



Acknowledgments

Land

Definity Foundation acknowledges the traditional territories of many nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnaabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee, and the Wendat peoples. Toronto is covered by Treaty 13 with the Mississaugas of the Credit and has a long history of being a meeting place and centre of trade. Today, Toronto is home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. We are grateful to have the opportunity to work in this territory and commit ourselves to learning the truth of our shared history and to engage in the process of reconciliation.

African Ancestry

Definity Foundation acknowledges all Treaty peoples - including those who came here as settlers - as migrants, either in this generation or in generations past. The Foundation acknowledges those of us who came here involuntarily as a result of slavery and the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade and pays tribute to those ancestors of African origin and descent.

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Our Mission

To advance community-led solutions that further climate, health, and socioeconomic justice.

Our Vision

A just and equitable society.

Our Values

Community at the Core

We ground our work in deep listening that informs our actions, a belief in self-determination as the path to better solutions, and a commitment to collective and cooperative action as the driver of meaningful, lasting change.

Driven by Justice

We are committed to addressing both historic and ongoing inequities, including the imbalance of power and privilege, by working alongside others to create conditions of access, well-being, inclusion, and equity, while continually confronting uncomfortable truths and acting with courage.

Integrity through Action

We take action and make decisions rooted in our mission, vision, and values, acting with respect, openness, and honesty, while holding ourselves accountable for the impact of our actions.



The following conversation between Justin Wiebe (Board Chair) and Arti Freeman (President & CEO) highlights how one message can hold learning, stories, impact and more, revealing honest reflections of philanthropy, partnership and how the Definity Foundation lives the values of community, justice and integrity through their work.



What events, commitments and beliefs sparked the beginning of the Foundation's work?

Arti Freeman, President & CEO: Definity Foundation started operating in early 2022 in the midst of a global pandemic, a huge economic crisis, and among anti-Black racism cry outs. We had to carefully consider how to build processes and systems that were responsive and relevant to the people we serve - because how we show up matters as much as what we fund. We were deliberate in defining our core beliefs, which would drive everything we do.

Justin Wiebe, Board Chair: The core beliefs have deeply shaped our work. Committing all our capital in alignment with our strategy, being flexible and responsive to the needs of our partners and building trust with partners so that they know we are here to support, learn and enable their important work.

Arti: Some of those other core beliefs include maximizing resources; prioritizing Black, Indigenous, and racialized communities; and addressing the root causes of inequality — otherwise, we're just tinkering at the edges.

Justin: It is about systems change. It's about transformation. And it's about committing, for the long term, to building a society that works for everyone.

What are the most pressing challenges that the philanthropic sector needs to address?

Justin: There's a lot of challenges facing philanthropy and our society right now. Things like rising inequality and financial insecurity. People are struggling to keep their homes. They're struggling to feed themselves, and I think philanthropy has a really important role in addressing these challenges.

Arti: It's been years since the [Unfunded: Black Communities Overlooked by Canadian Philanthropy report](#) was released. It brought to light the issue of lack of funding for Black communities. We haven't closed that gap. Black people, Indigenous communities, racialized people, people in the North, lack access to capital and financial services. Those that are furthest behind still struggle to access the resources needed to make a life and thrive in our society.

How does the Foundation go beyond just grantmaking?

Justin: One of the most exciting parts of how the Foundation's evolved is a real recognition that we can do more when we leverage all our assets. So yes, we're making impactful grants, we're diving into impact investing, we're supporting partners and convening. There's so much that we can do when we bring all of that together, aligned to our mission and values.



What does it mean to be a justice-driven organization and doing philanthropy differently?

Arti: We remain committed to advancing equity and justice no matter what's going on around us. Taking a holistic approach to philanthropy, means using all our assets.

Justin: For the board, we're not limited in thinking about the disbursement quota. We do need to meet that as a minimum, it's not what constrains our thinking. We embrace the idea of big bets.

We are a Foundation that's not afraid to speak out about the things we're committed to. That's important, and it can help bring others along. In a time where people are pulling back, now is the most important time for us to step up and to take risks. We have to act with courage.

