BELONGING

{ EXPLORING CONNECTION TO COMMUNITY }

BELONGING

Where do we belong? What do we belong to? Each of us has a personal connection to the idea of belonging. It reaches deep. It's influenced by our experiences with the people, places and identities to which we feel connected. Strengthening our sense of belonging is at the heart of building more resilient communities and a better country.

Our exploration of belonging has been inspired by our community foundation movement. Vancouver Foundation and The Kitchener and Waterloo Community Foundation have been early leaders in signaling the importance of belonging, and catalyzing new research and community impact to increase belonging in their regions.

As we move towards 2017, Canada's 150th anniversary of Confederation, belonging seems a particularly powerful theme. This milestone urges each of us to think about the kind of communities that we want to be part of and the kind of country we want to build together.

In addition to taking the pulse on belonging across the country, this year's *Vital Signs* report also looks back at what's changed since the last such milestone, our centennial in 1967. History makes it clear that Canada is a work in progress.

While we still have far to go, we're well on our way toward building communities where we all have a stake, where we all have a voice — and where we all belong.

Vital Signs is a national program led by community foundations and coordinated by Community Foundations of Canada that leverages community knowledge to measure the vitality of our communities and support action towards improving our quality of life. Started by the Toronto Foundation in 2001, today more than 70 communities across Canada and around the world use *Vital Signs* to mobilize the power of community knowledge for greater local impact.

FI Capital
FINANCIAL INTEGRITY.
WISE STEWARDSHIP.

WHAT IS BELONGING?

Belonging is being part of a collective 'we'. It's about how much we believe we 'fit' in a place or group, but it's also about how much that place or group welcomes and includes us.

We can belong to many things at the same time:

/ **A COMMUNITY**

/ **AN ETHNO-CULTURAL HERITAGE**

/ **AN ORGANIZATION RELATED TO A SHARED INTEREST**

/ **A SUBCULTURE**

/ **A LANGUAGE**

/ **A WORKPLACE OR SCHOOL**

/ **A PLACE IN THE NATURAL OR BUILT ENVIRONMENT**

/ **A PROVINCE**

/ **A COUNTRY**

Connections and engagement are two important elements of belonging. As Vancouver Foundation discovered in their work around belonging, connections are our relationships with others and the strength of those relationships. Engagement, on the other hand, is our commitment to community and the willingness to take action or participate in activities that make our communities better.[1]

We know that people who feel they belong to a community are more likely to take action with others for the common good.[2] So how can we strengthen belonging to each other and our communities? Well, it's really a two-way street:[3] Communities need to send signals of acceptance and inclusion; and individuals need to cultivate connection with other people and engagement in the community.

PROPORTION OF CANADIANS WITH A VERY STRONG SENSE OF BELONGING TO:

63%
{ CANADA }

45%
{ THEIR PROVINCE }

32%[4]
{ THEIR COMMUNITY }

"My definition of community is knowing and acting like we have a shared fate."

ZITA COBB, FOUNDER, SHOREFAST FOUNDATION[5]

WHY BELONGING?

Belonging is not just a feeling, it's a powerful catalyst for healthier communities and a more cohesive, inclusive Canada.

"We are most fully human, most truly ourselves, most authentically individual, when we commit to the community. It is in the mirror of our community — the street, the neighbourhood, the town, the country — that we find our best selves."

ADRIENNE CLARKSON, CO-CHAIR, INSTITUTE FOR CANADIAN CITIZENSHIP[6]

"When I look at the power and resilience of humanity that we saw after the Calgary flood, I ask myself all the time: how do we harness that power, to deal with poverty, homelessness, the environment, to deal with the issues we face as a community every single day? Now that we know that power exists, there has got to be a way to leverage it."

NAHEED NENSHI, MAYOR OF CALGARY[7]

Angus Reid Institute Belonging Survey
Our national belonging survey was conducted in partnership with the Angus Reid Institute in August 2015, providing responses by Canadians on their sense of belonging and connection to community. Some responses are included throughout this report and a full summary of the survey results is available online at angusreid.org.

ANGUS REID ✦ INSTITUTE
Public Interest Research

WHEN WE FEEL A STRONG SENSE OF BELONGING AND CONNECTION TO PEOPLE AROUND US:

WE ARE HEALTHIER
Belonging to social groups and networks is as important to our health as diet and exercise.[8] People with strong support networks tend to have a lower prevalence of mental illness[9] and better overall physical health.

SUSTAINED EMPLOYMENT IMPROVES
Extensive support networks provide better opportunities for sustained and secure employment.[10]

CHILDREN LEARN BETTER
Belonging is a key element in the curriculum for early childhood education across Canada.[11]

LIFE HAS MORE PURPOSE
When people have a stronger sense of belonging, they perceive life to be more meaningful.[12]

WHEN COMMUNITIES ARE MADE UP OF PEOPLE WHO FEEL THEY BELONG AND TRUST EACH OTHER:

NEIGHBOURHOODS ARE SAFER
As connectedness among people in communities increases, so does neighbourhood safety and a sense of community pride.[13]

CONTRIBUTIONS OF TIME AND MONEY INCREASE
People who feel they belong are more likely to volunteer, donate to the community, and be involved in community governance.[14]

CULTURE AND IDENTITY FLOURISH
Aboriginal communities that have maintained more elements of their culture and a greater level of self-governance feel more individual and community continuity and identity.

