INCOME, ECONOMY AND POVERTY** as the top community indicator. This incorporates references to overall economic conditions and income levels. A few communities have reported 'poverty' as their indicator, where participants have commented on more frequent use of the food bank or schools needing lunch programs for the children.

12% of participating communities identified **FAMILY VIOLENCE AND SAFETY**. While some conversations defined safety by a rise in crime rates, others noted greater instances of family violence.

9% of participating communities identified **HOMELESSNESS AND HOUSING** as a top community indicator. Some participants identified homelessness as the issue stemming from a lack of affordable housing.

4% of participating communities identified **RECONCILIATION AND INDIGENOUS ISSUES** as a top community indicator, which also includes issues related to Indigenous peoples.

Five emerging issues

The remainder of the report is structured around five emerging issues that have been identified by participating communities in Question 4 (Q4). Ranked by their importance to the communities, these emerging issues are:

1. Sustaining rural communities

2. Drug abuse and addiction

3. Safety in communities

4. Racism towards new immigrants and Indigenous peoples

5. Homelessness and affordable housing

Within each issue, specific challenges are identified as reported in Question 5 (Q5) as well as resources and supports needed to make a change, compiled from Questions 3 (Q3) and 6 (Q6). Each issue is also supported with existing evidence gathered from regional indicators, or examples from work within communities.² Responses from Question 7 (Q7) are compiled in the concluding section of the report.

² All supporting evidence is compiled from documents, publications and reports released up to and including August 1, 2019.

Emerging Issue #1:

Sustaining rural communities (22% of conversations)

"One of 4-H Saskatchewan's concerns is around people moving out of rural communities. Small schools in these communities are being closed, forcing families to move to urban centres. Since there is the isolation from urban centres, kids are no longer involved in 4-H and clubs are folding due to low enrollment, leaving an older population behind." From the Saskatchewan 4-H Council in partnership with Saskatchewan 4-H Foundation conversation

"[...] Online shopping and traveling to the cities have a negative effect on Assiniboia's economy. [Need] [i]jobs to keep youth living here." From the Town of Assiniboia conversation

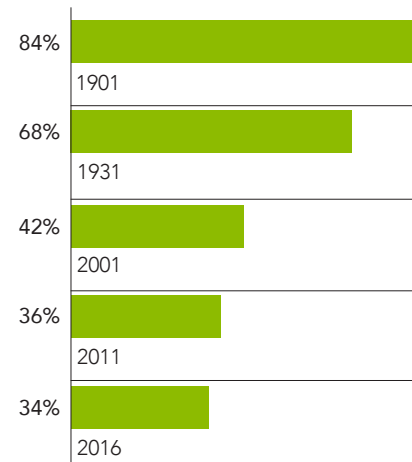
Specific challenges reported by communities (Q5):

- Aging infrastructure, saving old buildings in small towns
- Programs are closing down in small towns
- Development of arts community in small towns
- Economic downturn affecting small towns
- Young people leave small towns, lack of age diversity
- Closing schools in small towns
- Very limited access to home care in small communities
- Loss of businesses in rural communities
- High speed internet on the farm is still lacking
- Updating water systems and infrastructure
- Difficulty in building any sizeable arts programming within small communities
- Arts education in the school system in small towns
- Aging population in smaller communities – parking access for people with disabilities
- Keeping youth active, engaged and involved
- Loneliness within small communities for all age groups
- Attraction and retention of families, seniors and businesses
- Lack of transportation services to urban centers



**Rural Canada
contributes about
30% of the
country's gross
domestic product.**

Figure 3: Share of Saskatchewan's rural population between 1901 and 2016



Sources: Strengthening Rural Canada (1901, 1931, 2001), Saskatchewan Population Report prepared by the Government of Saskatchewan based on Statistics Canada's Census 2016 (2011, 2016)

Existing evidence for sustaining rural communities:

Sustainability of rural communities is essential to Canada's economic growth. Rural Canada contributes about 30% of country's gross domestic product and approximately 23% of Canadians work in rural communities.³ The province of Saskatchewan is known for its large rural population, which comprised 34% of Saskatchewan's total population in 2016.⁴ In comparison, Ontario's rural population accounts for only 14% of its total population. Figure 3 illustrates that Saskatchewan's rural population as a share of total population in the province has been steadily declining since 1901. Closure of the farms (due to the incorporation of smaller farms into larger units and a substitution of capital for labor) has contributed to the decline in rural population. It is projected that this trend will continue unless all levels of government step up to create positive change.

In addition to the declining trend in rural population, participating communities are witnessing a shift in the demographic composition, where younger population leaves for larger cities with aging population remaining. Such a demographic shift poses a challenge to economic wellbeing of the communities and calls for creative action.

Government of Canada, with partners from various provinces, has embarked on a three-year Pan-Canadian initiative to strengthen Rural Canada.

For Saskatchewan, this means that the Government of Canada will work with its partner Saskatchewan Literacy Network and rural communities to find potential solutions to

existing challenges. Based on three criteria – population size, degree of rurality and diversity, this Pan-Canadian study chose seven Saskatchewan communities: Fort Qu'Appelle, Gravelbourg, Hudson Bay, Humboldt, Kipling, Rosetown and St. Louis. *Strengthening Rural Canada* will work with these individual communities to develop community plans where opportunities will be identified and strategies will be developed on how to build each community's human and social capital.

In its 2019 Budget, the federal government also committed up to \$6 billion in investments in rural broadband internet over the next 10 years, which will help build "fully connected Canada."⁵

In terms of local support for rural Saskatchewan, the provincial government is allocating \$71 million in funding to rural municipalities and \$40.8 million in funding to towns, villages and resort villages through its Municipal Revenue Sharing for 2019-20 fiscal year.⁶ Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities uses these funds to ensure rural infrastructure and roads are properly maintained.

Preserving rural Saskatchewan is critical to having a vibrant and growing province. Initiatives such as *Strengthening Rural Canada* can help small communities overcome challenges such as declining populations and skill shortages.

³ These figures are from the Western Producer article entitled "Rural Canada Contributes 30 percent of GDP," May 31, 2018.

⁴ Information is available up to 2016, since it is based on the latest 2016 Census.

