

GREATER THAN

COUNTY YOUTH COLLECTIVE

INNOVATION IMPACT REPORT JULY 2022 - MARCH 2023



Tamarack Institute Innovation Fund

BACKGROUND

Youth representing, supporting, and advocating for our needs in Prince Edward County. The future is in our hands, and we're building it together.

Greater Than County Youth Collective (founded in 2015) is now in its third year of a pan-Canadian project called Communities Building Youth Futures, funded by the Tamarack Institute and the Government of Canada. We are one of 14 communities participating in a collective impact project committed to improving outcomes for youth who face barriers as they pursue their education and transition to employment. Education and wellbeing are defined as youth priorities in PEC based on research, youth surveys and workshops (Vital Signs, SCC: Sharing the Stories).

We understand that this work requires collaborative, community-championed solutions with youth leadership and youth engagement. We work to empower youth and work side by side with them to break down barriers and build meaningful youth engagement in their communities.



INNOVATION GOAL

In addition to our core funding, in July 2022, Greater Than County Youth Collective was granted an innovation fund of \$50,000 to try new ways of reaching and supporting youth, over a 9 month period.

We set the goal to build stronger youth networks through free youth events and digital strategies, focusing on youth social connections and empowerment through a combination of in-person events and online presence designed by youth.

Data was collected and evaluated in collaboration with 4 key partners: Prince Edward Learning Centre , theROC Youth Services, Students' Commission of Canada and the County Foundation.



APPROACH

We tried **seven new ways** of connecting and empowering youth:

- Social media to build brand identity & awareness of events
- Creation of a new youth-designed website to build membership, database & share PEC youth resources
- Digital storytelling to amplify youth voice
- Sponsorship of school sports & arts extra curriculars
- Youth honorariums
- Hackathon approach to youth & community co-design
- Hosting 3 more free youth events to follow up on the successful Greater Than Youth Pride Event in June 2022

IMPACT SPOTLIGHT

OUTCOMES

All these innovations have had a positive impact on youth engagement and empowerment. Importantly, the hackathon approach to co-design, has the added benefit of building youth capacity through skill development offering huge potential for youth leadership in solution creation.