COMMUNITIES BOUNCE BACK AFTER EMERGENCIES
Communities in which there are many social connections are more resilient during emergency events.[15]

WHEN PEOPLE FEEL A STRONG SENSE OF BELONGING TO THEIR COUNTRY:

SOCIAL INCLUSION IMPROVES
Belonging is a common indicator of how well someone has integrated into society, and helps build social cohesion within a country.[16]

PUBLIC HEALTH IMPROVES
When more people feel connected to others in their community, individuals report higher levels of positive mental health[17] and seek out health services they need when they need them.[18]

PARTICIPATION IN SOCIETY INCREASES
Belonging to a community, region or country influences identity and the extent to which citizens participate in society.[19]

WHAT INFLUENCES BELONGING?

A variety of elements and factors influence our sense of belonging to each other, our communities and our country.
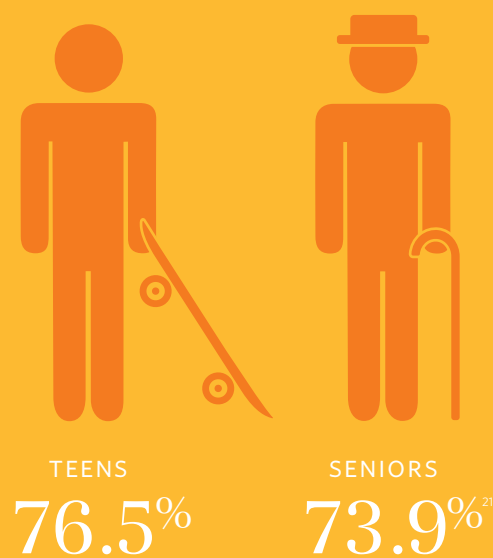
Community belonging has been growing slowly but steadily over the last decade.[20]

66.4% of Canadians aged 12 and older described their sense of belonging to their local community as *somewhat strong* or *very strong* in 2014.

66.4% 33.6%
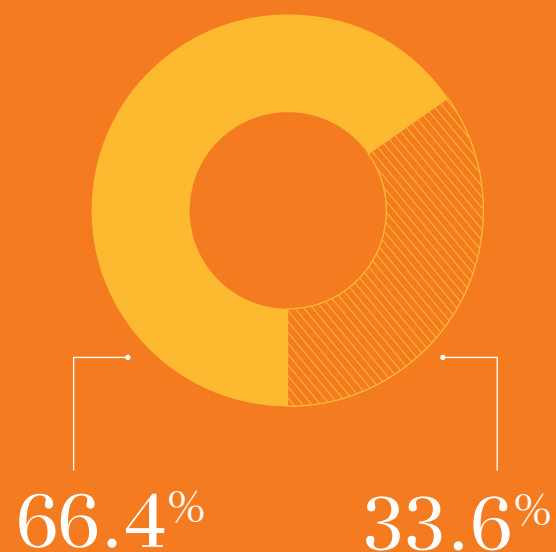
Who had the strongest sense of belonging to the community?

PEOPLE AT BOTH ENDS OF AGE SPECTRUM

TEENS
76.5%

SENIORS
73.9%[21]

{ PERSONAL SOCIAL CONNECTIONS }

The more we interact with our families, friends, neighbours and people of different backgrounds, the more we feel we belong. The number of relatives to whom we feel close has a positive impact on our sense of belonging regardless of whether or not they live close to us.[22] As the number of close friends living nearby increases, so too does the feeling of community belonging[23] and trust in others.[24]

Over the past decade, social connectedness appears to be on the rise in Canada. Between 2003 and 2013, the proportion of Canadians having three or more close friends increased from 70% to 75%, as did the number of people with more than ten other friends or acquaintances.[25] However, we are less likely to spend time in-person with our friends compared to a decade ago. The proportion of Canadians who saw their friends a few times or more each week declined from 56% in 2003 to 44% in 2013.[26]

☑ *74% of Canadians believe that knowing their neighbours is an important part of their day-to-day lives.*

{ COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS }

Supportive interactions between people in a neighbourhood is one of the strongest factors found to increase community belonging.[27] People who feel comfortable asking a neighbour for help are far more likely to feel strongly connected to their community. It's good news then that the percentage of Canadians who reported doing a favour for a neighbour in the last month is on the rise, from 61% in 2003 to 70% in 2013.[28]

☑ *72% of Canadians say they socialize with their immediate neighbours. Manitobans are most social (80%), while Québecers are most likely to stick to themselves (58%).*

☑ *Spending time out and about in the community is more important to people who were born in Canada (69%) than those that were born outside of Canada (59%).*

{ SOCIAL INCLUSION }

Inclusion means ensuring everyone is respected and has access to the basic needs to thrive regardless of race, ability, family background, income, age, gender, or belief.[29] When these needs are not met, it can lead to stress and affect community belonging.[30] Belonging is also negatively impacted by experiences of discrimination.[31] Unsurprisingly, those who experienced discrimination in the past five years were less trusting of other people.[32]