⁵ Budget 2019, "Building a Better Canada: Universal High-Speed Internet"

⁶ Government of Saskatchewan, Funding for Municipalities

Resources and supports needed to make a change as reported by communities (Q3 and Q6):

- More funding is the primary request from communities. The stability of funding has been noted as an important factor. Lack of funding has been a threat to meeting the needs of small-town communities, for example, in maintaining facilities as well as in developing and supplying various programs.
- Diversification of funding – relying on fundraising has become a challenge
- Identification of appropriate grants and assistance in applying to funding agencies
- Education about the importance of the arts in small towns
- Establishment of food banks in smaller communities
- Promotion of small communities
- Road and infrastructure repairs
- Small business development and community beautification
- Community calendar listing all events for people who do not use the internet



COMMUNITY FOCUS

Partnership is key for conserving our environment

The Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) is our country's largest land conservation organization. Established in Ontario in 1962, NCC's first conservation project in Saskatchewan was a quarter-section of native grassland in the Qu'Appelle Coulee in 1982. Today, NCC conserves over 150,000 acres in our province. There is an urgency to this work as it is estimated that only about 20% of Saskatchewan's native prairie remains intact.

Jennifer McKillop, Regional Vice-President of NCC says, "The grasslands that we see in southern Saskatchewan, are the most endangered ecosystem on the planet, more than the rain forest and more than coral reefs, and what we have left is valuable for a lot of reasons and its valuable to all of us."

"Indigenous people have been a part of that landscape for thousands of years and I think that the conservation of those lands has to include Indigenous people."

NCC is partnering with First Nations on environmental conservation programs.

"*Learning the Land* is a partnership which NCC Saskatchewan has with Treaty 4 Education Alliance which now represents seven schools in the Treaty 4 area. It was initiated as a pilot project almost five years ago when I started with NCC to explore education and outreach around native prairie conservation, from both a conservation science point of view, and from an Indigenous traditional knowledge point of view," adds McKillop.

The program is focused on grade seven science curriculum with both classroom work and field trips to NCC property and land important to First Nations. Staff teach skills like using GPS and inventorying plants. In

addition, the children study species at risk such as the piping plover, northern leopard frog and burrowing owls. Each child chooses a species to explore further in a variety of ways including internet research and asking grandparents what the animal's name is in their native language.

"The conservation community has its own history with Indigenous people and it's not always a happy one. We have seen in the past where areas set aside for protection have actually displaced Indigenous people. Programs like this one are opportunities to build bridges and work together."

Adding an art component to *Learning the Land* is one of those bridges. Michael Lonechild, a Cree artist from White Bear, leads Treaty 4 students in painting murals of endangered animals. Copies of these colourful murals are proudly displayed in the NCC's Regina offices. *Learning the Land* continues to increase the range of activities and grades included. McKillop is particularly enthusiastic about introducing Indigenous children to careers in environmental science and stewardship.

"This is the coolest job on earth. Our staff get to spend time in nature whether they are a biologist, ecologist, or a range manager – sparking one kid's interest in post-secondary education – that's pretty exciting... In Saskatchewan we have the opportunity to be cutting edge and to do some really exciting work... We are a leader and we have a huge opportunity for the students," McKillop says.

Students, teachers and everyone else can learn more at Learningtheland.ca.

by Donna Boyle

Emerging Issue #2:

Drug abuse and addiction (20% of conversations)

"The abuse of methamphetamines, or speed, is not new. However, crystal meth, as it's more commonly known, is a relatively new, fast-acting, long lasting and cheaper drug than others and can be addictive after only one use. The fact that it is cheaper and longer lasting means that is more economically accessible to people in comparison to other drugs. As such, its use has spread rapidly in the past few years." From the Carmichael Outreach Inc. conversation

"Drug addiction brings with it many problems such as prostitution, as a way to pay for the habit, and the contaminated litter, mainly needles, that could hurt children. A current challenge that the community faces is how unsafe they feel because of drugs. Parents do not want their kids to play outside because they may end up getting hurt by an infected needle and Elders are afraid they may be robbed for money as they are fragile and unlikely to fight back." From the Civic Museum of Regina conversation

Specific challenges reported by communities (Q5):

- Addiction to fentanyl, crystal meth
- Alcohol dependence
- Impacts of gang activity, which includes gang-related graffiti, drug use, sales and crime
- Low school attendance
- Mental health supports, medications shouldn't be the first response
- No treatment centers for youth
- Increase in the incidence of drug abuse among young people

Existing evidence for drug abuse and addiction:

Alcohol and drug addictions are serious and ongoing problems in our communities penetrating the lives of many families.

In 2015-2016 (the most recent available data), Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI) reported that on average 345 individuals per 100,000 people were hospitalized due entirely to alcohol consumption in Saskatchewan. This is 44% higher than the national average. Hospitalization rates were also quite pronounced in rural parts of Saskatchewan as shown in Table 1. The Government of Saskatchewan offers ongoing programs and supports to individuals suffering from addiction to alcohol, which can be found on the provincial government's website under "Alcohol and Drug Support".

Table 1: Number of hospitalizations due entirely to alcohol in south Saskatchewan

Regional Health Authority (RHA), 2015-2016	Major towns in RHA	Number of hospitalizations entirely due to alcohol (as per 100,000 people)
Regina Qu'Appelle	Regina	339
Cypress	Swift Current, Shaunavon, Maple Creek	434
Five Hills	Gravelbourg, Moose Jaw, Assiniboia	222
Sun Country	Weyburn, Estevan, Oxbow	290
Sunrise	Melville, Yorkton, Esterhazy	292

Source: Canadian Institute for Health Information, 2015-2016 report.

With regards to drug abuse, a fairly new and devastating phenomenon is the increased use of opioids. Opioid overdoses claimed 95 lives in Saskatchewan in 2018, which is a rate of 8.2 individuals per 100,000 people.⁷ While the majority of cases occurred in Regina and Saskatoon, other locations such as Weyburn, Shaunavon, Estevan and Yorkton also suffered the effects of the opioid crisis.⁸

For the period from January to March 2019, there were 68 opioid overdoses in Saskatchewan, which is a 19% increase from 57 cases in the previous quarter (October to December 2018).⁹

The Government of Saskatchewan is committed to addressing the opioid and crystal meth dependency through various initiatives. It has invested \$7.4 million to expand access to opioid substitution therapy. The Government of Canada is also granting \$5 million to Saskatchewan to train health care providers in creating treatment options for patients who use crystal meth, amongst many other initiatives (Government of Saskatchewan, Alcohol and Drug Support).