AWARENESS AND YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

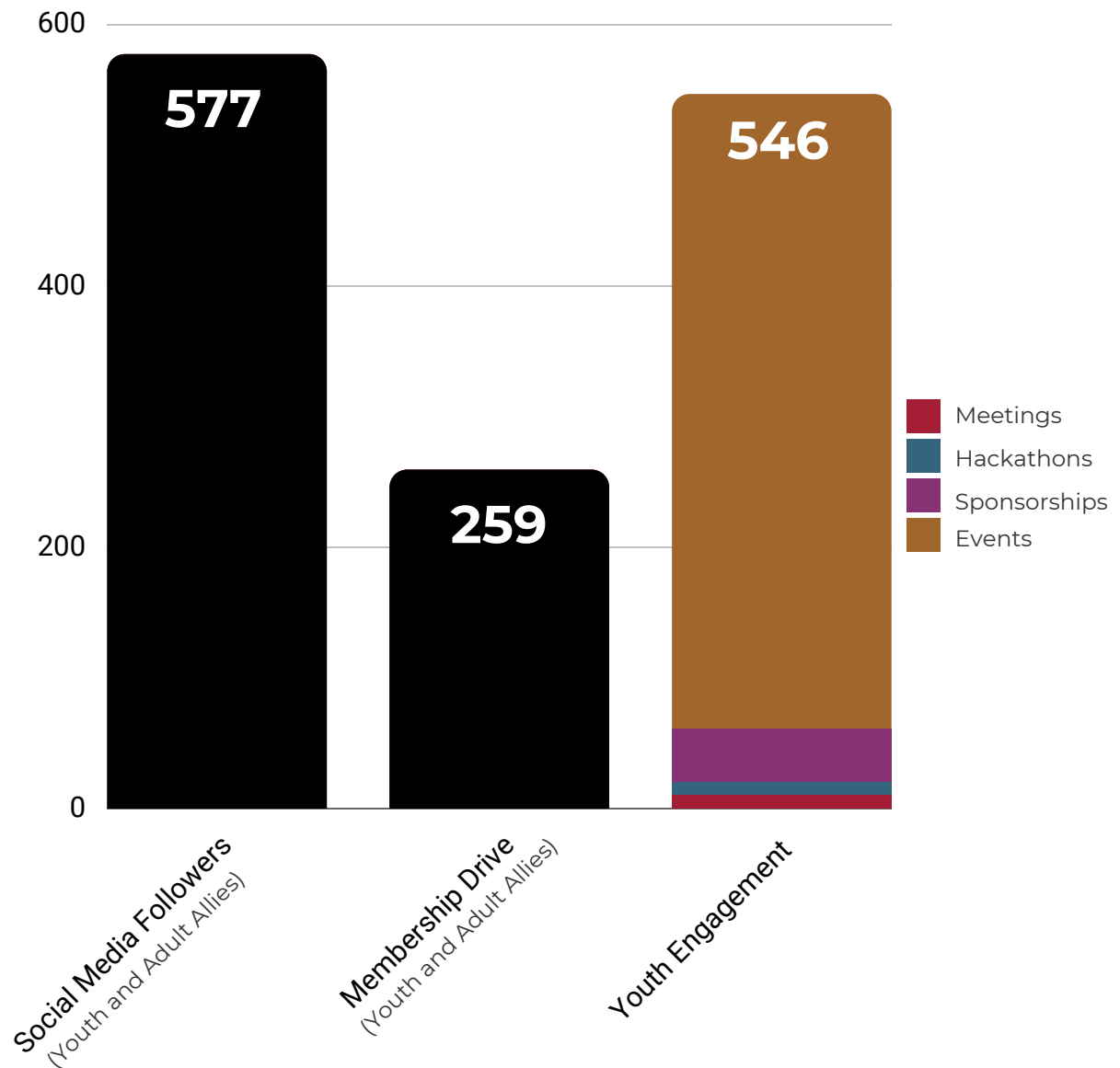
546 Youth Engaged July/22- March/23:

Free Youth Events: 485

Hackathons: 10

Leadership meetings: 10

Sponsorships: 41



BUILDING COMMUNITY

MORE THAN 25 ORGANIZATIONS ENGAGED!

LEADERSHIP TABLE

1. Prince Edward Learning Centre
2. theROC Youth Services
3. The County Foundation
4. Students Commission of Canada
5. Prince Edward Collegiate Institute
6. The Municipality of Prince Edward
7. Children's Mental Health Services
8. Baxter Arts Centre
9. Alternatives for Women
10. All Welcome Here
11. Thrive PEC
12. Career Edge
13. Broccoli Non-profit Consulting Services
14. Community Living Prince Edward
15. The Regent Theatre
16. The Enrichment Centre for Mental Health
17. Youth Habilitation Quinte Inc
18. Department of Illumination
19. The County Arts Lab
20. HPE Public Health
21. Prince Edward County Library
22. Ontario Provincial Police
23. Magnificent Creations
24. Chamber of Commerce
25. Picton Business Improvement Association (BIA)
26. Kin Canada

And a BIG thank you to all our community businesses and youth entrepreneurs who have also collaborated with us!

KEY LESSONS LEARNED

1.

DIGITAL STRATEGIES

577 followers to date and 259 members! Youth-designed website and social media are effective tools to build a database that can be used to recruit youth to engage in co-design, research, advocacy, and more.

2.

DIGITAL STORYTELLING

Digital storytelling is an emotional way to communicate impact stories! We produced a 5 minute video featuring PEC youth stories that premiered at a large community event (Thrive PEC) that is now on our website and on Youtube.