{ PLURALISM AND DIVERSITY }

The ethnic diversity of our communities also contributes to trust and belonging. Caucasians that live in diverse neighbourhoods have a stronger sense of belonging to Canada than their peers residing in low-diversity neighbourhoods. However this reality is not felt everywhere as belonging among people of visible minorities is unaffected by neighbourhood diversity[33]. Having friends from different ethnic backgrounds also has positive impact on belonging.[34] In 2013, 59% of people reported that at least a few of their friends belonged to a visibly different ethnic group, up from 54% in 2003.[35]

{ ENGAGEMENT & PARTICIPATION IN THE COMMUNITY }

There are many ways that community engagement is expressed, including through sports and outdoor activities. In a recent survey, 87% of new citizens said that watching their children play sports or volunteering for their children's teams made them feel more connected to the community.[36] Newcomers also reported that they often had more meaningful social interactions in the stands and on the field than at work. Yet although taking part regularly in social activities clearly has a positive impact on belonging,[37] less than half of Canadians (43.6%) volunteered in 2013.[38]

☑ *Half of Canadians think that being involved in community events or activities is either not very important or not at all important in their day-to-day lives.*

{ POLITICAL INCLUSION }

Canadian voting rates have been falling in recent decades, but it's not yet clear if there's a link between voting and belonging. What we do know is that voting for the first time is often described by newcomers as an experience of belonging. Increasing representation among elected officials and the public service is important in strengthening belonging for underrepresented groups of Canadians.[39] There are fewer racialized people among elected officials and the public service, for example, than their proportion of Canada's population.[40] The argument is that people feel a greater sense of ownership over their community and country when they see themselves and their experiences reflected in decision-makers.

☑ *Nearly 40% of Canadians don't have confidence in their municipal government.*

WHERE HAVE WE COME FROM?

Communities today are very different from those that celebrated and contested Canada's centennial in 1967. Yet the transformations that took place at that time profoundly shaped the current context for belonging and inclusion.

Lament for Confederation

JULY 1, 1967: CHIEF DAN GEORGE, HEAD OF THE TSLEIL-WAUTUTH NATION, MADE A HISTORIC SPEECH TO 32,000 PEOPLE IN VANCOUVER

"Oh Canada, how can I celebrate with you this Centenary, this hundred years? Shall I thank you for the reserves that are left to me of my beautiful forests? For the canned fish of my rivers? For the loss of my pride and authority, even among my own people? For the lack of my will to fight back? No!

Before I follow the great chiefs who have gone before us, Oh Canada, I shall see these things come to pass. I shall see our young braves and our chiefs sitting in the houses of law and government, ruling and being ruled by the knowledge and freedoms of our great land. So shall we shatter the barriers of our isolation. So shall the next hundred years be the greatest in the proud history of our tribes and nations."

{ PICTURE IT }
CANADA IN 1967

THE BABY BOOM

The Baby Boom came to an end, but its influence on Canada's demography continues to be felt today.

A BILINGUAL CANADA

The Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism delivered the first volume of its report which led to French and English being declared Canada's official languages and planted seeds for multiculturalism policy.

EXPO 67

Expo 67 welcomed the world to Montréal, one of the first Canadian events to receive international acclaim.

DIVERSITY

Immigration practices until 1967 heavily favoured Europe as the region from which newcomers arrived, limiting racial and cultural diversity.

OIL SANDS

Canada was in a period of industrial and economic growth as drilling began in Alberta's oil sands.[42]

MIGRATION

Rural youth started to migrate in large numbers, resulting in a net exodus of youth from rural and small towns in every province over the next decades.[41]

IMMIGRATION

Pathways to Canada shifted enormously in 1967 with the overhaul of federal immigration policy. The new universal point system removed ethnic origin as a valid consideration when deciding admissibility to Canada, instead placing emphasis on education and skills. Soon newcomers were arriving from regions all over the world.

60s

THE SIXTIES SCOOP

The relationship between the state and Indigenous people was extremely fraught. The 'Sixties Scoop' began and continued until the 1980s as large numbers of Aboriginal children were removed from their communities and adopted into non-Aboriginal families or placed in the child welfare system.

LAW AMENDMENTS

Attitudes towards other social issues were broadening. The Omnibus Criminal Law Amendment Act was introduced in Parliament in 1967 to decriminalize gay sex, legalize contraception, and increase restrictions on gun ownership.

SOCIAL SAFETY

The social safety net continued to be woven. The creation of the Canada and Quebec Pension Plans responded to a common concern at the time about how people would provide for themselves as they got older.

COMPARISON: 1967–PRESENT

Canada's landscape has transformed since 1967. Our economy is more urban and service-oriented. Our families are smaller. We vote and work less. We live longer. And our population has aged significantly. Looking back at the scale of change over the past 50 years, it's hard not to wonder where Canada's communities will be 50 years from now.

