



What we heard

A portrait of perspectives from Carleton

Strategic Plan **for** Community Engagement (SP**4**CE)
Progress Report
May 2022



Carleton
University

Centre for
Community Engagement

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How did we get here?

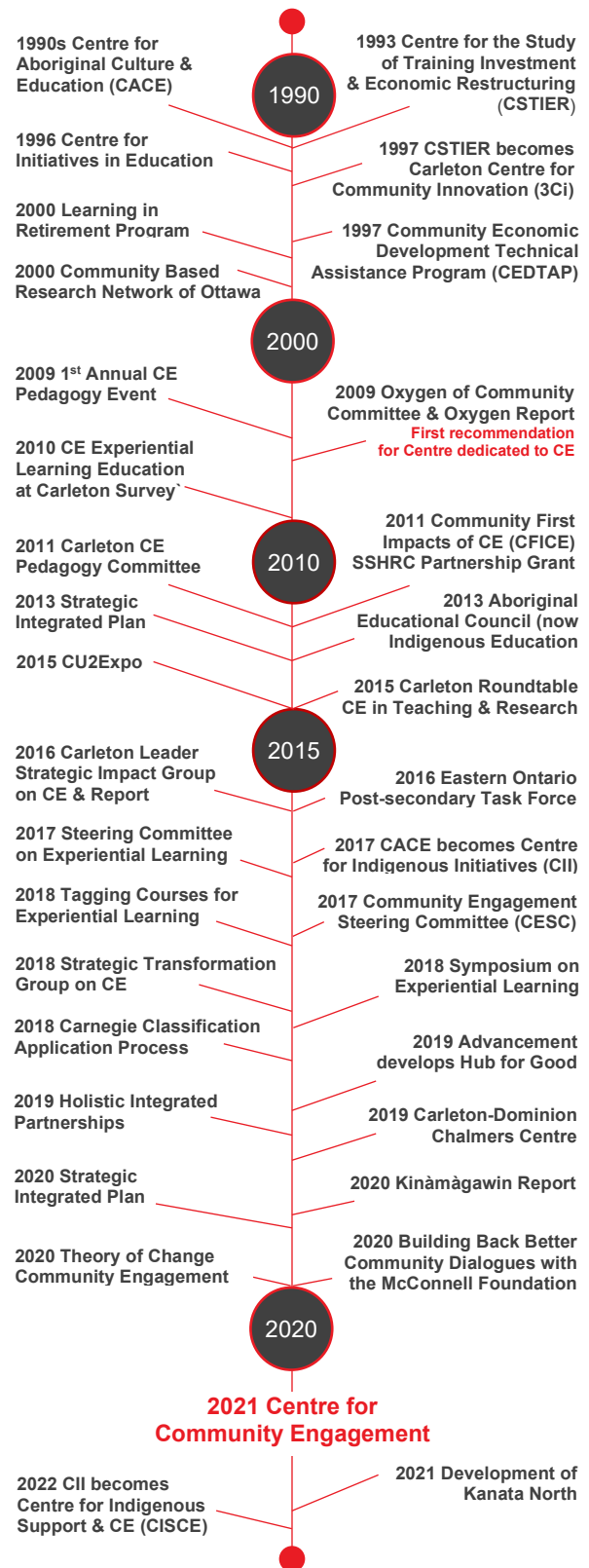
Community is our founding story.

Carleton University was built by, for and with the community in 1942 to meet the needs of veterans returning from World War II. This deep connection to community continues to be an integral part of Carleton's story. As a public institution, it's our responsibility to generate, preserve and share knowledge, understanding that knowledge is created by society as a whole. Our collective effort is critical to solving our challenges and uplifting everyone. With this, Carleton is here to *Serve Ottawa and Serve the World*, a key strategic direction for the university.

We are already doing great work in this area, captured in this timeline spanning the last 30 years. Community engagement will continue to move organically throughout the university, with the Centre for Community Engagement there to help support, promote and measure these efforts in a strategic way. From the formation of the Community Based Research Network of Ottawa in 2000, to the important groundwork of the Oxygen Committee in 2009, to a campus-wide Community Engaged Pedagogy Group established in 2011, a continuous thread of enthusiasm and dedication links us all to community-engaged work at Carleton.

