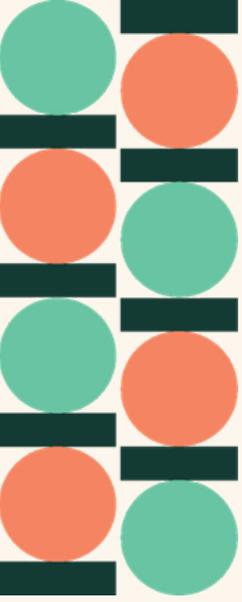




# Impact Report

## 2025

*Fulfilling the promise of community*

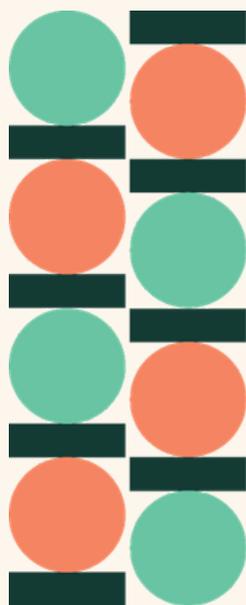


*In the spirit of reconciliation, Community Potential acknowledges that our work takes place on the traditional and treaty lands of Indigenous peoples who have cared for and stewarded these lands since time immemorial.*

*We recognize that the Niagara region is situated on lands with a rich Indigenous history, including the Hatiwendaronk (Neutral Confederacy), the Haudenosaunee, and the Anishinaabe peoples, including the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. These lands are subject to the Upper Canada Treaties and are within the territory protected by the Dish With One Spoon Wampum Agreement.*

*As an organization committed to community-driven research, collaboration, and systems change, we recognize our responsibility to reflect on how the systems we help shape impact Indigenous peoples. We commit to ongoing learning, relationship-building, and to supporting equitable and respectful partnerships grounded in truth, accountability, and reciprocity.*

*We pay our respects to Elders past and present and extend that respect to all First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples today. We commit to continuing to learn from Indigenous communities and to supporting respectful relationships grounded in truth, accountability, and reciprocity.*



# A Letter from the Executive Director

Dear Friends,

In 2025, Community Potential worked with partners across Niagara to strengthen collaboration, alignment, and the shared infrastructure that helps community services work better together.

As demand for community supports continues to grow, building strong, connected systems is essential for services to be accessible and responsive. By supporting coordination, shared data, and trusted spaces for collaboration, we help community resources to go further, and reduce barriers for the people who rely on them.

We are deeply grateful to the partners, funders, and community members whose leadership and commitment make this work possible. This report reflects the collective value of investing in community infrastructure, and the impact that is created for Niagara.

I would also like to recognize and thank our Board of Directors for their stewardship, governance, and strategic guidance throughout the year. Their thoughtful oversight and commitment to strong accountability ensure that Community Potential remains focused, sustainable, and responsive to Niagara's evolving needs.

— Rachel Gillmore,  
Executive Director



# OUR MISSION & VALUES

**Mission:** Building common understanding for collective action to improve our life together

**Values:**

- Empathy
- Compassion
- Knowledge
- Action
- Belonging
- Creativity

**Vision:** Stronger communities where everyone belongs



# A Year in Review

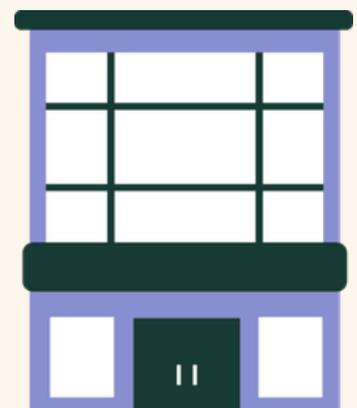
In 2025, Community Potential worked alongside partners across Niagara to strengthen how communities respond to complex social challenges. We did this by **connecting people, aligning systems, and translating evidence into action.**

Our work focused on what communities consistently tell us they need most: **clear strategic design, trusted coordination, collaboration, and data that reflects lived experience.**

Through collective-impact leadership, systems mapping, and community-driven evaluation, Community Potential helped organizations **work smarter together.**

## At a glance in 2025:

- Engaged hundreds of community leaders, service providers, and individuals across multiple networks and initiatives.
- Strengthened systems and collaboration across sectors, including gender-based violence, human trafficking, nonprofit leadership, community infrastructure building, and Age-Friendly communities.
- Created evidence and tools which continue to be used beyond the year of investment.
- Demonstrated financial and social return on investment (ROI & SROI) for Niagara through coordination, prevention, and system efficiency.
- Restructured the Living in Niagara Report methodology and strengthened its technical architecture.



# Why This Work Matters

Niagara's social challenges are not caused by a lack of care or effort.

Organizations are often expected to respond to complex, overlapping needs while navigating disconnected funding streams, siloed data, and limited capacity for coordination.