Despite major social, economic and demographic shifts, the key concerns of Canadians have not changed all that much.
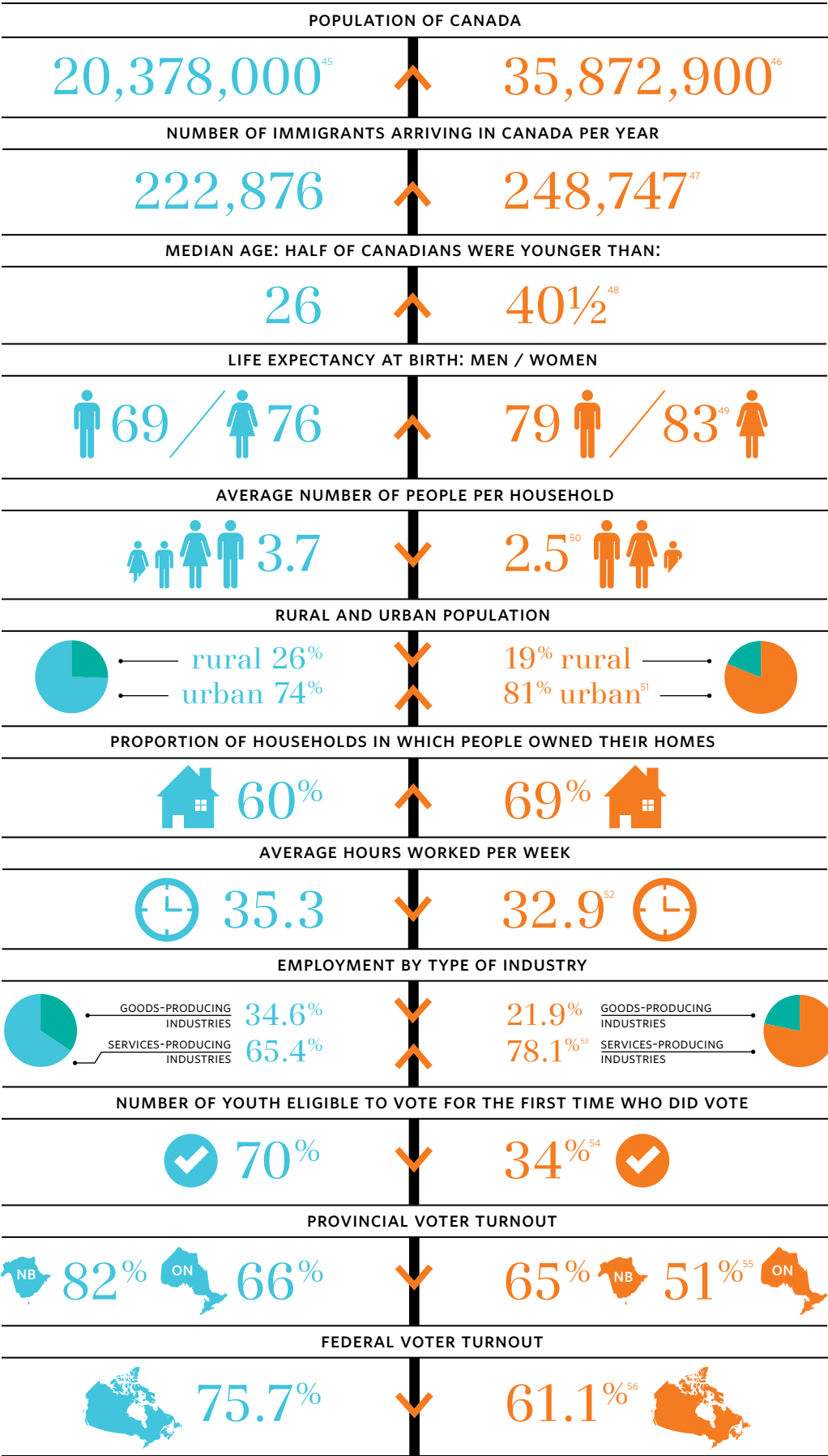
1967:
WHAT CANADIANS WORRIED ABOUT MOST[43]

31.9%	MAKING ENDS MEET
18.8%	HAVING ENOUGH MONEY FOR OLD AGE
18.6%	MY HEALTH
18.2%	HAVING A REASONABLE PLACE TO LIVE
17%	GETTING PROPER FOOD
18.6%	KEEPING MY OWN OR MY SPOUSE'S JOB

2015:
WHAT CANADIANS WANT PARTY LEADERS TO TALK ABOUT MOST DURING THE FEDERAL ELECTION CAMPAIGN[57]

54% RISING COST OF LIVING	**36%** SHAKY ECONOMY
40% RISING FOOD PRICES	**36%** RETIREMENT PENSIONS
28% ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION	**27%** JOB LOSSES

{ THEN } — { NOW }

	THEN	NOW
POPULATION OF CANADA	20,378,000 [45]	35,872,900 [46]
NUMBER OF IMMIGRANTS ARRIVING IN CANADA PER YEAR	222,876	248,747 [47]
MEDIAN AGE: HALF OF CANADIANS WERE YOUNGER THAN:	26	40½ [48]
LIFE EXPECTANCY AT BIRTH: MEN / WOMEN	69 / 76	79 / 83 [49]
AVERAGE NUMBER OF PEOPLE PER HOUSEHOLD	3.7	2.5 [50]
RURAL AND URBAN POPULATION	rural 26% / urban 74%	19% rural / 81% urban [51]
PROPORTION OF HOUSEHOLDS IN WHICH PEOPLE OWNED THEIR HOMES	60%	69%
AVERAGE HOURS WORKED PER WEEK	35.3	32.9 [52]
EMPLOYMENT BY TYPE OF INDUSTRY	GOODS-PRODUCING INDUSTRIES 34.6% / SERVICES-PRODUCING INDUSTRIES 65.4%	21.9% GOODS-PRODUCING INDUSTRIES / 78.1% SERVICES-PRODUCING INDUSTRIES [53]
NUMBER OF YOUTH ELIGIBLE TO VOTE FOR THE FIRST TIME WHO DID VOTE	70%	34% [54]
PROVINCIAL VOTER TURNOUT	NB 82% — ON 66%	65% NB — 51% ON [55]
FEDERAL VOTER TURNOUT	75.7%	61.1% [56]

WHAT MAKES YOUR COMMUNITY A GOOD PLACE TO LIVE?

