

# **Community Development Society of Calgary & Area**

## **Introduction**

Calgary is a city that is growing at a rapid pace, with changing demographics and evolving communities. The challenges that community development practitioners face in Calgary are many: isolation, limited professional development dollars within non-profits and community-based CD efforts; lack of easy access to research and knowledge; new challenges in reaching diverse populations in constructive ways; challenges in how to channel the growing and changing needs of Calgary in a way that builds communities; and challenges in understanding funding priorities and requirements within the Calgary context.

Community developers also face the challenge of maintaining the energy required to provide momentum to community development efforts that are often characterized by high rates of turnover, sporadic skills sets and commitment levels and pressures for immediate outcomes.

## **Who are we?**

We, the Community Development Society of Calgary and Area, are a reflective, inclusive and adaptive Community Development Community of Practice (CoP), that develops events and programs which support learning and building learning relationships around community development themes and issues, and are grounded in the needs and requests of a sustainable CoP.

## **Our Vision**

Community development philosophies and approaches are influencing policies and practices across all sectors and promoting an engaged citizenry and vibrant and caring institutions with proactive, preventive, relevant and responsive programs in Calgary.

## **Our Mission**

The Community Development Society of Calgary and Area ensures there is a welcoming structure and framework for interest in pursuing community development through learning opportunities and effective networks.

## **Our Assumptions**

1. People interested in community development philosophy and approaches, particularly those new to the field, can find it difficult to connect with a supportive network in Calgary.
2. There is a broad range of community development expertise in Calgary and area.
3. Many of our institutions are struggling to incorporate sustainable and positive social, economic and environmental changes through their work, and are relying on community development approaches to assist with this.
4. Community development practitioners are often struggling with isolation, difficulties in connecting with 'the community', limited resources, funding requirements, and few opportunities for professional development.
5. Increasing connections and professional development opportunities among community development practitioners can foster dialogue about emerging issues, and increased effectiveness among practitioners on the whole.

## **Our Target Groups**

All organizations and institutions mandated or interested to work in community development in the areas of health, education, justice, social services, environment and economic development.

## **Our Goal**

The Community Development Society of Calgary and Area has expanded opportunities for learning and skill building opportunities and is engaging a wider group of community development practitioners more often in learning and dialogue about effective community development approaches.

## **Our Values**

Members of the Community Development Society of Calgary and Area will demonstrate the following values and beliefs in their work to provide outstanding learning and skill-building opportunities for Community Development practitioners:

**Community:** We believe that supporting this Community of Practice is important, and that the "community" involves individuals who are engaged in learning about community development philosophy and theories and/or practicing community development approaches to create positive changes in our society.

## **Our Values...cont'd...**

**Collaboration:** We understand that to achieve our vision, we need to build on the strengths and capacities of each member. To do so, we will be responsible to each other and to the group to ensure that what is accomplished is reflective of a collection of efforts. We believe that differences in experience, skills, approaches and opinions can stimulate new thinking towards a common goal, and we welcome that diverse collaboration within Communities Calgary.

**Inclusion:** We believe that community development practitioners come from many different communities, and we need to ensure that those practitioners are actively encouraged to participate and that their communities have access to the learning our work provides. We recognize that people have different ways they would like to be respected and included in this Community of Practice, and we are committed to being sensitive to their preferences and to being fair.

**Empowerment:** We ensure processes that enable the Community of Practice to express its needs and wants for professional development opportunities, and trust the community to create an identity that evolves and matures to support itself.

**Commitment:** We recognize the expertise and experience that exists within a broadly representative Community of Practice. We commit to supporting one another and the structure of the group through our engagement in critical and constructive dialogues that promote greater effectiveness in our work.

## **Our Strategies**

1. Build on the learning and successes of the past four years of community development conferences and investigation of further possibilities in Calgary.
2. Capitalize on the interest shown in continuing to be more frequently involved in professional development opportunities among conference attendees.
3. Continue to reach out to community development practitioners to ensure opportunities are inclusive of many sectors and a wide range of interests.
4. Foster a Community of Practice among those interested in pursuing further learning and interaction about particular areas of interest.
5. Establish a more solid governance structure to support the activities.
6. Solidify collaborative institutional support for participation in the governance structure and activity planning.
7. Create an effective and up-to-date means of communication that reaches a broad range of community development practitioners in Calgary.
8. Develop resources at the municipal, provincial and federal levels (both governmental and non-governmental) to support CDSCA.

## **Outcomes**

1. The Community Development Society of Calgary and Area is a thriving non-profit society with strong leadership and committed and collaborative institutional support.
2. The Community of Practice is supporting members in their community development work, pursuing questions of interest, and fostering effective collaborations.
3. Quality and varied learning opportunities are enhancing the effectiveness of community development practitioners in Calgary & Area.

## **Our Guiding Principles**

We work best....

- With a common understanding of the goals and principles and a belief that they are important
- With a commitment to achieving the goals through a collaborative process that allows systems and individuals to work together
- With trust and patience that the diversity of the group will lead to decisions that provide the best results
- With leadership, a flexible structure, and effective processes that allow positive relationships to develop, and everyone to own the activities and outcomes
- With financial and human resources that are sufficient to create the desired results
- With a willingness to respond to the needs identified by the community