On February 12, 2019, the Government of Saskatchewan launched a campaign to help bring awareness to the problem, educate the public on how to identify the signs of the opioid overdose and how to respond.

The province's health authority also administers harm reduction programs. One such program is *Take Home Naloxone Kits* available in case someone is experiencing an opioid overdose. To promote community safety, Saskatchewan's Health Authority also issues needles and collects them at no cost.¹⁰

Addressing the problems of alcohol and drug dependency can bring relief to communities that are also experiencing higher crimes and homelessness, as these issues are interconnected.

345 individuals per 100,000 people, on average, were hospitalized due entirely to alcohol consumption in Saskatchewan.



This is 44% higher than the national average.

⁷ National Report: Apparent Opioid-related Deaths in Canada (June 2019); www.health-infobase.canada.ca.

⁸ Saskatchewan Coroners Service, 2010-2019 report.

⁹ Suspected opioid-related overdoses in jurisdictions across Canada based on Emergency Medical Services Data (June 2019); www.health-infobase.canada.ca.

¹⁰ Harm Reduction Programs and Services in Saskatchewan, 2016-17 report.

Resources and supports needed to make a change as reported by communities (Q3 and Q6):

- Communities would like to see investment from all three levels of government to ensure sustainability of alcohol and drug support programs
 - Necessary funding of services that are required to strengthen programs for dealing with addiction as currently there are no adequate services to detox and heal from addictions
 - Funding to run programs for our youth, who need a second chance
 - Gender-based programming for mental health and addictions as men and women may require different resources and services
 - Proper transitional services for those who wish to return to employment after recovery
 - Safe injection sites or harm reduction buses
-



COMMUNITY FOCUS

Integrated support for recovery and homelessness promotes success

The first Oxford House Saskatchewan (OHS) residence was established in 2010. They now operate four Houses for men (20 beds) and one House serving women (5 beds) providing safe, affordable housing and support for people to continue their recovery from addictions.

Blair Pope, Executive Director of OHS says potential residents are referred by community organizations such as addiction treatment centres, counselling agencies, medical professionals, church and AA/NA leaders.

"Many recovering addicts try to quit by themselves," says Pope. "The vast majority fail. The key to recovery is living life with others. They find support and empathy with people who understand the struggles of maintaining sobriety."

The Oxford House process is unique and based on a model successfully implemented throughout the United States and other parts of Canada. An Outreach Worker interviews the candidate and if there is a good 'fit' within one of the Houses, the applicant meets the current House Membership and moves in as a temporary Member. After a one-month trial period, the House Membership democratically votes to grant permanent status. In doing so, they accept the responsibility of mentorship for that individual through recovery time at Oxford House.

"We do not enable our residents by 'fixing' their problems for them," Pope describes. "The Houses operate democratically and independently."

Any issues arising from within the Houses are dealt with by the Members.

Rather than the high risk of individuals repeating the cycle of addiction by going back to their 'old haunts' only to slip back, OHS provides a new lease on life. With a fresh start, Members can fully recover and re-establish themselves in their old community at a later date if they have the desire and when they have the emotional, psychological and financial strength to do so safely.

"This is a process, a journey, and few can magically recover from years of self-abuse with a single stay in an addictions treatment centre," says Pope. "This process takes time and energy to heal. OHS fills the gap that exists in the transition back to living independently."

Pope says as a country, the economic cost of homelessness is enormous. The majority of our residents at Oxford House are either homeless or at-risk of homelessness.

"When one calculates the cost reduction associated with fewer detox stays, emergency responses, policing, hospital, social welfare, and/or corrections and justice, the savings are immense. Every person we assist reduces the number of individuals who require social income support and those tax dollars can be directed to other initiatives. As working, tax-paying citizens, these individuals can be productive members who contribute rather than being a burden on our tax dollars," he says.

Story courtesy of Oxford House Saskatchewan

Emerging Issue #3:

Safety in communities

(20% of conversations)

"Many people stated they do not feel safe in the evening and there is a need for additional night watch patrols and programs like White Pony Lodge." From the Civic Museum of Regina conversation

"We need a united, safe and peaceful community." From the Southeast Advocates for Employment Inc. Weyburn conversation

Specific challenges reported by communities (Q5):

- Home invasions have increased
- Rising number of gangs in schools and community
- Safe sidewalks for the blind and partially-sighted
- Workers' safety, specifically in relation to vulnerable trades
- Road safety – bringing awareness to impaired driving
- Increase in different kinds of crime within our community
- Vehicle break and enters, vandalism, lack of safety for cyclists and pedestrians
- Inadequate snow and ice removal, which limits safety for people with accessibility issues

Existing evidence for safety in communities:

According to a comprehensive report released by Statistics Canada in 2019, Saskatchewan was one of only three Canadian provinces to report a *decline* in the Crime Severity Index (CSI) in 2018 compared to 2017.¹¹ A 3% drop in CSI was primarily attributed to lower instances of sexual assaults against children and of homicide. Fraud, breaking and entering were slightly higher in Saskatchewan in 2018 compared to 2017. In comparison, Manitoba, as one of our neighbouring provinces, has seen an increase in the Crime Severity Index by 6% in 2018, while Alberta's crime rate remained the same.

Police-reported crime rate in Saskatchewan's capital, however, increased. Regina's Crime Severity Index (CSI) rose by 10% in 2018 compared to 2017 due to higher rates of robbery, theft under \$5,000 and motor vehicle theft. In terms of the actual rates, Regina is one of the few cities reporting CSI rates that are higher than the national average (127 in Regina compared to 75 in Canada).

As for crime in rural Saskatchewan, the 2018 Statistics Canada report indicated that Saskatchewan's rural crime was 36% higher than urban crime in 2017, resulting from increased rates in all types of crime – violent, property and other crime. The 2019 report, however, has no information regarding crime rates in rural Saskatchewan.