**Community Potential** exists to be a **neutral, third party connector** of organizations. Since 2005, we have been taking a 30,000 foot view of **action, connections, and what's emerging** in the Niagara wide-community.

Our role is to:

- **Convene** across sectors
- Translate **research into practical tools**
- Support **collaboration** grounded in **collective impact**
- **Measure** what matters and **mobilize** learning back into community systems

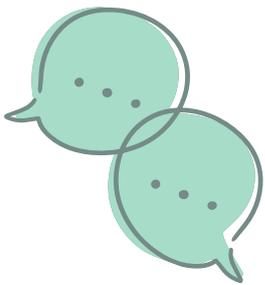
Our work consistently focuses on **system-level impact**, with the recognition that lasting change comes both from programs, and from how those programs are connected.





# What we Heard & How we Responded

In 2025, across meetings, consultations, and collaborative tables the same themes surfaced again and again:



- *“We want to collaborate, but without a shared strategy it’s hard to know how our efforts fit together.”*
- *“We spend a lot of time responding to crisis, with little space to think upstream.”*
- *“The system is complex, and it’s not always clear where people fall out or why.”*
- *“We have data, but we don’t always have the capacity to make sense of it.”*

Community Potential functioned as a neutral third-party facilitator and advisor, by focusing on **alignment**, shared understanding, and creating the conditions for **collaboration** to work.

Rather than asking organizations to do more with limited capacity, we invested in evidence collection and infrastructure building which supports collective action, including:

- building shared strategy and language to guide collaboration
- strengthening connections and trust across sectors and roles
- supporting organizations to better understand systems, data, and complexity

*Small shifts - such as shared tools, common frameworks, and intentional convening - create a big impact in how the system functions.*



# What we Delivered in 2025

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In 2025, Community Potential supported Niagara through a mix of convening, coordination, research, and tools that help systems work better together.

We delivered:

- Community forums, working groups, and cross-sector tables
- Training and capacity-building for service providers and leaders
- Systems mapping and service-navigation tools
- Research, evaluation, and knowledge-mobilization products
- Backbone coordination for 5+ regional networks and coalitions

**These outputs were not ends in themselves, but are inputs into stronger, more connected systems.**



## Knowledge Mobilized

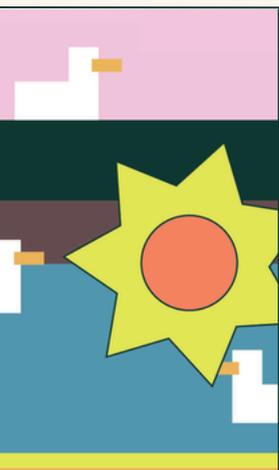
*Evidence shared. People reached. Practice informed.*

- 130+ Niagara-focused evidence items mobilized
- Shared with 600+ community leaders, practitioners, and decision-makers
- Distributed through the Niagara Knowledge Exchange and Community Potential e-blasts
- 3 webinars hosted or co-hosted

## Learning & Presentations

*Turning evidence into shared understanding*

- Panelist, Navigating Generative AI: Implications for Small Businesses & Non-Profits (Hosted by Niagara Community Observatory)
  - Facilitated presentation of Policy Brief #59 on Age-Friendly Communities to 80+ participants at the Niagara Older Adult Alliance Spring Meeting (hosted by Brock University's Niagara Community Observatory)
  - Sector-specific Living in Niagara presentation to 25 members of the Niagara Arts and Culture Connection
  - International knowledge exchange on the Living in Niagara Report with UNESCO-affiliated scholars and graduate students
- 
- 



## Convenings & Forums Hosted

*Creating space for coordination*

- 40+ participants at More Than a Food Bank webinar (*Food security, partnerships, and UN SDGs*)
- Supported regional learning on SDGs, climate action, and human wellbeing (in partnership with Brock University)
- 70+ Community Expert Opinion Leaders engaged across 11 sectors to guide early development of Living in Niagara 2026 quality of life report
- 100+ participants at the launch of *Navigating the System: A Gender-Based Violence Perspective* (Final report for the Coalition to End Violence Against Women)

# What we Delivered in 2025 cont'd

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## System Tables & Networks

*Where coordination happens*

- Active participation in:
- Niagara Open Data Consortium
- Niagara Climate Change Action Network
- Niagara Food Security Network
- Niagara Poverty Reduction Network
- Niagara DEI Community of Practice
- Niagara-Ontario Health Team – Mental Health & Addictions
- Niagara Arts & Culture Connection
- GNCC, support for the Non-Profit Conference, *Elevate*

## Collaborations Supported

*Strengthening Niagara's Infrastructure*

- Age-Friendly Niagara
- Niagara Older Adult Alliance
- Niagara Transit
- Niagara Fundraisers Network
- Niagara Arts and Culture Connection
- Strong Fort Erie Neighbourhoods
- Team member, *Mobilizing Subjugated Knowledges for a Just and Inclusive Niagara* (Brock University–community research partnership)