In 2020, Carleton launched its Strategic Integrated Plan (SIP), which included community engagement as a prominent feature. At the same time, Carleton joined the Carnegie Canadian Pilot Cohort to explore the possibility of adapting the Carnegie Classification of Community Engagement by post-secondary institutions to the Canadian context. We continue to work with this group, taking national leadership in establishing a Canadian Carnegie Classification.

What we learned from the SIP and participating in the Carnegie Pilot was significant. We learned more about the depth and breadth of community engagement initiatives that were happening in all areas of the university. We also realized that we could improve our community engagement efforts by investing in organizational infrastructure and staffing to help support, promote and measure these activities in a strategic way. It was on this foundation that the proposal for a new Centre for Community Engagement was built.



What do we mean by community engagement (CE)?

In 2020, Carleton's Community Engagement Steering Committee advanced our thinking through two important contributions: the development of a working definition of community engagement (CE) and a Hub and Spoke model for working together. The committee also developed a Theory of Change document that highlighted the need for organizational infrastructure and plotted a course for how to get there. These would help spark campus and community-wide discussion on how we might collectively envision what we mean when we talk about engaging with the community.



Working Definition of Community Engagement Developed by Carleton's Community Engagement Steering Committee

At Carleton community engagement is a powerful method to develop, translate and mobilize knowledge for the greater good. We emphasize respectful, reciprocal relations with neighbours.

We engage with communities and institutions locally, nationally, and globally, from all sectors of society. These communities can be defined both by place and by what brings them together—shared interest, practice or circumstance.

Community engagement is both a social responsibility and connected to Carleton's founding mandate, ensuring we remain valued and trusted by neighbours and communities.

In practice, it describes community-based initiatives by faculty, professionals, student services and students that are mutually beneficial in the eyes of all partners.

Partnerships can emerge from personal, professional, or institutional connections. They can be based on a community's needs, Carleton's research, teaching or service objectives, or shared concerns. Outcomes might be either immediate or future oriented, but all partners should value the long-term implications of working together.

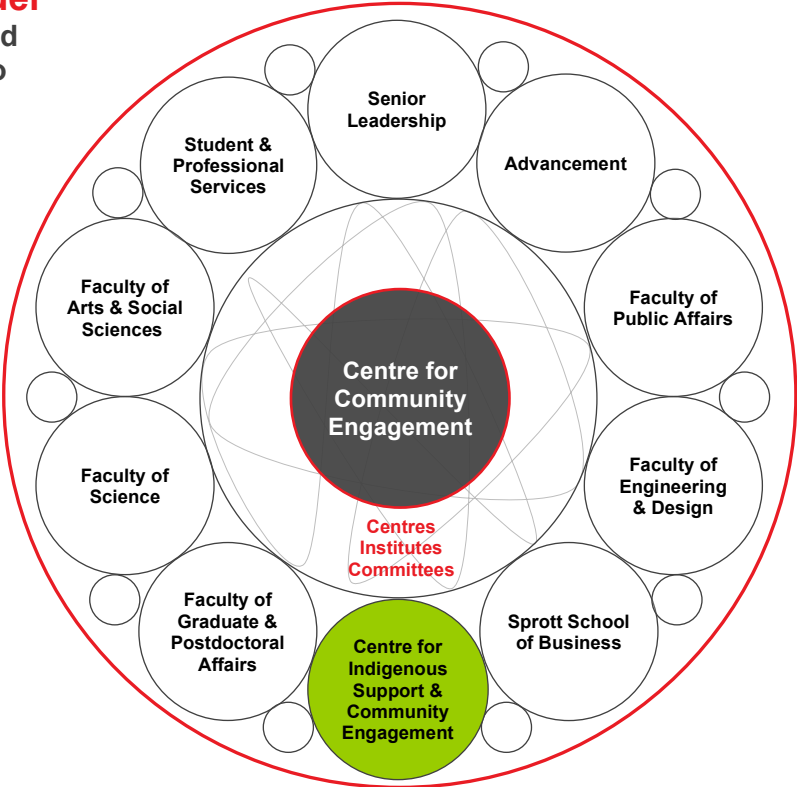
At their heart, partnerships with an ethical foundation are built on good relationships, accountability, respectful dialogue, and reciprocity.

