

#AllIn2019

Community Foundations of Canada conference

- Views from four European participants -

The theme of the 2019 Community Foundations of Canada conference was 'All In' with a focus on a future where everyone belongs. Featuring provocative, powerful and moving presentations where real challenges were aired, and the space created to explore solutions. Key topics addressed included belonging and engagement, community data, the future of philanthropy, and SDGs.

The conference attracted over 700 delegates from the 191 community foundations in Canada, along with a significant number of international participants, including 9 from Europe.

Lessons learned through broadening perspectives in relation to issues of leadership, power and engagement are described in reflections on #AllIn2019 ((June 6-8, 2019) from four European participants. They also highlight the ideas, contacts and inspirations they took away - not least a sense of belonging to a vibrant community of practice.

Rebekah Goddard - Head of Learning, UK Community Foundations



Almost as soon as I joined UK Community Foundations last year I was asked to consider representing our network at the Community Foundations of Canada's #AllIn conference in June 2019. It was described to me as one of the best global gatherings to connect with others in the world of Community Foundations and philanthropy, and I have to say it lived up to the hype! Excellent plenary speakers and a varied workshop programme made this event incredibly well-attended, with great interactive elements and opportunities to network and learn.

As delegates we were called to bring our whole selves to the event, starting with introductions that focused as much on who we are outside our work as within it, and being open to powerful and moving presentations woven into the programme with the main aim of provoking us out of our comfort zones. It's hard to be complacent when faced with the reality of how asylum seekers feel when being questioned about their reasons for leaving home, or the anger of young leaders of local indigenous communities who feel ignored by those who mean to help them. The conference was designed to air those challenges, and to create the space to explore solutions.

Most useful for bringing back to my own work were the conversations about leadership and power. There were opportunities to discuss and to observe great leadership, as

prominent speakers showed authenticity, vulnerability and a real desire to learn and change. One of the greatest changes demanded is to shift the power, to create spaces for others to do their best work, and to walk the talk of collaboration and community empowerment. Throughout the event we were asked to consider power: what is it, who has it, what do they do with it, and how do we shift it to those who know their communities best and can achieve the most with it? This gave me lots of food for thought for the [UKCF Conference 2019](#) where we'll be exploring the theme 'Empowering Communities Together'.

I came away with more questions than answers, but also many more perspectives and contacts to help me answer them. It is so important to stay connected to the global Community Foundation movement, to learn from our colleagues around the world, and the CFC conference is a fantastic place to do that. I'll be keeping an eye on the #RoadtoToronto2021, and I hope to see you there!

Sasha Lysa - Program Manager, Community Foundation Podilska Hromada, Ukraine



Belonging, community data, the future of philanthropy, SDGs, these are all topics that have been linked across in a perfectly designed programme of the conference. The speakers managed to plant it in my head and even a few weeks after being back at home I am still thinking about all of this.

I was inspired the most by the plenary session with young people; it was very impressive and powerful. The session was on the first day of the conference and it felt like during the rest of the days everyone was still discussing what those young people said. For example: "Young people will not come to the organisations that do not serve them" was the most memorable phrase for me. Very simple, but so true: if we want to engage young people, we need to find the right approach.

The most useful for me were sessions connected to the Vital Signs programme. We don't have standard methods of effective community needs assessments in Ukraine and right now we are working on getting Vital Signs membership to start doing it here. So it was great to see Vital Signs reports of different Canadian Community Foundations, to hear from people who are doing it for years already how Vital Signs help them to know their communities better and how they use it in their everyday work.

The conference was a great opportunity to meet and learn from much more experienced community foundations, to see how much Ukrainian community foundations could grow in the future if we will continue to work towards philanthropy development.

Ciprian-Mihai Păiuș - Executive Director of Iași Community Foundation and President of the Romanian Federation of Community Foundations



My first contact with Community Foundations of Canada (CFC) was at the Community Foundations Centennial in Cleveland, USA. I remember the attending representatives from CFC and community foundation members from Canada, being a forward-thinking group and ever since, I wanted to meet them again and get to learn more from them.

