

CITY OF
BRANTFORD



UNESCO Coalition of Inclusive Communities

In June 2022 Brantford joined the UNESCO Coalition of Inclusive Municipalities, making a commitment to work with local experts and organizations to create a community where everyone can fully participate in economic, political, social, cultural and recreational opportunities.



Inclusive Community Plan 2023-2026

To support this goal, the City worked with a range of organizations to develop the Inclusive Community Plan 2023-2026.

The plan was developed in partnership with the Wilfrid Laurier University School of Social Work. The consultation process included a breadth of research and community engagement activities, including literature reviews, environmental scans, focus groups, workshops, surveys and key informant interviews, and was co-endorsed by 30 community organizations.

Our Guiding Principles

The concept of 'Inclusion' is broad, and applies to a wide variety of personal, social and cultural experiences. The Inclusive Community Plan 2023-2026 is part of an ongoing process of listening, learning, and celebrating, while acknowledging that acts of hate, discrimination, and inequity are harmful to both individuals and communities.

The Inclusive Community Plan is based on three Guiding Principles:



Learn from Each Other



Stand Up for Each Other



Celebrate Each Other

Community Engagement and Recognition

The Inclusive Community Plan 2023-2026 has been a catalyst for community action and collaboration. In the first year of implementation, over 35 partners have been engaged in the development of 20 projects and events, reaching over 1400 residents.

Several of these projects have been recognized by the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association, Laurier Summit for Creative Solutions, and the 2024 Accessibility Expo.





UNESCO Days of Recognition

International Mother Language Day (February 21)

International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (March 21)

Build Belonging

The Build Belonging project was developed to increase EarlyON attendance from diverse families, in alignment the Building Our Community from the Kids Up plan. The project is a collaboration between the Brantford Immigration Partnership, EarlyON providers (Community Living Brant, Child and Family Services of Grand Erie), the YMCA Settlement Services, and the Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School Board. These partners designed and delivered culturally informed programming, holidays and events, including diverse food, art, books, and toys.



As a result of these efforts, EarlyON partners have identified that attendance at these EarlyON sites increased by nearly 40%, with a high proportion of 'new' visitors representing a variety of cultural backgrounds. In April 2024, the program was recognized by the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association with a Local Champion Award. In addition, the Build Belonging project is being used as a case study within other communities as they seek to develop inclusive EarlyON programming.

Healthy Kids, All Kids

Over the next five years, the City's Healthy Kids program will focus on accessibility to local children's programs by providing training and tools for local sports, art, culture and recreation organizations to be more inclusive of children from a range of backgrounds and experience.



Children's Services: Access and Inclusion Pathway

In support of the Ministry of Education's Access and Inclusion Framework, the City developed a local Inclusion and Access Pathway for Early Learning and Child Care to support the inclusion of all kids in municipally-led children's programming.



Key strategies of this plan include strengthening community partnerships, enhanced language support and multilingualism, supporting special needs and mental health services, and the development of a self-assessment tool for child care operators to evaluate their current diversity and inclusion practices.



Bad at Sports!

Designed in collaboration with Brantford Youth Council, this pilot project engages with functional exclusion in sports spaces for newcomer, 2SLGBTQIA+, racialized youth, and girls.

The first event “Bad at Skate!” was hosted in March 2024 with partners Cro’s Ice Nest, and Brantford Sports Council.

Additional Bad at Sports! events will be hosted by Brantford Youth Council throughout summer and fall 2024.



Express Yourself

2SLGBTQIA+ youth art pilot hosted at the Brantford Public Library through three drop-in sessions in July 2023. Partners on the pilot included Wilfrid Laurier University, Brantford Pride, and The Bridge Brant.

Youth Peer-to-Peer Conversation Video Series

In partnership with the Brant Youth Council, the video series features youth voices around themes of belonging and inclusion, healthy relationships, and mental health.

These videos will be released on the City’s social media platforms in summer 2024.



Ask Laurier Experts Series: Youth Inclusion

In partnership with the Laurier Hub for Community Solutions, this Ask Laurier Experts Series brought together academics and community experts to discuss the challenges and opportunities of youth engagement in Brantford.



February 2024: Youth with Refugee Backgrounds: Dr. Stacey Wilson-Forsberg presented: “Pathways to Postsecondary Education for African Youth with Refugee Backgrounds in Canada: Early Findings from Ontario”.