Community engagement is applied in situations where Carleton's resources and structures can illuminate a real community issue and when the practical and lived experience of a community can illuminate academic theory or research.

The Hub and Spoke model (pictured on the next page) illustrates a process where various parts of the university work 'back-and-forth' to systematically support each other in community-based work. The model serves to recognize, respect and leverage parts of the university already invested in community engaged work to provide guidance in doing this type of work well.

When we set out to consult with stakeholders across Carleton about their thoughts and aspirations for community engagement, the Hub and Spoke helped us structure a Task Force broadly representative of units across campus, but also guided the organization of our consultations.

The Hub and Spoke Model Working Together to Foster and Strengthen our Commitment to Community Engagement



Indigenous Community Engagement and Kinàmàgawin The First Call to Action

Carleton is located on unceded Algonquin land. As part of its commitment and responsibility to maintain good relations with Indigenous Peoples, Carleton has undertaken specific community engagement initiatives with surrounding Algonquin nations, especially Kitigan Zibi and Pikwakanagan.

As a result, Carleton has a closer connection, supported by ongoing conversations, with surrounding Algonquin communities. This helps to ensure an appropriate balance that recognizes the land and the valuable insight that Elders, Knowledge Keepers and community members hold. These efforts are in addition to the ongoing support that Carleton provides to First Nations, Métis and Inuit faculty, staff and students through the Centre for Indigenous Support and Community Engagement (CISCE), and the Office of the Assistant Vice-President, Indigenous Teaching, Learning and Research. Apart from formally recognizing this important work as an institution, we also heard about the significance of these initiatives throughout our consultations with Carleton community members.

Early work in community engagement is captured in Kinàmàgawin, a revitalized Indigenous strategy that was published by the Carleton University Strategic Indigenous Initiatives Committee in May 2020. Community engagement is a prominent theme that occurs throughout Kinàmàgawin, with the document’s first call to action focusing on **“the development of an Indigenous Community Engagement Policy that would guide staff, faculty and students in the areas of recruitment, research and partnerships with Indigenous communities.”**

Working closely with CISCE and the Algonquin nations is a critical part of the Centre’s work to discuss and develop foundational principles and supports around community engagement, artefacts that will naturally evolve over time as we build our relationships.

Our work so far...

Timeline of events and early exploration of community engagement themes

The Centre for Community Engagement was established in July 2021 and officially launched in October 2021.

At the launch, early themes around community engagement were explored and we held our first consultation with stakeholders across campus on what 'community engagement' means to them.



Themes explored at the launch of the Centre

- Where do I start?**
Things to do, things to think about, actions to take
- From classroom to community**
Teaching a community engaged course
- Work as imagined vs. work as done**
The realities of working in complex community engagement initiatives
- Community engagement in action**
What might real impact and real outcomes look like?
- Knowing me and knowing you**
How are we and our students evaluating our partnerships and work with the community?
- Tips and tools for community engagement in not-so-normal times**
Challenges and opportunities emerging from the pandemic

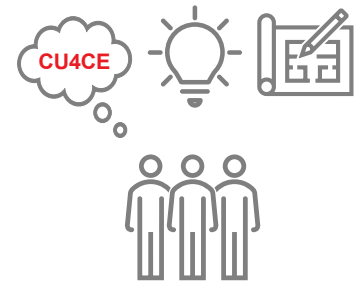
One of the Centre's first goals focused on developing a Strategic Plan for Community Engagement, or **SP4CE**, and forming a Task Force that would help guide the process. Although Carleton has been actively involved in the community since it was first established, this is the first university-wide plan to strengthen our commitment to working with communities. The development of **SP4CE** involves consultation on 'what makes sense' to support our members at Carleton and in the larger community.