I was pleased to find out that CFC granted me a bursary to attend the All In 2019 conference in Victoria and although my stay was short, and my travelling was long, I came back with a lot of ideas, contacts and most of all inspiration, from the time spent in Canada.

Community foundations in Romania are now building endowment and reserve funds and it was important for me, as one of the community foundation leaders, to learn more about the approaches foundations in Canada are having towards that, as well as challenging the endowment model in today's society. I found out that although endowment is one of the most leveraging tools of a foundation, it is also one of its biggest weaknesses in terms of maximising social impact, being responsive to the fast paced developments around us or fighting organisational self-sufficiency. I have also learned that the foundations in Canada are involving youth in building endowment funds, exposing them to strategic philanthropy from an early age, helping them cultivate community related values and preparing them for being the next generations of donors.

It was also very inspiring to see how Canada owns its history and is concerned with inclusion, diversity and social justice. This opens new perspectives for us all at the Community Foundations of Romania as well as new topics to address the communities we serve. We are still a young movement and still funding and operating more education related projects.

Mihaela Giurgiu - Peer-learning expert ECFI



Ever since I started working in the community foundations field, the Canadian movement and their gatherings sounded legendary. Needless to say I was very excited to be a delegate this year at their biennial conference. The event was hosted by the Victoria Foundation and attended by over 700 people the majority from Canada, but also having a strong global presence with delegates from Mexico, Burkina Faso, Australia, Kenya, New Zealand, USA, Belgium, Nepal, India, United Kingdom, Ukraine and Romania.

“Are we fitting in or belonging?” asks Andrew Chunilall, CEO of CFC in the opening plenary, which you can watch [here](#), fast forward to minute 25:12 for his remarks.

This may have hit a personal chord for me as I question what belonging means in a country I recently moved, but it also made me think of how we create inclusive communities for all citizens. And that it’s not just for newcomers, but also perhaps people who because of their social status, religious beliefs or sexual orientation don’t belong and struggle to fit in. How do we as individuals, as citizens, as funders, as supporters create not a sense, but a reality of belonging in our communities (whether of place or interest) instead of perpetuating practices and narratives where certain groups dominate and others have to fit in? I think belonging gives you power, while fitting in makes you powerless.

While it seems that there are more questions than answers, I found it inspiring and refreshing that the organisers brought out real people to talk about the issues that matter to them, whether youth, refugees, indigenous people, women, and not just advocates of those people. They gave them a centre stage so that they could present their views and talk about how they actively work to shift the power.

Because of the nature of my current and previous work I also gained practical insights from the conference and I was pleasantly surprised by the solutions marketplace at the conference, a lot of private providers who were genuinely interested in understanding the work community foundations do and what are their challenges so they can better support them with tailored products (for example Grantbook.org). While this might sound trivial, for those working in the non-profit sector and even more specific for a community foundation we know a lot of the technology and solutions mostly cater to for-profit entities (especially in emerging contexts) and to have a variety of optimised solutions saves time and energy that can go into the actual work with the community.

Site visits are a wonderful opportunity to learn about a program on the ground from the people who are running it or benefit from it and I was very pleased with my choice of the Thriving Non-profits cohort program that the Victoria Foundation is doing with Scale Collaborative. The programme’s purpose is to build the capacity of the local non-profit sector by supporting organisations to diversify their sources of revenue through strategies such as social enterprise, fee-for-service and win-win partnerships. In my view a community foundation should support, enable and cultivate local leadership and initiatives and I can’t help but think of Bucharest Community Foundation’s own programme entitled Bucharest Powered by People, a sort of community leadership incubator also designed to support, develop and grow local initiatives. If you are a community foundation and you are thinking of ways to support the local non-profit ecosystem and want to know more about these two programmes, please reach out so we can exchange more practical information.

After four days of excellent plenary speakers, engaging parallel sessions, informative site visits, a useful pre-conference master class on Vital Signs and SDGs, informal and formal networking opportunities, reconnecting with friends and making new ones I felt a strong sense of belonging to this community of practice. Thanks to CFC for the opportunity to participate and I hope we can support other people to participate in two years for the #RoadtoToronto2021.