In March 2019, RCMP together with the Government of Saskatchewan and other partners launched a Crime Advisory Network. Created as a crime prevention tool, "the network allows RCMP detachment commanders to send text messages, emails or phone calls to residents with information about criminal activity in their area. Residents can then contact the police with tips related to the advisory."¹² Saskatchewan Association of Rural

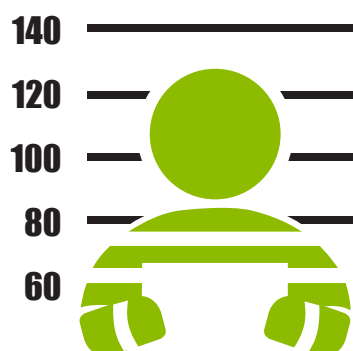
Municipalities has indicated that this network will benefit rural Saskatchewan and contribute to community safety.

Provincial government provides \$50,000 in funding to RCMP to run the Crime Advisory Network.

Similar to declining crime rates, impaired-driving rates in our province were also lower, falling by 1% in 2018. This positive change is also reinforced by new alcohol-impaired driving laws, which were legislated by the federal government in December 2018.¹³

Feeling safe in our communities is an essential requirement for everyone's physical and emotional wellbeing. In addition to relying on police to fight crime, communities can also join in the efforts to prevent it by being watchful and reporting suspicious activity.

The Saskatchewan Crime Watch Advisory Network



Regina's
Crime Severity Index
is **70%** higher than in the
rest of **Canada.**

¹¹ Crime Severity Index (CSI) is a measure of police-reported crime that takes into account the volume and severity of crime. To calculate the CSI, each violation is assigned a weight, which depends on the seriousness of the offence. The weighted offences are summed and divided by the population. More about CSI calculation can be found in the report "Police-Reported Crime Statistics in Canada, 2018" (pg. 15).

¹² News release on April 18, 2019 by the Government of Saskatchewan.

¹³ A detailed infographic on the new alcohol-impaired driving laws is available at the federal Department of Justice website: <https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/cj-jp/sidl-rlcfa/longdesc.html>.

Resources and supports needed to make a change as reported by communities (Q3 and Q6):

- Funding and donations, identifying funding sources to meet specific needs
- Communities need more education on safety
- Late closing centres, past 10 p.m.
- Volunteer safety patrol
- Bike lanes
- Better lighting in alleys
- Support for a neighborhood watch
- Improving sidewalk conditions so that seniors can feel safe walking
- Speed bumps in school zones
- More policing
- Self-defense classes



COMMUNITY FOCUS

Innovative programs serve community needs with exciting results

A dynamic program created through partnership between the Regina Public Library (RPL), the Regina Police Service (RPS), and Regina Schools was introduced this past year.

"Cops and Readers" was developed to promote the value and fun of reading for students and families; to increase reading proficiency and to increase familiarity and comfort of students with police officers. In this program, students make a personal connection with police officers and library staff over the school year and get to see firsthand the whole community approach to supporting school success. A mid program family literacy night and celebration extends the learning to the members of the whole family.

The program was launched in September 2018 in two community schools. Based on the feedback received from teachers, library staff, and police officers, we know that *"Cops and Readers"* has increased children's reading scores and changed their view of police officers from stereotypes into friendly, caring, and approachable people. While formal reading score evaluation is forthcoming, anecdotally teachers have reported that children have increased reading proficiency by as much as two levels over the course of the program. Drawings completed by students at the beginning and end of the program reveal a dramatic decrease in the portrayal of police involved in more stereotypical, sensationalized behaviour. At the end of the program drawings instead

depicted police reading to children, walking hand in hand across the street and generally being helpful and kind.

Another innovative partnership that has seen exciting results has recently been developed between RPL and Family Service Regina Inc. (FSR). FSR approached RPL because they wanted to deliver service in spaces that are safe, comfortable and accessible. The intention of the partnership is to reduce the stress and stigma some people may have of going to a traditional 'counselling centre' and to reach populations that find it difficult to access mental health support.

Since launching in January 2018, the program has been expanded to multiple library locations and consistently operates close to maximum capacity. Together they are reaching people through the *THRIVE Walk-In Counselling* program who would not have otherwise reached out for help. They found THRIVE counsellors because they were at the library for other reasons and decided to take an opportunity to get help.

Regina Public Library works together with community partners to understand, anticipate, and serve the needs of the Regina community. By working together they can support a thriving and inclusive community of learning, connection and diversity.

by Judith Silverthorne

Emerging Issue #4:

Racism towards new immigrants and Indigenous peoples (13% of conversations)

"Racism is becoming more obvious and more direct. Racism, which is embedded in human hatred and xenophobia, drastically impedes the integration process. Racism is compounded by unemployment and poverty as many New Canadians are marginalized, either unemployed or in precarious low pay, low skill, low security jobs." From the New Canadian Integration Society - in partnership with Heritage Community Association Inc. conversation

"Community happens when diverse groups of people develop common goals and work collectively for the benefit of all members." From the Saskatchewan Abilities Council Inc.
– Swift Current Branch conversation

Specific challenges reported by communities (Q5):

- Ignorance and lack of respect by larger community of the needs and supports for marginalized communities
- Marginalized communities are excluded from decision-making
- Integration of First Nations communication
- Education on the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action
- Not enough opportunity to get to know the newcomers
- Limited job opportunities for newcomers
- Lack of tolerance towards newcomers
- To preserve and strengthen First Nations and Métis arts and culture
- Too few support services and systems to help New Canadians
- Little cross-cultural understanding of and respect for other cultures
- Overcome discrimination and promote social inclusion and diversity
- Minimal existing relationships between Indigenous and white communities
- Colonial structures must change to properly support the Indigenous peoples

Existing evidence for racism towards new immigrants and Indigenous peoples:

Hate crime in Saskatchewan has seen a significant spike since 2014. Hate crime, as defined by the *Criminal Code of Canada* Sections 318, 319, is a criminal incident that is motivated by hatred towards an identifiable group. According to police-reported data made available by Statistics Canada, the number of instances of hate crime motivated by race or ethnicity has almost doubled in our province, increasing from nine instances in 2014 to 16 instances in 2016.¹⁴ As a share of Canada's total instances of hate crime due to race or ethnicity, Saskatchewan's rate has increased from 1.5% in 2014 to 2.5% in 2016. The rate of police-reported general hate crime specifically in Regina has risen from 0.8 per 100,000 people in 2014 to 4.4 per 100,000 people in 2016.¹⁵

Understandably, data captures only the numerical side of the racism problem. Stories about racism and discrimination towards newcomers and the Indigenous population have made numerous headlines in Saskatchewan.