## Research & Tools Developed

*From insight to action*

- Final report, tools, and knowledge products for *Navigating the System: A Gender-Based Violence Perspective* (including printed and digital resources)
- Updated Living in Niagara 2026 methodology aligned with leading quality-of-life research frameworks
- Policy brief editing, community engagement, and knowledge mobilization for Niagara Community Observatory research

Supporting **new and emerging initiatives** across Niagara, including:

- a regional **Anti-Human Trafficking Coalition**
- **perinatal and healthcare** supports for women facing barriers
- alternative recreational therapy for **youth mental health**
- nonprofit **infrastructure and operational capacity** building

*Coordination, evidence, and shared learning are the infrastructure behind systems change.*

# Shared Knowledge. Stronger Systems.

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## Navigating the System: A Gender - Based Violence Perspective

2025

Final Report for  
the CEVAW  
Referral Pathways  
Mapping Project



COMMUNITY  
POTENTIAL

*Navigating the System* was a 3-year systems-mapping and applied research project led by **Community Potential** with the **Coalition to End Violence Against Women (CEVAW)**. In 2025, project results reflected a stronger understanding of how people experiencing gender-based violence (GBV) navigate services in Niagara, and opportunities that exist for improvement.

In December of 2025, the report was **launched** through a **cross-sector community event** which convened more than 100 service providers, organization leaders, and system partners. Designed as a learning and reflection space, the launch supported shared understanding of system pressures and built momentum for coordinated action.

## Tools & Impact

The project produced **practical system navigation tools** for both service providers and survivors, including clear **referral pathway resources**.

These tools are now being used to support **safer, more consistent referrals** and **clearer system navigation**. Collectively, the report and tools are strengthening shared language, improving coordination, and increasing readiness across Niagara for collaborative planning, training, and policy advocacy related to GBV.

*This work builds the shared understanding needed for CEVAW and community partners to better support people when they need it most.*



# Raising the Bar

In 2025, Community Potential invested in strengthening the foundation of the Living in Niagara Report – Niagara’s most comprehensive quality-of-life assessment published since 2008 - by strengthening the **data backbone** of the report.

We updated the Living in Niagara Report methodology to match or exceed best practices from other leading quality-of-life reports in Canada by improving consistency, comparisons, and how lived experience and community voice are reflected

**We are building the Living in Niagara Report to inform action, not just measure conditions.**

## How our meta-analysis strengthened our framework:

Indicator Framework	Comparators & Benchmarking	Data Quality & Governance	Equity & Disaggregation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refined core indicators across social, economic, and health domains</li> <li>• Aligned with relevant policy frameworks</li> <li>• Prioritized community voice, not just system performance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthened regional, provincial, and national comparators</li> <li>• Ensured methodological consistency</li> <li>• Enabled trend analysis across report cycles</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved documentation and transparency</li> <li>• Strengthened data sourcing and validation</li> <li>• Clarified decision rules for interpretation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Embedded equity across all domains</li> <li>• Applied an equity lens consistently across social, economic, and health data</li> <li>• Designed indicators to support both action, and description</li> </ul>

## The Result

### A future-ready Living in Niagara Report that:

- Strengthens community knowledge
- Supports evidence-informed planning & decision-making
- Improves alignment and recognizes opportunity across all sectors



**Living In  
Niagara**

# What Our Work Contributes To



As demand for community services grows and systems become more complex, Niagara needs **shared tools**, **trusted data**, and **coordinated leadership** to make informed choices.

**Community Potential** helps Niagara move from fragmented responses to **strategic**, **preventative**, and **evidence-informed action**, helping to ensure our community resources are used where they matter most.

## Stronger Systems

- Clearer understanding of system gaps and overlaps
- Stronger relationships across sectors
- Shared language that lends itself toward collective impact

## Better Coordination

- Improved collaborations
- Reduced duplication across organizations
- Greater confidence navigating complex systems

## Lasting Impact

- Stronger regional alignment on complex issues
- Increased readiness for collaborative funding and advocacy
- Tools and frameworks used beyond individual projects

# Investing in Us

Community Potential Works across all sectors to create cross-sector impact which works to inform the Living in Niagara Report - a holistic regional planning tool.