To date, we have held internal consultations across the university with approximately 600 people to hear from faculty, staff, students and senior administrators about their experiences and ideas related to community engagement. These internal consultations have helped us develop a better sense of what's going on in our 'own house', with the intent of providing some foundation to subsequently engage in discussions with external community members. Our next step in this process is to hear from our community members at large about their experiences with Carleton, and their aspirations for how we might interact or work together in the future.

Hearing from all these stakeholders—internal and external to Carleton—will help inform the strategic plan. The diversity of perspectives will allow us to see the bigger picture and develop ways of working together more intentionally and easily to co-create ideas, goals, and approaches. A commitment to developing these conditions will help shape more reciprocal relationships in our work, better benefit our communities and lead to greater societal relevance and impact.

What did we find?

Our questions encouraged students, staff, and faculty to reflect on community engagement now and in the future. The questions were broad and open to include diverse views. The Task Force focused on listening to avoid interjecting our own perspectives. At times, we were asked to define community engagement, perhaps for reference. However, we intentionally did not refer to the definition of CE developed by the Community Engagement Steering Committee so that new views and ideas could emerge.



What are your broad aspirations for community engagement at Carleton?

- Develop **reciprocal relations**, look beyond ourselves
- Prioritize **Indigenous consultation** and what that means for broader relations
- Advocate for **Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion**, cultural learning, understanding
- Support a **lifelong and intergenerational** approach
- Make the process more **accessible**, provide **centralized support**
- Develop **communication strategies** to connect and raise awareness
- Support **CE teaching, learning and research networks** to improve skills
- Foster **exciting new ways to work and learn** with communities
- Recognize and support the **importance of place/space** in engaging with community
- Ensure efforts are more **tangible, applied, implemented, used**
- Work with **strategic partners** to advance this area
- Actively **frame Carleton's intent, identity** toward community engagement

How can we better serve our external communities?

We can...

- do all we can to become more **accessible**
- reflect on and improve our **relationship building** skills
- identify **institutional barriers** affecting efficiency, ease, experimentation
- **simplify the system** to improve people's experiences
- recognize the importance of **time and timing**
- **re-examine our work/jobs** to make room, make it count
- innovate in teaching and learning, develop **creative curriculums**
- appreciate, leverage **student experience, knowledge and leadership**
- identify and advocate for **funding**
- identify metrics to **evaluate impact**

What are Carleton's strengths in community engagement?

- There have been community engagement **strategies before this...**
- This means a lot to us as an institution, as **part of our identity**
- We're open, approachable, and **friendly** with each other
- We see the **weight and responsibility** involved
- We have a **diverse and balanced** approach
- We're **agile**, we see exciting potential for **innovation**

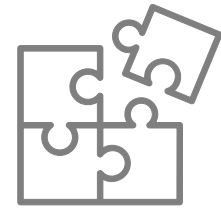
How can Carleton build upon its strengths?

We can...

- **broaden** our definition
- commit to **listening** more intently and actively
- recognize and create **incentives** through funding and awards
- better support our **neighbours and neighbourhoods** here and beyond
- design 'our house' to **strategically rebuild**
- focus on optimizing **time, resources, and processes**
- collect and **communicate** our efforts internally and externally
- develop innovative, alternative **curriculum strategies**
- better recognize and support **student experience and leadership**

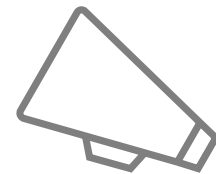
What does all this mean?

Strategic themes and ideas emerged from consulting with Carleton stakeholders. We clustered ‘headlines’ that were discussed into themes—themes that capture **what people talked about most, and what was not talked about a lot yet was striking to see.** We also developed themes capturing **tensions or differences of opinion**, as well as **pressure points.** Finally, we captured the **ideas** shared by Carleton community members. Along with input from our external community members, all of this will be valuable to consider in developing **SP4CE.**



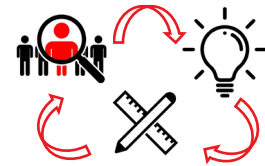
What people talked about most

Leveraging and improving the design of services, programs, places, and spaces for community impact. A key theme centred around leveraging and improving the design of our services, programs, places and spaces to better support community engagement and impact. It was common to hear things like “*orienting and supporting new faculty or staff*”, “*streamlining*”, “*making things easier*”, “*making processes more accessible*” in these conversations. The importance of the campus as a welcoming place for community members, as well as our physical presence in the community through places like Carleton-Dominion Chalmers Centre and Kanata North were also mentioned frequently.