The Multicultural Council of Saskatchewan Inc. (MCoS) coordinates a provincial March 21 campaign to end racism in our province. This date also coincides with the United Nations International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

The University of Regina has also joined the initiative and launched its own anti-racism campaign on March 21, 2019 entitled "You Belong Here. Racism Doesn't".

By bringing awareness to the issues of racism and discrimination, we can put a stop to unacceptable behaviours and attitudes together.



Hate crime in Saskatchewan almost doubled, from 9 instances in 2014 to 16 in 2016.

¹⁴ Latest available data is for 2016

¹⁵ Police-reported hate crime in Canada 2014-2016, Statistics Canada report released in April 2018. Current data is available for urban centers only.



Saskatchewan 4-H Council Inc. in partnership with Saskatchewan 4-H Foundation (Saskatoon) community conversation

Resources and supports needed to make a change as reported by communities (Q3 and Q6):

- Educating individuals about various cultures
 - Credential recognition
 - Better access to information and services
 - Create dedicated cultural activities and ceremonies
 - Having a world map in community centers for people to show where they come from
 - Education around Treaties
 - Support Indigenous connections (cultural, spiritual and subsistence) to the land in southern Saskatchewan
 - A friendship centre for First Nations
 - Education and awareness on anti-racism
 - Effective policies and programs to address challenges and barriers faced by New Canadians
 - Safe walking and biking paths
-



COMMUNITY FOCUS

Engagement promotes community connection

For nearly thirty years, Common Weal Community Arts Inc. has improved the quality of community life by activating social change through engaged arts activity. Although relatively new to the Vital Signs network, their mandates align. Common Weal connects communities with artists in all disciplines, focusing on a process of dialogue and reflection in which the lived experience and knowledge of participants are prioritized.

Developed as a way to explore how artistic practice might address the growing issues of racism towards the newcomer and Indigenous peoples, Common Weal's *Respond to Racism* program has already reached over 3,260 people in 17 southern Saskatchewan communities, with the support of 30 community partners. Southern Artistic Director, Shaunna Dunn, speaks to the importance of this work.

"The arts create spaces where people can find genuine connection," Dunn says. "The work we are doing examines how community is built, what brings us together and ways we can strengthen and extend these relationships."

The *Respond to Racism* program includes a number of streams, led by artists Kris Alvarez, Zoey Roy, and Joely BigEagle-Kequahtoway. These artists explore how the arts can support anti-racism education and action. The primary focus is on finding ways to build healthy community relationships, bridge segregated communities, and establish communication tools. Since launching in March 2018, *Respond to Racism* has proven to have

strong impact in achieving cross-cultural understanding, inclusion, and a sense of belonging. This initiative also addresses several emerging priority issues reported in the *Vital Community Conversation* community gatherings around the province.

One stream facilitates conversation through the sharing of meals. Eating together becomes a catalyst to engage community members to speak honestly about racism from their personal perspectives. Through this communication process people learn to listen, to hear, and to better understand, and are encouraged to examine their biases. Another stream brings Indigenous and newcomer youth together to share their stories through theatre and improv games, encouraging community belonging and connection. In a third stream, school groups, staff at participating facilities, and the general public participate in the two week residencies run by Indigenous artists and local Elders. Teachings about the buffalo, the history of colonization, and discussions about cultural sensitivity are woven together with hands-on buffalo tanning and traditional arts.

Respond to Racism is just one of Common Weal's innovative programs. Whether working with seniors or people in correctional facilities, generating an interactive exhibition with Denesuline Elders and youth of Patuanak, or creating spaces for 2SLGBTQIA+ participants to dance, Common Weal is making a real difference in people's lives.

by Judith Silverthorne

Emerging Issue #5:

Homelessness and affordable housing

(9% of conversations)

"Poor quality housing. If you receive income assistance your rent will cost more than what is provided." From the Regina Transition House Inc. conversation

"I am too young for a senior complex. We need group homes for people with physical disabilities just like there are group homes for adults with intellectual disabilities."

From The Big Sky Centre for Learning and Being Astonished Inc. conversation

Specific challenges reported by communities (Q5):

- Lack of suitable, good quality and affordable housing
- Housing for aging population, lack of care homes in rural communities
- Housing for people with disabilities: physical or cognitive
- Lack of homeless shelters, emergency shelters, transitional homes for all ages



Everyone is Home:

A 5-year plan to end Chronic and Episodic Homelessness in Regina

Existing evidence for homelessness and affordable housing:

On June 20, 2019 a partnership between the City of Regina and the Regina Homelessness Advisory Board unveiled a plan to end homelessness entitled “*Everyone is Home: a 5-Year Plan to End Chronic and Episodic Homelessness in Regina*.” For this plan to be implemented, the funding needs to come from all three levels of government.¹⁶

“The plan calls for 80 new permanent supportive housing spaces, 80 new affordable housing spaces, 80 new rent supports, 100 prevention interventions, 140 new Assertive Community Treatment spaces and 130 new Intensive Case Management spaces.”¹⁷

This plan is crucial for Regina. According to the 2018 Regina Homelessness Count, which conducted a point-in-time count on April 18 and 19, 2018, 286 people were considered homeless. Over the course of the year, around 2,000 people are estimated to be episodically homeless.

The top two barriers to finding a permanent home are high rents and low income, as indicated by 62% and 59% of 125 survey respondents respectively.¹⁸

Every week, Carmichael Outreach Inc. publishes a list of available housing units in Regina with rent amounts applicable for a particular week. For the week of July 8-12, 2019, rent for a basement suite ranged from \$600 to \$900, while rent for a house for the same week ranged from \$700 to \$1,500. A single individual on social assistance would receive \$735 monthly on average, which needs to be budgeted for shelter, food and clothing. Housing affordability becomes a true challenge for such an individual.

Organizations such as Regina, Moose Jaw and Yorkton Housing Authorities assist in “providing quality, safe and affordable housing for the benefit of low-to-moderate income seniors, families, and persons with disabilities.”¹⁹ However, the problem of housing affordability continues to persist as it affects many people: the homeless, individuals with physical and intellectual disabilities, seniors and youth. Recognizing the range of needs is the first step in addressing the housing problem.