March 2024: Understanding Cyberbullying: Dr. Danielle Law presented: “Staying Connected: Understanding (Cyber)Bullying in a Wireless World” with community discussants from Wesley’s Provincial Youth Outreach Worker program, and Why Not City Mission.



Community Changemakers

The Community Changemakers was developed in partnership with WLU LaunchPad. This free six-week course teaches project management, program design and budgeting, and supports the development of grassroots projects and programs that support social development in Brantford.

Changemakers: Connection and Belonging

focused on increasing a sense of social belonging in Brantford. A total of eight projects were completed, including the establishment of a local Tamil Cultural Association, and providing culturally diverse children's books for Little Free Libraries across Brantford.

Changemakers: Youth March Break Edition provided an opportunity for youth in Grade 11 and Grade 12 to develop projects related to inclusion and safety in Brantford. All three successfully pitched projects received a certificate marking completion of the program from Wilfrid Laurier University.



International Film Series

Over 350 people attended screenings of international films accompanied by discussions with professors and student groups representing voices from the communities featured in the films.

- Eat Drink Man Woman (Taiwan)
- The Lunchbox (India)
- Taafe Fanga (Mali)
- Banshees of Inisherin (Ireland)
- The Diving Bell and Butterfly (France)



Pieces for Peace Series

The Pieces for Peace series, was developed in partnership with Imam Abu Noman Tarek, and Laurier Hub for Community Solutions. This unique cultural knowledge-exchange provides an opportunity to share lived experience and insight into misunderstood elements of cultures, identities and beliefs.



November 2023: Hosted at Wilfrid Laurier University, the discussion served to highlight experiences of local newcomers who work as experts in the newcomer support sector.

February 2024: Hosted at Glenhyrst Coach House, guest speakers provided their unique perspectives as educators, artists, and activists.

May 2024: Hosted at the Glenhyrst Art Gallery of Brant, guest speakers spoke to grief, faith and community-building from a 2SLGBTQIA+ perspective.



Community Peace Mural

Inspired by the Pieces for Peace project, the City collaborated with a professional muralist and workshop facilitator to engage community members in designing a mural in the downtown. The overarching theme for the project was “community peace, finding unity by celebrating our differences”. Through public mural workshops, community members were encouraged to share ideas and imagery that illuminated their different cultural and social backgrounds.



Fusion Beats

Fusion Beats is a celebration of multi-cultural music and dance, developed in partnership between the Laurier Hub for Community Solutions and the Sanderson Centre for Performing Arts in Brantford, featuring the following performers in September 2024:

- R.P.M., University of Toronto K-Pop dance crew
- Makeda Kafele-Green, Laurier Health Studies student, singer
- Harman Singh Sandhu, Conestoga College student, acoustic singer
- Conestoga College Bhangra Team, bhangra dance crew
- Chandler Berardi, Laurier alumni, singer
- Gaurav Kishor Isai, Conestoga College, break dancer
- Onyedikachi Emmanuel-Kalu, Laurier alumni, DJ

Additional Fusion Beats performances are being planned for 2024.



Black History Month Initiatives 2024

Love Letters to Black History Month: Resource sharing space hosted by the City of Brantford, Brantford Youth Council, Laurier’s Black Student Collective, and the Laurier Hub for Community Solutions.

Black Queer History Film Screening: In collaboration with Brantford Pride, QueerSphere (Laurier Brantford), Queer Joy Brantford, and the Laurier Hub for Community Solutions.





Inclusive Communities Celebration

In March 2024, the City hosted the first inaugural Inclusive Community Celebration to highlight the pillars of the Inclusive Community Plan: Listen to Each Other, Stand Up for Each Other, Celebrate Each Other.



Listen: Dr. Amilah Baksh (WLU) facilitated a discussion about inclusion engaging participants in small group discussions about youth inclusion using questions created by the Brantford Youth Council.



Stand-Up: Keynote, Kahsenniyo Kick, showcased poetic first hand narratives about inclusion and community-building drawing on her personal experiences of teenage motherhood, intergenerational trauma and Indigeneity.



Celebrate: Performers included: Trash Panda Brass (a queer youth brass band), Sumedha Mongia (classical Indian dancer), David Delisca (spoken word artist who discusses immigrant and diasporic experiences), and Mabe Kyle (a local youth multidisciplinary artist).