Ideas

- Develop a **centralized service and digital strategy.**
- Identify **system-level barriers** and **streamline processes.**
- Expand **student-focused CE programs** (e.g., Co-op, Virtual Ventures).
- Provide a **variety of space types** for people to come together on and off campus.
- Identify and advertise **resources for community use** (e.g., library, workshops, games).
- Develop **channels and opportunities to share ideas** to work with or serve community.
- Provide **new faculty, staff and student CE orientation.**
- Form an **advisory board** representing the university for strategic visioning, planning.
- Develop **pedagogy, learning outcomes, templates, models**, etc. with Teaching and Learning Services.
- Connect **international students with the Canadian context** outside of the university.
- Create opportunities for more **consistent, everyday interactions** and acts of **reciprocity.**



Recognizing and supporting diverse groups in our engagement strategy.

This theme centres around diverse communities and approaches to be engaged respectfully in community-based work. This might involve understanding the customs, perspectives, institutions and achievements of a particular group, nation, generation, organization or sector. Drawing attention and priority specifically to Indigenous engagement as a foundational approach was discussed as part of this theme. Conversations focused on developing better cultural understanding and appropriate supports to facilitate engagement. There was also a strong focus on students as an important group to recognize for their experience and leadership in community-based work.

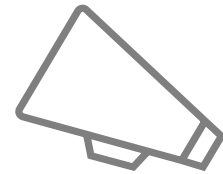


Ideas

- Carleton can be unique if we **embrace a broader definition** of community engagement.
- Invite diverse **community members to join our committees** to expand our perspectives.
- Focus on **engaging well internally and externally** with diverse communities.
- Work with diverse members of **alumni as a strategic group** to broaden mentorship and careers.
- Acknowledge **different CE approaches and capacities**: through teaching, learning and research; governmental, non-governmental and industry projects; and informal, individual, or personal work.
- Engage **disciplines not known for CE** to bring attention to their contribution.
- Recognize that we need **appropriate approaches** to engage diverse communities.
- Develop a process and support for **when things don't go well**.



Strengthening communication for community engagement. The need to focus on communications to support community engagement came up frequently in all four questions. This included things like strategically and systematically raising awareness around what we are doing (both Carleton and community members), but also included comments around managing our internal and external communications to strengthen our relationships. Other challenges focused on communicating a more intuitive and cohesive 'front door,' so community members know where to enter and how to navigate once inside.



Ideas

- Tell stories about **what we're collectively doing** as a larger community.
- Tell stories at a **systems level** and through more informal, **word-of-mouth channels**.
- Build more **formal communications** with **strategic liaisons** (e.g., government, news).
- Support Carleton members to **go into the community more actively and consistently**.
- Leverage **active CE groups to communicate** and host events for better reach.
- Develop **interactive ways to familiarize people with Carleton**.
- Develop a strategy to increase the **presence of the Hub for Good**.
- Develop a **database to map our relations and outreach** with community members.
- Create a **digital communications and social media strategy**.



Discussions around pressures and tensions

Time, resources and recognition for community engagement.

People identified pressures around time, resources and lack of recognition for community-based work. So, it will be important for our plan to outline steps to help build capacity to address these pressures and increase recognition for this work.



Ideas

- Develop **resources**: How to start, what are the steps, who to connect with?
- Develop **process maps, classifications** to make the system more explicit, easier to understand.
- Develop **university wide agreements** to reduce duplication, workload and remove barriers.
- Offer expertise, **mentors** on doing CE to reduce workload.
- Develop **guides, modules** with Teaching and Learning Services.
- **Incentivize** faculty and staff through awards, formal recognition.
- **Reassess work structures** and commitments to make more time for CE (e.g., reduce committees).
- Provide **official, formal recognition** for community members (e.g., letters, awards, events).
- **Compensate community members** financially or with in-kind matching.
- Develop **university-wide communication/database** on CE opportunities to save time, effort.