Resources and supports needed to make a change as reported by communities (Q3 and Q6):

- Adequate funding since social assistance and disability supports are barely enough to survive
- Shared housing options or other creative housing solutions
- Expansion of *Housing First*, and better housing supports for people living in chronic poverty and/or addictions
- Enforcement mechanisms for landlords to ensure safe housing
- More community housing
- Multi-generational care homes
- Access to safe shelters
- Men’s Shelter
- 2nd stage housing
- Youth home centre
- Rental subsidies
- Sidewalks that have curb cuts at the corners

¹⁶ As of July 12, 2019, no funding commitments have been announced

¹⁷ Leader Post Article, June 21, 2019 “New \$63-million plan to end homelessness in Regina now needs government funding commitments

¹⁸ These figures are from 2018 Regina Homelessness Count report (pg. 6).

¹⁹ Quote taken from the Moose Jaw Housing Authority website.



Regina Region Local Immigration Partnership in partnership with Regina Open Door Society Inc. community conversation



COMMUNITY FOCUS

Meeting the needs for affordable housing

Ta and Sah Blu fell in love in a refugee camp. Forced to leave behind everything they knew, they escaped from the civil war in Myanmar and dreamed of one day growing roots again. Like everyone, they wanted the opportunity to build a normal life – have a job, own a home and start a family.

After 14 long years in the refugee camp, Sah Blu and her family's application to immigrate to Canada was accepted. Sah Blu was thrilled until she learned that Ta's application had been accepted by the USA. They were finally leaving the refugee camp but only to be separated from each other.

Ta and Sah Blu never gave up on each other or the plans they had made. Their commitment to their dream kept them strong until they were reunited five years later. Finally!

They were so relieved to be together again, even though it meant sharing a small home with Sah Blu's parents and siblings. There wasn't much space for 10 people in the modest house, and soon there would be even less space. Ta and Sah Blu were expecting their first child, Michelle. Now was the time to save for a home to call their own.

When Michelle turned two years old, Ta and Sah Blu's second daughter, Milda, was born with spina bifida and hydrocephalus. Much of Ta and Sah Blu's hard-earned savings would have to go toward getting the equipment that Milda needed. It seemed like owning a home would never be possible. Until they heard about Habitat for Humanity Regina Inc. and the affordable homeownership program.

Ta and Sah Blu learned that they qualified for a Habitat home – they had stable income between \$32,000 and

\$66,500, had lived in Canada for at least three years, and hadn't declared bankruptcy in the last two years. They couldn't wait to contact Family Services to start the application process.

In addition to building safe, decent homes in their Moose Jaw, Estevan and Yorkton chapters, Habitat Regina has embarked on the largest build in Saskatchewan's history. Haultain Crossing, in Regina's Eastview community, will house approximately 250 people, including over 150 children, after all six construction phases are completed.

Every house built represents community in action, all committed to a common goal: helping low-income families to build strength, stability and self-reliance through affordable homeownership. Companies and organizations come together to increase their impact, by matching donations or co-sponsoring homes. A Habitat home is a testament to the power of collaboration and is proof that when we work together, anything is possible.

Ta and Sah Blu still remember the day that they received the life-changing phone call. They had been accepted to become Habitat homeowners! In return, they agreed to pay an interest-free mortgage at 25% of their income and to contribute 500 volunteer hours. Their long-held dream was becoming a reality.

Milda will have room to move freely around the house in her wheelchair. Big Sister Michelle wants to paint her very first room pink. Ta and Sah Blu will never have to be apart again.

Story courtesy of Habitat for Humanity Regina Inc., Regina

What is your wish for your community? (Q7)

We conclude this report with the following interesting findings:

Belonging is reported
as the top indicator by
54% of all
conversations.



50% of participating
communities
wish for Safety.

More education and **more funding** were the two key issues standing
in the way of having communities that participants reported that they wished to have.

Top Indicator in Your Community	Top Wish for Your Community
54% say Belonging	50% say Safety
32% say Physical and Mental Wellbeing	31% say Inclusiveness

Source: community responses from conversations



COMMUNITY FOCUS

Arts contribute to sense of belonging in community

Through the *50 Vital Community Conversations* initiative, the Saskatchewan Arts Alliance (SAA) embarked on a series of conversations about the arts in the communities of Shaunavon and Weyburn in partnership with the Organization of Saskatchewan Arts Councils.

SAA also conducted an independent meeting in Humboldt. The gatherings were to determine a sampling of the gaps and an understanding of the arts ecology in the respective communities.

The results of these community discussions will inform the more expansive study, *"Value of Arts and Culture for Community Cohesion,"* a partnership of the SAA, the University of Regina and the Saskatchewan Partnership for Arts Research.

The meetings drew people from surrounding communities who shared an enthusiasm for the arts - artists, art supporters, educators, municipal officials, and newcomers attended giving a much wider perspective. SAA focused their discussions with specific questions, directing the gatherings as a research project with the intent of using the information for the longer study.

The biggest takeaway was that people felt welcomed by their arts community and had a sense of community, of place, and of belonging.

Some findings indicated underlying consistencies for needing or maintaining a defined physical space to facilitate more cohesion and for garnering larger audiences. Levels of engagement and participation varied with newcomers.

One of the benefits was bringing people together for the first time. They met others in their communities who also were involved in creating, championing, and being appreciative of the arts. One common goal surfaced about the need to help budding and reticent artists achieve realization and the confidence to emerge.

Underlying commonalities arose in the forums around the value of connection, collaboration, learning, and sharing with each other. Financial support and the long-term presence and structures of creating and showcasing all the arts disciplines became an important recommendation for the vitality and wellbeing of communities. SAA learned a lot about the communities, the wide variety of arts programming and high involvement of community members in arts activity.

The SAA has played a strong role in the *Vital Community Conversations* initiative by also attending conversations as part of the Vital Signs Community Network. Reviews of these and the community discussions will inform further studies by SAA to discover the key needs, priorities and crucial issues throughout communities in the province in keeping the arts vibrant.

by Judith Silverthorne



From the Regina Early Years Family Centre, a program with the Regina Early Learning Centre Inc. community conversation

Community wishes

Detail for the definition and community wishes has been summarized by our researcher, and based on the reports completed by the organization.

The organization noted is the official legal entity name. Thank you to each host organization for bringing together many individuals and community interests!