2024 Accessibility Expo

On June 1, 2024, the City of Brantford hosted an Accessibility Expo at the Wayne Gretzky Sports Centre in support of National AccessAbility Week. The event premiered The City of Brantford 2024 “Day in the Life” Accessibility Awareness video, as well as a presentation to the awardees of 2024 City of Brantford Accessibility Awards program.



Brantford Immigration Partnership

The Brantford Immigration Partnership (BIP) launched in Spring 2020, and represents a network of stakeholders working together to create a welcoming community for New Canadians. Over the past year, the BIP developed a number of events and programs to support culturally inclusivity.



Newcomer Welcome Day 2023: Approximately 250 individuals attended an event hosted by over 35 service providers/community organizations. Newcomers made connections to local resources and programs, while enjoying a variety of activities.

Let's Cook Together: The BIP, in collaboration with the Grand River Community Health Centre (GRCHC), offered free cooking classes for newcomers and community residents. Participants shared recipes and stories from their culture, while establishing new community connections and friendships.



Brantford Immigration Partnership (continued)

Ukrainian Relief Working Group: Beginning in March 2022, the Ukrainian Relief Working Group (URWG) was developed to support Ukrainian nationals with challenges related to housing, employment, integration and settlement. To date, approximately 500 Ukrainian nationals have arrived and settled in Brantford.

Voices of New Canadians: The video series “New Canadians in Brantford” shares the stories and journeys of New Canadians arriving and settling in Brantford. These videos are available on [Brantford.ca/NewcomerStories](https://brantford.ca/NewcomerStories).

Women in Governance: A Candid Conversation

The event provided an engaging and insightful discussion, exploring the challenges that women face in the political arena and the inspiring stories of overcoming these obstacles. Brantford City Councillors Rose Sicoli, Linda Hunt and Mandy Samwell will be joined by other panelists including:

- Diana Huson, Regional Councillor, Town of Pelham, Niagara Region
- Emily McIntosh, Executive Director of CONTACT Community Services and initiator of The Women of Ontario Say No
- Erin O’Hoski, Deputy CAO of the City of St. Catharines
- Natasha Salonen, Mayor of Wilmot
- Tracey Vaughan, CAO of The Town of Cobourg



Fireworks By-law

In January 2024, Council approved the inclusion of Lunar New Year and Diwali in the City’s permissible dates for consumer fireworks.

This update reflects the City’s commitment to inclusivity and recognition of the changing demographics in our community.

The decision to include Lunar New Year and Diwali in the permissible dates for consumer fireworks aligns with the City’s commitment to accommodating cultural and religious celebrations, and is meant to strike an appropriate balance between allowing limited use of fireworks for those who enjoy them and addressing the concerns of those who find them disruptive.





Support for Community Initiatives and Events

In addition to co-designing activities and events with partners, the City is an active participant in a number of community-led initiatives

- **2023 Day of Truth and Reconciliation Event**
- **Laurier Brantford Black Student Collective:** Black Excellence Gala event
- **Unite Against Hate!:** Resources shared through City of Brantford social media accounts for Black History Month
- **Youth Building Connections Collective:** Launch of a peer support space for older youth interested in engaging in municipal issues related to diversity, equity, and inclusion. In collaboration with Belonging Brant, and Laurier Student Public Interest Research Group.

Flag-Raising (2024-2025)

Flag-raising has important cultural and historical significance, providing the opportunity for municipal government to show support for organizations and issues, and days, etc.

- Aphasia Awareness - June 16
- World Autism Awareness Day - April 3
- Bell Let's Talk Day - Jan 25
- Black History Month - Feb 7
- Hindu Heritage Month - Nov 10
- FASD Awareness Day - Sept 8
- Huntington Disease Awareness Month - May 1
- International Women's Day - March 8
- National Senior's Day - Sept 29
- Pride Month - June 1
- PROBUS Month - Oct 11
- National PTSD Awareness Day - June 27
- Public Works Week - May 23
- Random Act of Kindness Day - Feb 9
- Senior's Month - June 5
- Sikh Heritage Month - April 14
- Suicide Prevention Day - Sept 7
- Transgender Day of Visibility - March 31
- National Volunteer Week - April 17
- Youth Sports Week Celebration - March 11
- ALS Awareness Month - June 21
- Youth Week - May 1
- International Villages Festival - June 28
- Mental Health Week - May 6
- National Day for Truth and Reconciliation - Sept 23