40% AFFORDABILITY

38% PUBLIC SAFETY

36% EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

HOW CANADIANS FEEL ABOUT ISSUES IN CANADA

44% { GETTING WORSE }

39% { STAYING THE SAME }

17% { GETTING BETTER }

TOWARD A CANADA WHERE WE ALL BELONG

As we explore the subject of belonging, we would be wise to also ask ourselves: Who belongs? The past 50 years show a clear path to protect the well-being and rights of groups of people who have historically been excluded.

In each decade, our answer to the question of "who belongs" has expanded. In contrast to 1967, newcomers can now settle in Canada regardless of race — more than 250 different ethnic origins make up our population.[57] Our communities are home to people with disabilities who are contributing to their full potential. Same-sex couples have raised their families secure in knowing they have full rights. Nearly one in five people in Canada speaks both French and English.[58] These are just some of the ways in which inclusion and pluralism have evolved unlike any other country in the world.

At the same time, one-third of Canadians report a weak sense of community belonging.[59] This experience is due in part to the persistence of discrimination and social isolation, two factors negatively associated with belonging.[60] For example, 45% of lesbian, gay and bisexual teens and 69% of transgender teens in Canada do not feel a real part of their school.[61] People in minority official language communities still have difficulty accessing services in their language of choice, and only 26% of francophones living outside of Quebec mainly use French in daily life.[62] For Canadians with intellectual disabilities, many continue to be institutionalized and almost 30% of youth with intellectual disabilities go to school in entirely segregated classrooms.[63] A large number of Canadians of visible minority experience racial discrimination when they try to access work opportunities, government services and housing.[64]

38%

✓

OF CANADIANS DON'T FEEL LIKE THEY HAVE A STAKE IN THEIR LOCAL COMMUNITY

Canada is clearly a pluralism in progress. We may celebrate where we have come from, but we must also act with humility and courage about where we as communities and as a country need to go next.
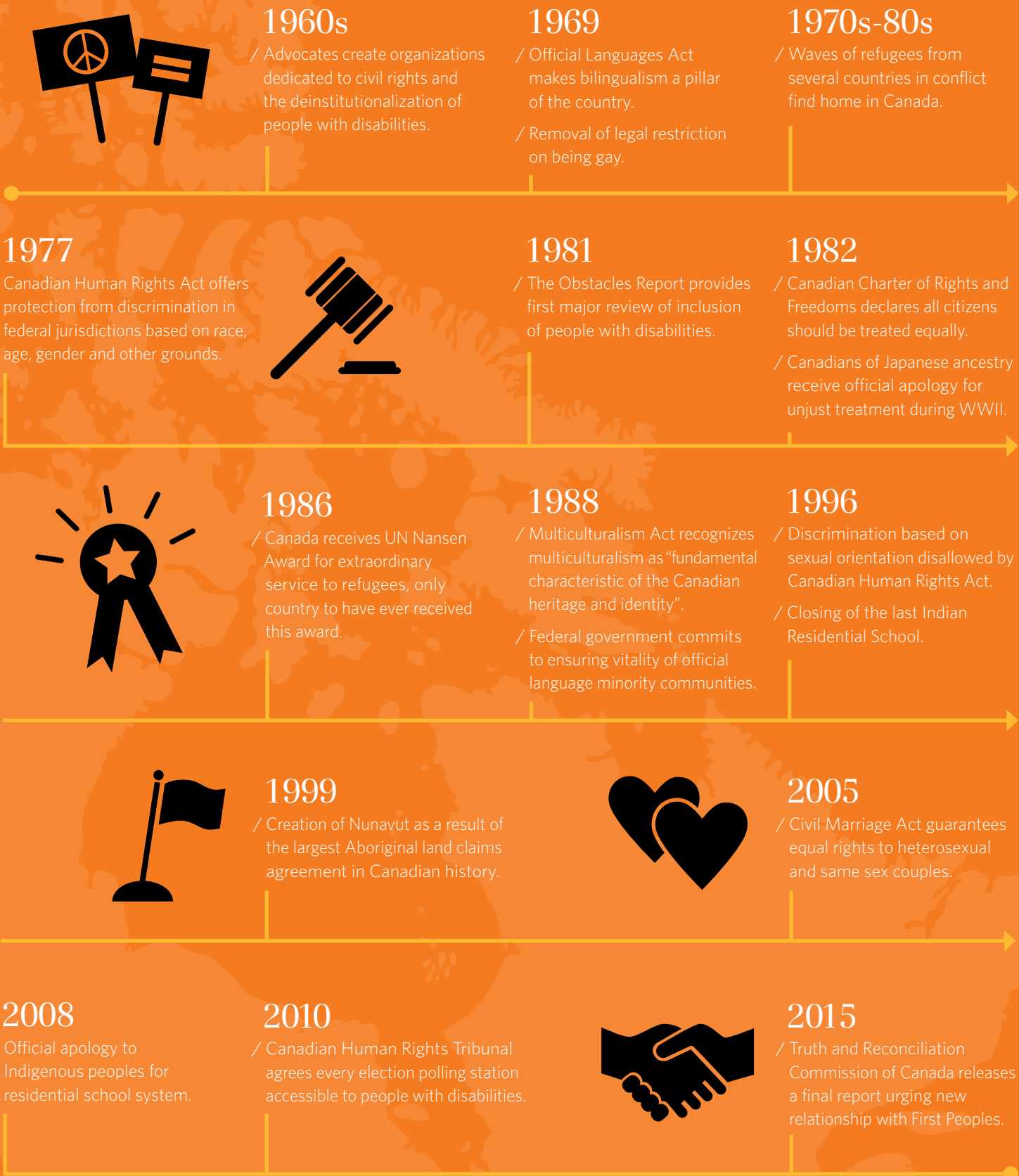
"As much as Canada's pluralism is embedded in Supreme Court judgments, parliamentary legislation and constitutional provisions, its actual breathing in and out is enabled by the lungs of community institutions in community after community in this country."