What the Centre should do in community engagement. Another tension was that people shared very different views on what the Centre should be doing - from more granular day-to-day matchmaking, to higher-level, systematic support. Knowing this, it will be important to define the Centre's role so that it has the greatest impact, while managing people's expectations about what the Centre can and should do.

Ideas

- Work on **institutional barriers** to CE.
- Develop a **centralized repository** of prior CE work.
- **Fill systemic gaps** that spokes can't achieve readily on their own.
- Provide **centralized CE knowledge** focused on pedagogy, research, ethics, training, communication, funding, work design, and management.
- Develop a **hub/customer relationship management system** to connect community members with Carleton, track CE (e.g., Hub for Good).
- Develop a systematic approach to **evaluate and measure CE** with key partners.
- **Seek out strategic partnerships** to engage across the university.
- Orient and support **student training and engagement**.
- Continually **revisit and renew SP4CE**.





Different definitions of community engagement. We observed tension related to how people envision community engagement. Some people shared views about who and where the university should engage or what counts as ‘community engagement’. Others considered CE as a broader umbrella that includes a variety of different sectors and activities. Still others expressed uncertainty around what this means and how they see themselves in it.

Small but striking things people mentioned

Measurement and evaluation to assess our engagement. We were surprised people didn’t talk a lot about measuring or evaluating our relationships with community members. We know groups across campus are very active in measuring community-based work, but it didn’t surface in these discussions. We currently don’t have a systematic, university-wide process in place for measurement or evaluation. So, it will be important to develop a plan that can build on the expertise and experience across the university to develop systematic measures.



Ideas

- Develop **guides, processes and tools to collect feedback** from the community.
- See feedback and input as an **opportunity to keep things relevant and fresh.**
- Emphasize more applied work with more **practical and tangible outcomes.**



Innovative and creative community engagement. This last theme wasn’t talked about a great deal but is particularly exciting: how community engagement at Carleton results in innovation, and how we are creative in doing this work. Although not frequently discussed, this theme speaks mountains to a major thread we see in the Strategic Integrated Plan. It discusses fostering excellence and innovation in “*knowledge sharing, benchmarking, trends and best practices*” and also points to the value of an “*entrepreneurial*” mindset. Social entrepreneurship is firmly seated in principles of good community engagement to achieve desired social change. So, hearing this from our colleagues shows promise for developing this theme further to advance our current practice. But at a larger level, it may help us challenge paradigms or structures that may be undermining transformative movement needed for social change.



Ideas

- Support community projects that focus on **leading areas of innovation, social innovation.**
- Build our approach and commitment to **innovation in CE teaching and learning.**
- Develop creative strategies for **transferring, mobilizing knowledge.**
- Explore **alternative accessible mediums** to share (e.g., multi-media, social media, multi-sensory).
- Open our **doors with a creative mindset** to the community.



Where do we go from here?

Our next steps involve consultations with external community members. We will share what we've learned so far about our own house with the larger community. We want to hear the perspectives of our external community members on their experiences of working with Carleton and their aspirations and needs to support them and their work.

We'll put this bigger picture of perspectives together from Carleton and the community for review and feedback. This work has been, and continues to be, critical in developing and implementing the Strategic Plan for Community Engagement (**SP4CE**), which will be published in the Fall of 2022.

If you have any further thoughts...

Get in touch.

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Appendix

Groups that participated in community consultations across Carleton

- Open Consultations (open to campus-wide participants)
- Students
- Board of Governors: Advancement and University Relations Committee
- Office of the Provost and Vice-President (Academic)
- Office of the Vice-President (Finance and Administration)
- Office of the Vice President (Research and International)
- Office of the Vice-President (Students and Enrollment)
- Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
- Faculty of Engineering and Design
- Faculty of Public Affairs
- Faculty of Science
- Sprott School of Business
- Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs
- MacOdrum Library
- Department of University Advancement
- Department of University Communications
- Community Engagement Steering Committee
- Committee for Community Engaged Pedagogy

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