**The return on investment that our work generates is not only about dollars saved but about dollars used wisely.**



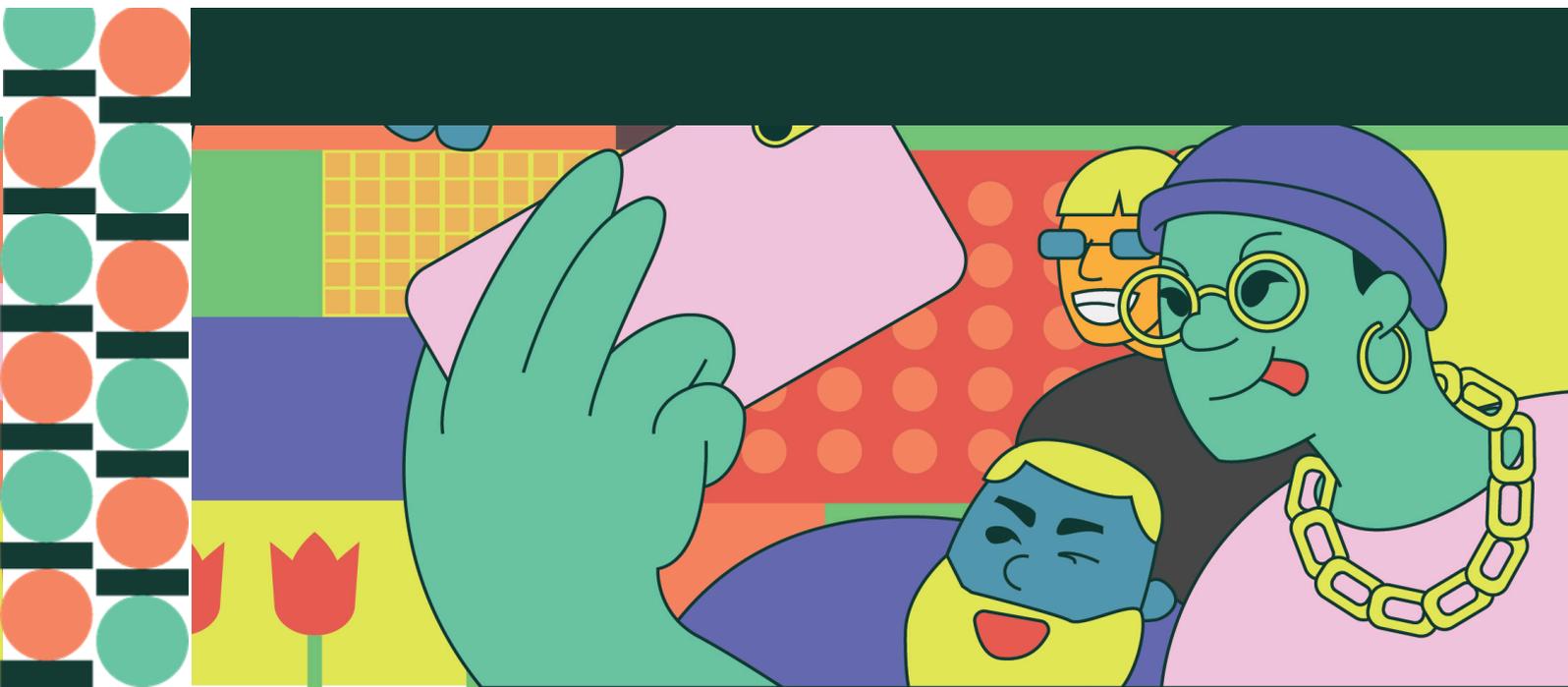
## What's the Return on Investment for Community Potential's system's level work?

- *Shared infrastructure and reduced duplication*
- *Prevention-focused work that avoids downstream costs*
- *More efficient use of partner time and funding*
- *Increased trust and collaboration*
- *Consistent, long-term view of layered, cross-sector data which helps to create shared insights, improved planning and smarter systems*

# Looking Ahead

## Our priorities for 2026:

- Deepening **system-level impact** across priority community issues
- Strengthening **evaluation and shared learning** across collaboratives
- Translating **complexity into clarity** for communities and decision-makers
- Expanding **knowledge mobilization** through accessible tools, training, and information sharing
- Deepening representation of **Francophone** experiences in the Living in Niagara 2026 Report and the Niagara Knowledge Exchange
- Commit to learning how **Indigenous ways of knowing** can be honoured and engaged within and alongside colonial quality-of-life frameworks in Niagara
- Under our new methodology framework, producing the **Living in Niagara 2026 Report**, to be released in January 2027



# Our Investors

*We are deeply grateful to our investors for believing in this work and in our community. We rely on your generosity and partnership to deliver our services and our work to strengthen collaboration, share knowledge, and turn information into real change across Niagara.*



A Community for All Ages



Food | Housing | Health | Store



# COMMUNITY POTENTIAL

## Turning community knowledge into action.

*Community Potential's impact is not measured  
by how visible we are but by how well the  
systems work when we are there.*



Living In  
Niagara



Niagara  
Knowledge  
Exchange



89-91 St. Paul St W  
St. Catharines, ON L2R 3M3

[www.communitypotential.ca](http://www.communitypotential.ca)  
[hello@communitypotential.ca](mailto:hello@communitypotential.ca)