KHALIL SHARIFF, CEO, AGA KHAN FOUNDATION CANADA[65]

"Canada makes no sense. We are dispersed geographically. We have a terrible climate. We have two official languages and many non-official. We have no revolutionary moment that binds us. We are a country of immigrants. We are a country of great regional diversity. For these reasons, we have to work at being Canada. But I believe the world needs Canada to succeed. We are an experiment that says, you can build the capacity to share and trust across these differences."

ALEX HIMELFARB, FORMER CLERK OF THE PRIVY COUNCIL[66]

1960s
/ Advocates create organizations dedicated to civil rights and the deinstitutionalization of people with disabilities.

1969
/ Official Languages Act makes bilingualism a pillar of the country.
/ Removal of legal restriction on being gay.

1970s-80s
/ Waves of refugees from several countries in conflict find home in Canada.

1977
/ Canadian Human Rights Act offers protection from discrimination in federal jurisdictions based on race, age, gender and other grounds.

1981
/ The Obstacles Report provides first major review of inclusion of people with disabilities.

1982
/ Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms declares all citizens should be treated equally.
/ Canadians of Japanese ancestry receive official apology for unjust treatment during WWII.

1986
/ Canada receives UN Nansen Award for extraordinary service to refugees, only country to have ever received this award.

1988
/ Multiculturalism Act recognizes multiculturalism as "fundamental characteristic of the Canadian heritage and identity".
/ Federal government commits to ensuring vitality of official language minority communities.

1996
/ Discrimination based on sexual orientation disallowed by Canadian Human Rights Act.
/ Closing of the last Indian Residential School.

1999
/ Creation of Nunavut as a result of the largest Aboriginal land claims agreement in Canadian history.

2005
/ Civil Marriage Act guarantees equal rights to heterosexual and same sex couples.

2008
/ Official apology to Indigenous peoples for residential school system.

2010
/ Canadian Human Rights Tribunal agrees every election polling station accessible to people with disabilities.

2015
/ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada releases a final report urging new relationship with First Peoples.

BELONGING TODAY

Does belonging really matter to the challenges we face in our communities? Today, many of the realities that are playing out in communities across Canada have a clear link to our sense of belonging.

/ INCLUSION /

The recent refugee crisis in Europe and the Middle East has refocused public attention on Canada's attitude toward international migration. Many of us are asking: What is Canada's role in welcoming people from around the world who want to build a future here?

Our approach to immigration over the past 50 years, as well as policies of multiculturalism that encourage Canadians to simultaneously identify with their new country and their cultural heritage,[67] have largely benefitted our communities. A majority (70%) agree that being inclusive to newcomers of diverse ethnic backgrounds is a defining and enriching part of Canadian identity.[68] Interestingly, Canadian citizens born elsewhere have a very strong sense of belonging to our country compared to those born in Canada (67% vs. 62%).[69] Such results reflect international findings that members of ethnic minorities are more likely to identify with a new national identity if they feel their ethnicity is publicly respected.[70]

Debbie Douglas, Executive Director of the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants, points out that despite these successes, racialized Canadians continue to experience individual and systemic barriers. "We see that Black, Muslim and Arab Canadians especially face discrimination, no matter how many generations their families have lived in Canada." For example, Canadian-born visible minorities have lower salaries than the Canadian average, and immigrants have seen their place in the labour market deteriorate in the last 20 years.[71]

There is also concern that the nature of immigration is changing. "Over the last decade, Canada's policies have shifted to see newcomers as purely an economic input, instead of how we used to see them, as nation builders," says Douglas. The number of temporary foreign workers has tripled since 2000,[72] it's taking longer for newcomers to become citizens, and new rules have made it easier for immigration officials to revoke citizenship for dual citizens. All this has led many commentators to remark that Canadian citizenship is becoming "harder to get and easier to lose."[73]

"What you find is that groups of people who are 'other-ed' start feeling as 'other,' which gradually deteriorates their sense of ownership and belonging to their town and their country," says Douglas. "If we truly want to live within a culturally pluralist society, immigrants need to be treated as though they are meant to stay, and people of colour need to stop being asked, 'But where are you *really* from?' We need to focus on weaving people of multiple origins into our communities, knowing that they nourish and build our economy and society."

