



# Grey-Bruce County, Ontario | A Local Deepening Community Initiative

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## Why A Local Deepening Community Initiative?

In 2012, Tamarack launched a campaign to host 1,000 conversations in communities across Canada in an attempt to gain a better understanding of how to build deeper and stronger communities. Emerging from these conversations were an array of incredible stories from people who recalled communities coming together in times of need and opportunity. Together, these highlighted: how essential neighbourliness and regular human connection are in cultivating a sense of belonging; how cultivating community assets builds community; and, how the power of a shared vision can inspire people to work together to create a better world. Three years later, these conversations are continuing through local Deepening Community Initiatives that Tamarack is undertaking in partnership with local communities across Canada. These local projects are both highly aspirational and profoundly practical. At the heart, they create opportunities for communities to think and act differently together: recognizing that no one sector, working alone, can be effective at addressing complex community issues.

## Grey-Bruce County Profile

Working in partnership with the Tamarack Institute, a team of Health Unit staff hosted a series of conversations with a diversity of different groups across the region over a period of six months. These conversations explored: the meaning of community; community strengths; challenges; future hopes; and, priorities for shared action. Highlights from this process were then shared through a series of six local celebrations that were hosted in the spring of 2015.

### *The goals of this local project:*

- 1. To reveal and strengthen community connections;*
- 2. To increase community engagement;*
- 3. To build consensus on opportunities for shared action; and*
- 4. To nurture diverse community leadership.*

### *Who Did We Hear From?*

***A total of 47 different Community Conversations were hosted across the Grey Bruce region.***

- These conversation involved a total of 407 individuals***
- 72% of participants were female, 27% were male and 1% were unknown***
- 9 Sectors/Perspectives were engaged***

**Timeline:** In spring of 2014, Grey-Bruce Public Health and Tamarack began a partnership to launch a Local Deepening Community Initiative.

**Population:** 92,568 People (2011 Census)

**Partners:** Tamarack partnered with a local leadership team, including: Grey Bruce Public Health and the Grey Bruce Healthy Communities Partnership.

**What did we learn?**

Each conversation began by inviting participants to remember a time when they really felt a strong sense of community and to share those stories with one another. Common themes were generated from all these experiences and used to help define community.

**What Is Community?**

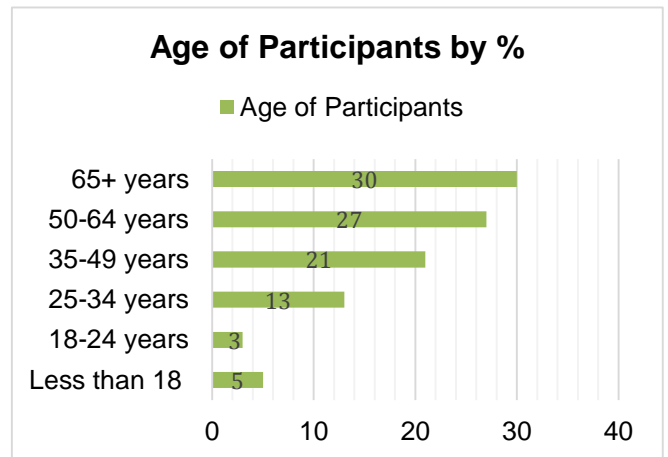
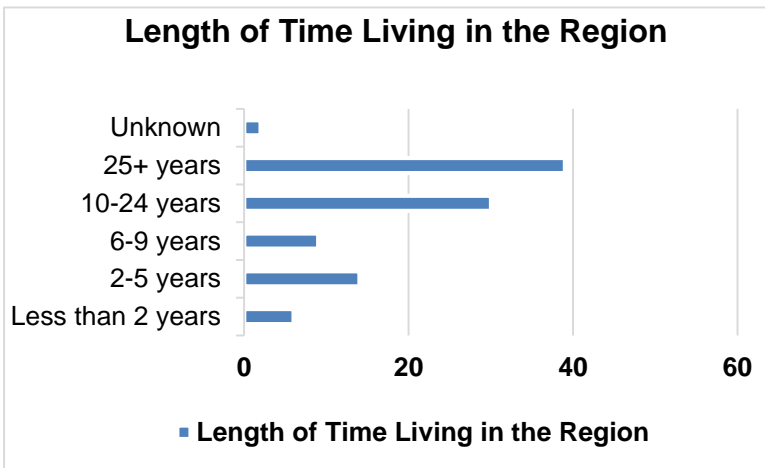
Participants described community in a variety of different ways. These included:

- **A Physical Space** – parks, trails, beaches, public spaces, natural features
- **A Gathering of People** – family, friends, neighbours, a common voice or identity

**Local Deepening Community Initiative Roadmap**



- **An Activity** – getting things done, working together, raising children, infrastructure, volunteering, caring for each other, having fun
- **A Describing Word** – safety, belonging, caring and being cared for, diversity, multi-generational, inclusion/exclusion
- **A Purpose or Benefit** – a healthy social and economic climate, mutual support, new ideas, honouring history and traditions.



## Challenges & Benefits of Community

Participants recognized the following as “benefits of community”:

- Reciprocity: Giving and receiving from others; “helping each other in times of difficulty”
- A Sense of Trust: Friendship and support; knowing neighbours...and who needs help; watching out for each other
- The Whole is Greater: Together we are stronger and can do more; infrastructure; public services etc.

- Working Towards Common Goals: Working together towards mutual aims and goals.

The following were identified by participants as “challenges of community”:

- Lack of Privacy: Rumours, gossip, everyone knowing each other’s business
- Lack of Common Sense: Sometimes “common sense” isn’t so common
- Too Few Engaged: How do we “sew new seeds” and attract new volunteers?
- Lack of Empathy: Being willing/able to think beyond your own experiences

Strengths of Grey Bruce Communities

- Community festivals and celebrations
- Green space and natural environment
- Caring for one another
- Willingness to help each other

### Participant Quotes

*Community is... “Dedicated people from different backgrounds committed to improve our community.”*

*“Friends go in different directions but community, whether large or small, works together for a common goal.”*

*“A community acts like a mirror helping you to see yourself.”*



- “Small Town” friendliness
- Community groups and networks
- Interfaith and church community
- Collaboration amongst community agencies and services
- Vibrant arts, music and theatre

### Challenges Facing Grey Bruce Communities and Opportunities for Shared Action

- Local Economic Development – More local businesses and employment opportunities
- Affordable Housing – Safe, accessible, affordable housing options for all
- Enhanced Local Resources/Services – Educational and training, high-speed internet services; public transportation
- Youth Retention – Support youth to return “home” after education and training
- Attracting Young Families – Make our communities more welcoming to young families
- Increased Social & Leisure Opportunities – Increased number of trails, parks, arts opportunities, festivals and celebrations for all ages

## Our Shared Hopes for the Future of Grey Bruce Region

When asked to envision their ideal community of the future participants said, “...in 10 years my community will...”

- Have a More Vibrant Economy: More employment opportunities for all, high-speed internet;
- Continue to Grow – More people, more young families
- Have More Recreational Opportunities: trails, bike paths, more arts and leisure opportunities
- Improve Public Transportation – within and between communities
- Improved Coordination and Access to Services – A single point of access to find services (e.g. a community hub, central meeting spaces)

### Opportunities for Shared Action: THE HOW

- Improve Communication: How can we keep
- Citizens informed and involved in projects and opportunities?
- Enhance Community Connection: How do we value and support formal and informal opportunities to connect with each other?

### Participant Quotes

*“Good community takes work and participation.”*

*“Gratitude to be living among such creative, intelligent, caring people”*

*“Strengthening connections is important.”*



- Increase Citizen Engagement/Leadership: How can citizens participate and contribute to creating our shared vision?
- Greater Collaboration: How do citizens, governments and sectors learn to work better together on shared community opportunities?

### What Can You Do to Build Community?

- Focus on what is possible
- Notice and celebrate positive progress
- Be friendly
- Help make connections
- Offer enthusiasm and encouragement
- Be willing and able to participate
- Ask for what you need
- Contribute what you can

### What Is Next?

As this phase of the Grey Bruce Deepening Community Initiative comes to an end, members of the Project Team hosted a total of six celebration events that:

- Connected people to each other
- Shared highlights from the Community Conversations Project
- Offered training in community engagement and how to contribute to positive community change.

### Thank you!

Our thanks goes out to the residents of Grey Bruce who participated in these conversations, shared their thoughts and ideas and helped us reconnect to the power and possibility of community.

The Community Conversations Project Team