Organization	Summarized community comments	Summarized community wishes
Big Brothers Big Sisters of Yorkton and Area Inc.	A strong family, that belongs, feels safe, supports, accepts, educates, engages, and forms a unity	Safe, inclusive, non-judgmental, strong multicultural community (Yorkton)
Carmichael Outreach Inc.	A social network with personal support, with everyone there for each other; community is tight, with acceptance of gender, mental health issues, race and other aspects	A safe, inclusive and caring community (Regina)
City of Melville	A great place to live because jobs are available, it provides good education and health care, it is safe, inclusive, people work together, respect each other	Vibrant, healthy, safe and growing community (Melville)
City of Moose Jaw	A safe and secure place with opportunities and a sense of belonging	A safe community with a place to play pickleball, go for walks, swim in the outdoor pool, experience nature (Moose Jaw)
Civic Museum of Regina	Helping one another, sharing and caring. Going the extra distance to help and give back to whomever is in need	A place where children can grow up to be happy and healthy (Regina)
Estevan Humane Society Inc.	All-inclusive to all living beings within that district and surrounding areas and is everyone's responsibility	A well informed, compassionate, responsible, responsive, prosperous community (Estevan)
Heritage Community Association Inc.	People are engaged with one another and doing life together	A more connected, cleaner and safer community (Regina)
Ignite Adult Learning Corporation	A way of working together to find ways to include everyone	A community that offers second chances for our youth to realize their true potential and goals for their future (Regina)
Mental Health Association Regina Branch	A place where you belong, share similar beliefs, values, where you feel safe, included, where you work together, where there is food and housing	A safe, secure and inclusive community (Regina)
Mothers Against Drunk Driving - (MADD Canada) - Estevan Chapter	Being part of a family that helps one another, a place to grow	A safer one (Estevan)
Multicultural Council of Saskatchewan Inc.	A place that offers an opportunity to connect with each other, help each other and be open to diversity	A safe, secure, inclusive and knowledgeable community (Swift Current)
Munch Cafe and Catering Inc.	A place of diversity, strong sense of including, respect and shared values	An inclusive, caring, respectful, stigma free, collaborative and safe community (Regina)
New Canadian Integration Society in partnership with Heritage Community Association Inc.	A place where people can lean on one another during bad times, celebrate each other during good times and work together always	An accepting, supporting, harmonious, equitable community (Regina)
Organization of Saskatchewan Arts Councils in partnership with Saskatchewan Arts Alliance	A feeling of home, a place of support and collaboration and a non-judgmental and inspiring environment	Community engagement, vibrant programs and facilities, increased arts education, and sharing a common vision with the broader society (Shaunavon)
	A welcoming group that provides friendship and is accepting and inclusive of both artists and non-artists, a safe place of self-expression	An inclusive and enthusiastic arts community, welcoming to new and aspiring artists of any field (Weyburn)
Oxford House Society of Regina Inc.	A place where health assistance can be provided	A reduction in the use of drugs and alcohol (Regina)
Rainbow Youth Centre Inc.	A safe place, a home, a place to grow	A safe, clean and welcoming community (Regina)

Organization	Summarized community comments	Summarized community wishes
REALM Ripplinger, Ehmann and Laborde, Mang Foundation Inc.	Connecting, including, bringing people closer together, being a family, educating, celebrating differences	Kind, knowledgeable, educated community that has resources and understands our experiences." (Regina)
Regina Early Learning Centre Inc.	A feeling of safety, "a place where you feel welcome, accepted, and looked out for"	An accepting and understanding with access to affordable childcare spaces (Regina)
Regina Early Years Family Centre, a program of the Regina Early Learning Centre Inc.	A support system, a place where you belong, feel included, where differences are accepted, where you are found	Awareness of the post-partum depression, a community that protects, supports, helps moms not feel alone and get them the help they need (Regina)
Regina Region Local Immigration Partnership in partnership with Regina Open Door Society Inc.	People, who gather, interact, share, respect, support, celebrate, and rely on each other	A culturally-sensitive, supportive, tolerant, free of conflict, inclusive, and equal for all (Regina)
Regina Symphony Orchestra Inc.	Response not available	Response not available (Regina)
Regina Transition House Inc.	Community means a group of people living in a town, city, reservation that are close knit and support each other emotionally, physically, and also could be financially, group participant	A clean and safe community, especially in low-income neighborhoods, with community services that are caring and non-judgmental (Regina)
Saskatchewan Abilities Council Inc - Swift Current Branch	A diverse group of people of all ages that develop common goals and work collectively for the benefit of all members	An inclusive community that is safe and welcoming to all people, and where our human needs are met (Swift Current)
Saskatchewan 4-H Council in partnership with Saskatchewan 4-H Foundation	A place where your heart lies, a place where you are at home, welcomed and accepted, where you work together, where you belong	A community that is strong, safe, vital, respectful, self-sustaining (Saskatoon)
Saskatchewan Council for Cooperation in partnership with Righting Relations Regina	A collection of people where diverse points are accepted, respected, where people belong and are heard, where the needs are understood	A vibrant, inclusive, safe, supported, caring society, in which diversity is embraced and cherished (Regina)
Saskatchewan Hospice Palliative Care Association Inc.	A feeling of belonging during the last moments of life, working together to provide good end of life care	A community that talks openly about end of life (Regina)
Saskatchewan Natural History Society	Belonging to an area and group of people that are like-minded, supportive, active and work together	A vibrant and diverse community with the opportunity for growth without compromising the environment (Arcola)
SaskOutdoors in partnership with Saskatchewan Natural History Society	Connection to each other, but not only physically	A community where natural spaces are valued, where people and nature are respected (Yorkton)
	People enjoying the nature and sharing ideas	A community where schools are not needing to do fundraising for things like arts, outdoor education (Swift Current)
Schizophrenia Society of Saskatchewan Inc.	An inclusive place to be, where like-minded people share and support each other through difficult time, recovery and suffering	An inclusive, non-judgmental, safe, understanding, welcoming, connected, respectful, altruistic community (Regina)
Society for the Involvement of Good Neighbors Inc.	An all-inclusive and diverse place, where people help each other, raise children, grow old, where people belong	A safe, friendly, clean community, with more knowledge and education, with less shame, with more equality, where everyone thrives (Yorkton)
South Central Regional Immigration Partnership in partnership with Moose Jaw Multicultural Council Inc.	A place where people are open to difference, care for each other, work together toward common goals (Gravelbourg)	A welcoming and cohesive community, that is safe, inclusive and harmonious (Moose Jaw)
	A place of gathering to talk about life, to learn; a system of support, where beliefs are shared, here needs are met, where people thrive (Moose Jaw)	
Southeast Advocates for Employment Inc.	A group of people living together who share similar interests, who serve the needs of each other and work for a common cause	A safe, peaceful and united community with more job opportunities, sports facilities, accessible leisure centers and recreational activities for kids (Estevan)
		A community where youth is recognized and encouraged to volunteer (Weyburn)
		A community where youth is recognized and encouraged to volunteer (Oxbow)