{ INSTITUTE FOR CANADIAN CITIZENSHIP }

Often the first few years as a newcomer to Canada are very demanding: settling in, finding work, and navigating a new community and culture can all impact on belonging. To help welcome newcomers, the Institute for Canadian Citizenship created the Cultural Access Pass as a kind of gift that encourages new citizens to experience the best cultural and natural attractions that Canada has to offer. Since the launch in 2008, more than 150,000 new citizens have participated in the program and benefitted from a year of free admission to over 1,200 parks, museums, galleries and discovery centres across the country.

{ VANCOUVER FOUNDATION }

In 2011, Vancouver Foundation set out to learn what issue people in the region were most concerned about. The answer was clear: social isolation. The Foundation's research showed that residents were retreating from community life and lacked connections with their neighbours. One of the Foundation's most successful initiatives to counter this trend has been Neighbourhood Small Grants. The program provides small grants for projects created by local residents — such as block parties, community meals, greenspace cleanups — with all grant decisions made by local volunteers. To date, 82% of participants report a greater sense of belonging in their community. Based on this success, the Foundation is currently exploring opportunities to expand the program across British Columbia.

AS NEWCOMERS SPEND MORE TIME IN CANADA, THEIR SENSE OF BELONGING TO COMMUNITY AND COUNTRY GROWS.[74] SOCIAL, POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC INCLUSION INDICATORS HELP TO EXPLAIN WHY.

/ More foreign-born citizens are elected to Parliament than in any other country globally.[75]

/ Children of immigrants have better educational outcomes in Canada than other Western democracies.[76]

/ Canadian-born women from religious minorities have the same rate of involvement in our workforce as the entire female population.[77]

"All young people need to know who they are and from where they come. Aboriginal children and youth, searching for their own identities and places of belonging, need to know and take pride in their Indigenous roots. They need to know the answers to some very basic questions. Who are my people? What is our history? How are we unique? Where do I belong?"

TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION FINAL REPORT, 2015[78]

Coinciding with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada holding its closing events in Ottawa, Canada's philanthropic community prepared a Declaration of Action committing to ensuring that positive action on reconciliation will continue. The Declaration is a call to action inviting others to join in moving forward in an atmosphere of understanding, dignity and respect towards the shared goal of reconciliation.

SIGN ONLINE:
philanthropyandaboriginalpeoples.ca

RECONCILIATION

Belonging is a powerful force. The recent final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada raised a new level of awareness and showed more clearly than ever how colonization was meant to disrupt Aboriginal people's sense of identity and connectedness. The effects of official Canadian policies that outlawed cultural expression, redrew communities, broke up families and even denied Aboriginal status to many continue to be felt today.

"There is a paradox of belonging for First Peoples," says Roberta Jamieson, the CEO of Indspire and first Aboriginal woman in Canada to earn a law degree. "On one hand, from birth we have a deep sense of belonging to a people, to a community, to a particular place. On the other hand, we receive subtle reminders of 'non-belonging' every day. Institutions do not reflect who we are. Curriculum in schools do not reflect our sense of geography or history. When we walk into a store or get on public transit, we never know if we will be welcomed. This can reinforce a sense of being second-class citizens in our own country."

Nowhere is the potential for belonging greater than in Aboriginal communities — promoting reconciliation and reshaping the relationship between Aboriginal peoples and all Canadians. Together we have a responsibility to cultivate healthy, trusting relationships between Aboriginal peoples and all Canadians, fuelled by an honest acknowledgement of the past, and a true and hopeful narrative of the future driven by Aboriginal voices. Jamieson believes First Nations, Métis and Inuit people, especially youth populations, will play a leading role in this vibrant future — reviving languages, creating school curricula, stimulating economic development and creating governance systems that reflect their cultures.

She reminds us that Aboriginal communities have a wealth of wisdom to share about how to truly belong in this land: "We define self and sense of belonging as relationship-based above all else — the relationship with extended family, community, a specific place on the land, even the moon. Indigenous means 'of the land.' John Ralston Saul has said that being Canadian means a willingness to embrace your Indigenous identity. That means you need to respect and be open to learning from those people who have the deep knowledge of living here. Indigenous people have an amazing generosity of spirit in their willingness to share knowledge."

TEMAGAMI COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

For the past hundred years, three distinct groups have made up the population of Temagami region in Ontario: 10,000 summer cottagers, the small town of Temagami, and the First Nation, whose roots in the area date back more than 5,000 years. The interests of each group were vastly different which sometimes caused them to be wary of each other. Temagami Community Foundation set out to help find common ground. One initiative that has had significant impact is an annual summer art camp that gathers children together from the three populations. Art Camp has become a source of community pride and a highlight of the whole year for townspeople, cottagers and First Nations families alike. Both children and adult residents, as parents and volunteers, have built a new level of trust and understanding that helps make other community collaborations possible.[79]

INDSPIRE

The work of Indspire illustrates the two-way street necessary for a strong sense of belonging. On one hand, Indspire helps make schools more welcoming and accepting to Indigenous children and youth by making education curricula and teaching more culturally-sensitive. On the other hand, Indspire's bursaries and scholarships help individual youth access post-secondary education that builds not only their skills, but also their self-confidence and identity. Their vision is that by investing in youth a new generation of Aboriginal peoples will come of age with a healthy sense of belonging to their culture, building stronger communities and country in the process.

