



Neutral Hills Community
Adult Learning Society



THE NEUTRAL HILLS LEARNING &
COMMUNITY CONNECTION CENTRE

Providing lifelong learning opportunities



2022

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT REPORT



Community
Learning
Network



Government



COMMUNITY ADULT
LEARNING PROGRAM

Thank you

We would like to thank all of the community members who took time out of their evening to join us for this community engagement. It was great to see such a cross-section of individuals engage in conversations about adult learning, social services and employment support and training. The insights gleaned from this discussion will play an integral part in our future program planning.

Introduction

The Neutral Hills Learning & Community Connection Centre is made up of the Neutral Hills Community Adult Learning Society and Consort & District FCSS. The Centre services the greater Neutral Hills area including Veteran, Consort, Altario and Special Areas #4. We provide literacy and foundational learning opportunities, community capacity building programs and events for individuals, families and the greater community, online course options, Food Bank intake and delivery, support and referral services, form filling services, and general interest programming.

The focus for the Learning Centre for 2022 and beyond is to:

- Increase community awareness of programs and services
- Increase program delivery
- Increase clientele
- Build community partnerships
- Create a welcoming environment at the Learning Centre



The Event

We held a Community Engagement event titled "Creating a Vibrant Learning Community" on June 15, 2022 at the GEM Centre in Consort, AB. The intent of the event was to gain insight into what is needed for our community in relation to adult foundational learning, social services and employment support and training. A variety of community members were in attendance including adult learning, schools, health, business, RCMP, Seniors Lodge, daycare, community organizations and local residents.

Participants were separated into four groups with a cross-section of sectors represented at each table. Table groups selected a scribe and a presenter for each topic of discussion. The discussions were based on an abbreviated version of a SWOT Analysis, where we focused on the S (Strengths), W (Weaknesses) and O (Opportunities). We chose to leave out the T (Threats) so as not to get hung up on what would keep us from moving forward.

The discussion was guided by the following questions:

1. What strengths does our region (Consort, Veteran, Altario, Kirriemuir) have related to adult learning, social services and employment support and training?
2. What weaknesses does our region have related to adult learning, social services and employment support and training?
3. Based on the identified strengths and weaknesses, what opportunities does our region have to create a more vibrant learning community over the next 3-5 years?

Groups were provided 15-20 minutes to discuss each question, then were asked to present an overview of their discussion to the group. Once the discussions were completed, the group engaged in a Dotmocracy, where they were each given five stickers to place beside the five opportunities from the group they felt were most important for the Neutral Hills Learning Centre to focus on over the next 3-5 years.



Strengths

Participants all agreed that our region has a strong sense of community and that there is strength in being rural. They also felt that leadership in the community opens new opportunities. Participants identified organizations, clubs, programs, schools, churches, facilities, services, family and community, employment and business and culture and information as strengths in this region. Specifically, they felt that there are strong service organizations and sports clubs, innovative schools, many facilities where community members could connect, lots of community involvement, strong job market with lots of opportunities, and a well connected community.



Weaknesses

Although our community has many strengths, the consensus was that sometimes services and supports can be limited in a small town. Identified weaknesses included societal pressures, lack of buildings and infrastructure, such as government service buildings and low-income housing, the cost of everyday living, lack of programming for youth, limited access to health and wellness services, increased crime, difficulty hiring skilled workers and workplaces not adapting to work culture changes, and a lack of technology and connectivity. Other challenges noted by participants were the increase in low-income community members and the language barrier with newcomers.



Opportunities

From the Dotmocracy several opportunities emerged as priorities for the group. The priority opportunities include:

- Mental Health promotion, prevention, education and programming
- Community kitchen and skill share workshops
- Volunteer database
- Youth Centre and attracting youth back to the community by encouraging their ideas and activities
- Work experience programs for individuals not in school
- Welcome to the community BBQ events once or twice a year
- Come for lunch, stay for the conversation events at the Learning Centre

Next Steps

Based on the information gathered from the Community Engagement, the Learning Centre will move forward with the following initiatives:

- **Mental Health:** We will be holding a Community Engagement similar to this one on September 12th focused on mental health.
- **Skill Share Workshops:** We will explore options for skill share workshops that would be relevant to adult learners.
- **Volunteer Database:** We will research best practices for completing a volunteer database to ensure the format used can be updated regularly with ease and continue to be relevant to the community.
- **Youth Centre:** We will talk with youth in the area about the type of space and activities they would like to see in a Youth Centre to better understand the need, space, and programs necessary to operate an effective Youth Centre.
- **Work Experience:** We will have discussions with local business owners to see if they would be open to work experience opportunities for individuals who are not in school.
- **Community BBQ:** We will host a Community BBQ for our 25th Anniversary in August of 2022 and will plan subsequent events for each year.
- **Lunch Events:** We will look for partners to work with us to offer Lunch n' Learn sessions at the Learning Centre.

If you are interested in working with us on any of these initiatives please contact the Learning Centre at neutralhillslearning@gmail.com or 403-577-3011.