



Community Belonging

Happening Now

People having a sense of belonging and being connected to their community is vital to the health, wellbeing and prosperity of everyone and everything.

- Municipal governments across Niagara are putting strategies in place to consider inclusion, diversity, connectedness and gender equity in their planning and decision-making.
- Almost all local municipalities in Niagara have established Youth, Seniors, Age-Friendly and/or Wellness Advisory Committees.
- Public Libraries in Niagara are increasingly recognized for being welcoming community hubs that offer comprehensive access to information and digital resources. They help citizens to bridge the technology divide; provide reliable access to the internet, computers, and technology; and they partner with human service agencies to offer opportunities for satellite outreach. (This statement also appears in the Arts, Culture and Heritage Sector.)
- The importance of making culturally-appropriate mental health services accessible to newcomers is being recognized in Niagara.
- The COVID-19 pandemic is resulting in increased efforts to reduce social isolation and remove barriers to participation, by making equitable access to virtual connections possible for everyone. Examples include: agencies providing clients with access to devices; an emphasis on digital skills training; young volunteers mentoring older adults to strengthen their tech skills; 'seniors centres without walls' telephone events; and renewed attention to closing gaps in high-speed internet infrastructure across Niagara.



What's Emerging

- The onset of COVID-19 is highlighting the vital role that non-profits and charities play in community well-being. Nationally, these organizations account for 8.5% of GDP and employ 2.4 million Canadians, of which 70% are women.
- Disruptive effects of the pandemic on volunteer levels, access to volunteer labour, and paid staff capacity to engage volunteers is causing charitable and non-profit organizations to assess their capacity and approaches going forward.
- Experiencing the pandemic is reminding us of the proven health benefits, for everyone and for the whole community, of people being able to connect with others and participate.
- Intentionally engaging the voices of newcomers, (im)migrants and black, Indigenous, and people of colour (BIPOC) in community development is seen as essential to strengthening Niagara.
- Plans are underway to engage thousands of volunteers to support the work of hosting the Canada Summer Games in Niagara in 2022.

Suggested Community Action Steps

- Acknowledge the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on charitable and non-profit organizations, and keep an eye on their ability to stabilize. These organizations provide essential services, play an important role in economic growth, create jobs, and are employers in our community.
- Implement measurable actions for reducing barriers to participation, across the Social Determinants of Health. Do this to strengthen Niagara as an equitable, diverse, inclusive, welcoming community for all people.
- Support organizations' efforts to re-establish their volunteer base and enhance volunteer training, in response to pandemic-related changes. Increase engagement of a younger, diverse pool of volunteers.
- Create the conditions for increasing voter turnout rates in Niagara by supporting equitable access to voting for vulnerable individuals.

Indicators Measures for these indicators can be found at: www.livinginniagarareport.com

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| • Charitable Giving | • Trust in Others |
| • Immigrants, Refugees, and International Students in Niagara | • Volunteering |
| • Sense of Community Belonging | • Voter Turnout |