> *"Canada is a country of considerable wealth and of far too much poverty. Ours is a land of learning, but also of insufficient access to quality education for all. We are incredibly diverse, yet we also suffer from persistent barriers to equal opportunity. We know our strengths, but we also know the challenges we face.*
>
> *The 150th anniversary of Confederation is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for Canadians not only to celebrate our country, but also to take a clear-eyed look at where we can and must improve."*

HIS EXCELLENCY THE RIGHT HONOURABLE DAVID JOHNSTON,
GOVERNOR GENERAL OF CANADA, 2013[80]

/ CONNECTION /

"When people have to travel long distances for work, how does that affect their sense of belonging?" asks Ainsley Hawthorn, Executive Director of the Community Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador. Her counterpart at the Community Foundation of Northwestern Alberta, Tracey Vavrek, is asking the same thing about regions around Grande Prairie that are on the receiving end of temporary workers and inter-provincial migration: "How can we help connect people who don't think they're going to stay?" questions Vavrek.

"The Canadian population is mobile, and we have always been that way," says Dr. Greg Halseth, Co-Director of the Community Development Institute at the University of Northern British Columbia. "Historically, many Aboriginal peoples moved across landscapes with the seasons. There have been various waves of immigration to different regions, people moving to cities, people moving to 'frontier' regions. If you look at any suburban neighbourhood today, it's common to find tremendous turnover in any five year period."

Today, the social impacts of this mobility are abundant. Communities that experience out-migration are losing youth, volunteer fire fighters, soccer coaches and skilled workers. In families, one parent ironically may become immobile,

charged with all responsibility for home, children and elders while the other is away. More subtly yet powerfully, a sense of belonging can be eroded when where you work and where you live are not the same place.

As the pace of economic change has acceleratedand become more globally connected, Halseth thinks communities may be having more trouble than before to adapt and sustain community connections. "We have to start investing in community again," says Halseth. "Coming out of WWII, we knew successful communities needed jobs as well as to be good places to live, where people of all ages feel belonging. Since the 1980s, policies have focused on lowering taxes and serving the global economy. We haven't renewed infrastructure, voluntary associations, community centres, arenas, swimming pools, parks, and the many other ways for people to build connections."

When we look at rural and remote living in the 21st century, Halseth believes people need to reimagine and rebundle community assets to meet their local aspirations. Belonging both drives and is reinforced by community development, moving us towards communities where global and local connections, movement and a sense of place all coexist in harmony.

{ COMMUNITY FOUNDATION OF NEWFOUNDLAND & LABRADOR }

Even for a remote town of 300 people, social connections need to be cultivated. In Branch, Newfoundland, isolation can be most acute in the winter months and for seniors whose children and grandchildren have moved away for work. The Singing Kitchen, however, is changing all that. Parents, kids and seniors get together every two weeks to share traditional songs, stories and a community meal. The Kitchen has built strong connections, not only between neighbours and generations, but also with cultural heritage. After receiving initial support from the Community Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador, the Kitchen is now self-sustaining and welcomes up to 150 attendees at a time.
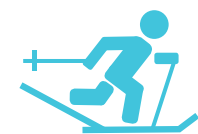
{ COMMUNITY FOUNDATION OF NORTHWESTERN ALBERTA }

Half of the residents of Grande Prairie, Alberta, are under the age of 30 and 15% of them moved in during the last five years,[81] mainly to work in or around high-wage petroleum industries. Local leaders like the Community Foundation of Northwestern Alberta are working hard to make the sense of belonging as plentiful as the job opportunities. In a region where it can snow any month of the year, the foundation got people out enjoying winter during the 2013 Frost Moon Festival. The community has since taken up the torch, creating many new winter events. The Family Mentorship Program, sponsored by the municipality, brings together immigrant and local families, building a sense of connectedness for both.[82] And this year 15,000 youth registered to take part in the local Random Act of Kindness day. This enthusiasm is reverberating throughout the community, and more families that had planned to leave at their end of their work contracts are deciding to stay.[83]

WHERE ARE WE GOING?

As part of our dedication to building strong and resilient communities, Community Foundations of Canada has chosen to make belonging and inclusion a major focus of our work for the next three years.

Looking back, we can see that together we have built the foundations for inclusion, not only through laws and policies, but just as importantly, through interactions with neighbours, co-workers, families and friends.

As we look to 2017 and beyond, we might keep in mind that belonging is a two-way street and that we can take action on both sides. As individuals we may ask: "What contributes to my sense of belonging? Am I as connected and engaged in the community as I would like to be?" As communities we may ask: "Who belongs, and who does not? Are we as welcoming to difference and diversity as we can be?"

While we still have far to go, we're well on our way toward building communities where we all have a stake, where we all have a voice — and where we all belong.

"Let us find a way to belong to this time and place together. Our future, and the well-being of all our children, rests with the kind of relationships we build today."

CHIEF DR. ROBERT JOSEPH, GWAWAENUK ELDER[87]

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WHERE ARE WE GOING?

87 Reconciliation Canada. *Chief Dr. Robert Joseph, O.B.C.*

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