3.

YOUTH EVENTS

Hosting youth events in public spaces empowers youth and creates a sense of belonging. Events are great for community sharing and Greater Than membership drives. 485 youth & community members attended the 3 free events hosted throughout the innovation period.

4.

HONORARIUMS

Honorariums for participation and/or accomplishment are necessary and highly motivating. Free Swag and giveaways are motivating too. We are learning that motivating youth aged 18+ is particularly challenging.

5.

HACKATHON CO-DESIGN

A hackathon is a creative way for youth to co-design solutions to issues that are important to them, offering hands on learning about problem solving, while developing skills important to academic and/or employment success.

DIGITAL STORYTELLING

Greater Than County Youth Collective partnered with a local youth entrepreneur film maker to produce a 5 minute video with youth sharing stories about the struggles growing up in Prince Edward County. They discussed topics such as, but not limited to; housing insecurity, struggles of completing high school, and barriers that still remain today.

This was an emotional way to amplify youth voices creating awareness of youth barriers in our community. We also hope it will serve as a prototype for other youth to speak out and share their own stories moving us towards systems change.

We premiered this video in March at a large community event (Thrive Symposium) with almost 300 community members in attendance. It is now featured on our website and on YouTube.

IMPACT SPOTLIGHT

Digital Storytelling

“Being involved in this project has given me an opportunity to give back to the community and help support youth in PEC. As someone who grew up in this community who needed supports, but didn’t receive them, it feels good to give back.”

— PEC Youth presenter aged 27



YOUTH EVENTS

Greater Than hosted 3 FREE community youth events ensuring safe inclusive spaces for gathering and celebrating. Youth helped design 3 free events: Youth Concert in the Park (August), Movie Night (August) and Spooktacular (October). 485 youth and community enjoyed these events together. **FUN!**

Youth have indicated to us in the past via surveys that they don't feel a sense of belonging within their community. This inspired Greater Than to develop this event series that is completely free, and accessible to youth. We wanted to guarantee that there were no barriers to participation. For instance, we provided free transportation and food at all events.

Youth events create inclusion and belonging by supporting youth identity and building social connections.

IMPACT SPOTLIGHT

Youth Events

"I've always wanted to perform music live with my friends and never thought that was obtainable until I got the opportunity from Greater Than. Going into the experience I was very nervous but seeing everyone enjoy our music, especially the songs by "Weezer", made me more confident. It also gave me a short introduction to some people I hadn't met and I had the chance to reconnect with people during the event as well." - Grade 12 youth



SPORTS SPONSORSHIP

Greater Than sponsored a hockey team at our local high school (PECI). Through social media, we responded to the coach's callout to the community searching for equipment to make participation possible for everyone. Through sponsorship funding, we helped purchase the equipment needed which meant they could go forward with a hockey team that year. We also attended most games to provide support, snacks, and cool free Greater Than swag!

This sponsorship increased Greater Than membership, as well as increased youth attendance at our Leadership Table.

★ ★ ★ IMPACT SPOTLIGHT

Sports Sponsorship

"My experience with Greater Than has been great, they provided many people who did not have equipment with new equipment and it helped me a lot because I've been using the same shoulder pads since grade 8 and were hammy-downs, they also cheered us on at all the games that they could come too, and supported us after our games win or losses with a pizza party or a congratulations and always wished us luck, and they made the payment to play much easier because it's an expensive sport and some people have trouble affording it." — Grade 11 hockey player



ARTS SPONSORSHIP

Greater Than sponsored the High School Musical Play by providing funds to go towards production costs. This was impactful as it provided an opportunity for youth to express themselves in a safe and non-judgemental space. It also helped build trusted relationships with Greater Than.

This sponsorship increased Greater Than membership, as well as positioned Greater Than as a key partner in all promotional material for the production.