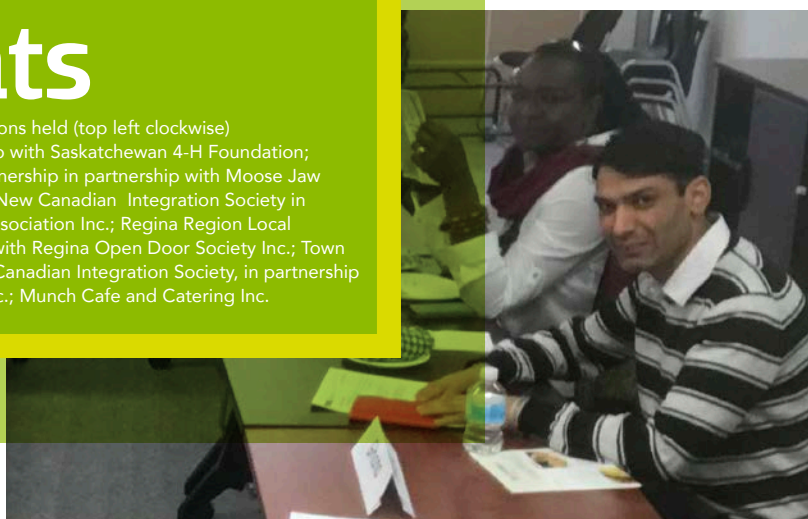
Organization	Summarized community comments	Summarized community wishes
Spinal Cord Injury Saskatchewan Inc.	A place where people are part of the family, fully accepted, living life together, inclusion, acceptance of differences, understanding, a place that brings people together, where people care and communicate	A community that is inclusive and free from both physical and attitudinal barriers (Moose Jaw)
		A community that is accessibly and mentally and emotionally inclusive, where people are celebrated (Regina)
		A totally inclusive community (Swift Current)
Town of Strasbourg	A place to enjoy each other's company, share ideas, make new friends and relationships, feel valued, and earn a living	A safe, active, vibrant and non-bullying community (Strasbourg)
The Big Sky Centre for Learning and Being Astonished Inc.	A place to belong, make a contribution, be valued, have a choice, provide support and be supported	An informed community that values our strengths, dreams and needs (Regina)
The Canadian National Institute for the Blind	Community is knowing that as someone who is blind or partially sighted is supported, included, has access to programs and understood	A community that is accessible, safe and inclusive (Moose Jaw, Swift Current, Regina)
The Caring Place Regina Inc.	A group of individuals from all backgrounds, cultures and ages who need support	Cooperative, caring, energetic and empowered (Regina)
The Nature Conservancy of Canada - Saskatchewan Division	A place that is bound by shared beliefs and values, connections to land and to similar livelihoods, a place where one belongs	A community with relationships of mutual trust and respect between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples (Saskatoon)
Town of Assiniboia	A safe place to live with plenty of events, programs and activities that encourage participation from all ages	Safe, active, lots of positive spirit, residents working together to achieve goals (Assiniboia)
Town of Gravelbourg	A safe place, a place of home, where kids can be kids, where one is welcomed, where one belongs, included and supported	A more vibrant, safe community, where everything that you need is available (Gravelbourg)
Town of Mossbank	Safe and comfortable, welcoming and supportive, social and spiritual and financially viable	A safe, clean, maintained, friendly, attractive, respectful and engaged community (Mossbank)
Village of Frontier	Working together to create a better space for everyone to enjoy, to live and to thrive	A community that can encourage people to stay, live and raise their families (Frontier)
Village of Hazlet in partnership with the Hazlet Community Development Committee	Family and friends working together, providing support and sharing ideas	A sustainable community full of culture, recreation, educational and business opportunities (Hazlet)
YMCA of Moose Jaw Inc.	A place with opportunities for personal growth and connections with those in the community, a place where people belong	A community where there is a sense of belonging with less drug use and violence (Moose Jaw)
Young Men's Christian Association of Regina	To feel you belong, to feel hopeful, respected, loved, to feel you have friends, to be yourself	A community where kids are in charge more (Regina)
Yorkton Women in Need Inc. - Shelwin House	Unity and equality, a place where people work together to make everyone's life better	A community with lower crime rates, equality, care (Yorkton)
Young Women's Christian Association of Regina	A foundation, where Indigenous and non-Indigenous people are working together and listening to one another	A community with Indigenous content, where women and children are proud of themselves and their culture (Regina)

While we have made every effort to ensure accuracy, we apologize if something has been inadvertently missed. If so, please contact SSCF at 306-751-4956 and thank you for your understanding!



Community Conversation Moments

From a number of community conversations held (top left clockwise) Saskatchewan 4-H Council, in partnership with Saskatchewan 4-H Foundation; South Central Regional Immigration Partnership in partnership with Moose Jaw Multicultural Inc.; Town of Gravelbourg; New Canadian Integration Society in partnership with Heritage Community Association Inc.; Regina Region Local Immigration Partnership, in partnership with Regina Open Door Society Inc.; Town of Assiniboia; Town of Strasbourg; New Canadian Integration Society, in partnership with Heritage Community Association Inc.; Munch Cafe and Catering Inc.



We encourage you to read this report, and continue the conversations in your community, and with other groups and organizations that share issues and resource needs. Please contact SSCF to learn more about how we will continue the conversations in your community, and how we can support you to take action.

The South Saskatchewan Community Foundation's 50 Vital Community Conversations initiative contributes to the national *Vital Signs*® program. This program is coordinated by Community Foundations of Canada to leverage local knowledge to measure the vitality of our communities and support action towards improving our collective quality of life.

Visit us or get in touch at any time. We would love to hear from you!



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