IMPACT SPOTLIGHT

Arts Sponsorship

“PECI’s production of High School Musical was definitely the most memorable part of my first year of secondary school and I am so grateful that Greater Than was able to sponsor the production to help make it happen. The amount of new friendships that were formed in our time working on the musical was incredible. I know that the rest of the cast and crew would agree in saying that we can’t thank Greater Than enough for supporting us!”

— Peci Youth Cast Member



HACKATHON CO-DESIGN

We define a Hackathon as “a group of clever people, making an effective solution to a problem, quickly”. Getting youth together to problem solve is fun, educational and challenging.

We are seeing evidence that the Hackathon approach to co-design supports youth engagement, empowerment and leadership.

We are using the hackathon process to gather youth and community partners to co-design solutions to issues that youth care most about. The goal of our first hackathon was for youth to create their own website (from scratch). In March, ten youth collaborated with adult allies to create a website in under 9 hours! This hands-on learning provided youth knowledge about website design, development, marketing, implementation and content creation.

★ IMPACT SPOTLIGHT

Hackathon Co-Design

“During the day, I was able to obtain new skills that I’ve been able to implement in my everyday work life. Due to this experience, I am now considering pursuing a career in graphic design!” — PEC youth aged 21



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Greater Than is cultivating youth and adult ally partnerships as well as building community collaboration to support youth.

Through our Leadership Table meetings, hackathons, and other community events we have been able to provide opportunities for youth and adults alike to be in the same room, discussing the same issues and working towards solutions together. This has strengthened relationships as well as created direct links to opportunities for youth to have access to.

★ ★ ★ IMPACT SPOTLIGHT

Community Engagement

“Within the past year or so, I’ve attended many leadership tables and Hackathons which I’ve been invited to by Greater Than. These events are an incredible way for youth to have their voices heard, meet people with common interests, and it’s always a plus to be compensated for your time! I’ve lived in a variety of cities stretching across Ontario, but I don’t think there’s ever been anything like Greater Than anywhere else! It’s a privilege.” — PEC Grade 10 Youth



TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION

The Greater Than County Youth Collective was granted an additional \$5,000 to put towards Truth And Reconciliation. In November 2022, we hosted a Truth and Reconciliation event, with the goal to build community connection with our neighbours in Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory.

Elders and youth from Tyendinaga led us through an afternoon of celebration. At the event, members learned how to put together an authentic dream catcher, participate in a dancing circle, and all gathered to enjoy traditional Indian Tacos.

We look forward to further engagement and collaboration with our Tyendinaga neighbours in the months to come.

IMPACT SPOTLIGHT

Truth and Reconciliation

“My dream was to be able to connect people back to where we were at one point as people, living in a happy, lovable, respectful, peaceful place where we honour each other as people. That is what the event is for, it’s a start to healing, and making a little difference.” — Tyendinaga Youth aged 25.



2023-24 INNOVATION SCALING OUT

Hackathon Approach to Co-design

In 2023-24 we have been granted \$50,000 to scale out one of our innovation strategies. We have chosen to scale out the hackathon approach to co-design.

This innovation scale-out will be added to our core offerings which include; social media, website membership drive, sponsorships, youth honorariums, and events. We also have additional funding for Truth and Reconciliation.



We are currently working with community partners to prepare and deliver 4 more hackathons focusing on Life Skills, Mental Health, Young Adult Recreation, and Safe Spaces with the goal of empowering youth with skills and new opportunities to co-create solutions to the issues they care most about.

The process will include co-designing and partnering with local agencies who can provide advice and knowledge on these topics. This will create a rapport between youth and community partners enabling better and more accessible programs, services, and support for PEC youth.

THANK YOU!

The team at Greater Than would like to thank our funder Tamarack Institute, all the youth who have engaged with the project, and our community partners. We would also like to thank all the people who have stopped in at our events, and everyone in between, for supporting the work we do.

This wouldn't have been possible without our supporters, and our amazing youth partners. We look forward to making this project sustainable for years to come.

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