Where is the Definity Foundation heading?

Arti: We've been at this for three years now. When we first started we said, we're going broad and then narrowing down because we wanted to learn by doing. We knew we wanted to advance equity and justice, in health, climate, and socioeconomic opportunity. We decided on five outcomes and 13 solutions we wanted to drive towards.

Then we said, let's learn. Where's there momentum? Where's traction? What is relevant to all the populations that we want to serve? Now we are at this cusp of where we're seeing themes emerge. Over the course of next year, we're going to start narrowing down key areas that we will then put everything behind them 100% to go deep into the issues and make a dent to create the change we want to see.

Justin: It's allowed us to really refine, build and deepen our commitment to certain places and communities, where others are not necessarily showing up or where we can really have a long term impact. We're always thinking about the role that the Foundation plays and why it exists.

Those are ongoing conversations that we don't shy away from. The role of the Foundation is not to exist forever, for forever's sake, and we embrace big new ideas, that may change and shift the direction of the Foundation.

[Listen to the full recording of In Conversation with Justin & Arti](#)



Community Investments: Grantmaking

Healthy People

**Increasing the health
and well-being of
equity-deserving and
Indigenous peoples
and their communities.**

East Scarborough Storefront

(Project of MakeWay)

\$ 223,514 | 2024-2026

To design a sustainable community-based response that addresses systemic barriers to food security for Black, Indigenous and racialized people in Kingston-Galloway-Orton Park (KGO) in Toronto.

Food First NL

\$ 450,000 | 2024-2028

To support efforts to reduce food insecurity in Newfoundland and Labrador by coordinating action on income security and transportation system resilience that will support better access to healthy affordable food.

The Depot Community Food Centre

\$ 40,000 | 2024-2025

To expand The Depot's work on building an integrated advocacy agenda, fostering a Quebec-wide coalition to dismantle systematic barriers to food access and build a more just and equitable food system.

Yellowhead Institute

\$ 1,334,090 | 2024-2029

To support research infrastructure that drive movements towards the restoration of Indigenous sovereignty, allowing Indigenous control and influence over the factors that impact their health and wellbeing across Canada.



Liveable Planet

Building community resilience to the negative impacts of climate change.

EcoTrust Canada

\$ 450,000 | 2024-2028

To support partnership between Metlakatla First Nation and EcoTrust Canada to create a Regenerative Ocean Farming (ROF) hub in the waters of Northern BC to revitalize maritime and seafood traditions and culture, increase local employment, and improve food access and safety.

Small Change Fund

\$ 450,000 | 2024-2027

To enable Environmental Justice Research Alliance (EJRA) to address Indigenous research needs through pro bono research support, to advance Indigenous-led research, and to train academics across Canada in decolonial research practices.

Environment Funders Canada

\$ 550,000 | 2024-2025

To establish a pooled fund focused on national infrastructure for movement organizing and enhancing the voices of underrepresented/underserved to support power-building strategies that drive systemic climate and nature solutions.

Urban Climate Leadership

(Project of MakeWay)

\$ 450,000 | 2024-2026

To support the Urban Climate Leadership project to scale up cross-sector collaboration to accelerate equitable climate action by local governments through select systems-changing initiatives.

Indigenous Climate Action

\$ 450,000 | 2024-2027

To support Indigenous-led climate action across Canada and internationally by addressing gaps and building Indigenous leadership to ensure Indigenous people can fully participate and influence policies and strategies that address climate change.



Thriving Communities

Reducing the effects of social and economic inequality.

Catalyst: Community Finance Initiative**\$ 150,000 | 2024-2026**

To strengthen existing and develop new rural and northern social finance intermediaries and funds by addressing capital access issues for geographically isolated or equity-deserving communities.

EntrepreNorth

(Project of MakeWay)

\$ 2,094,540 | 2024-2029

To support early-stage Indigenous entrepreneurs with business education and financial practices, and increase access to capital, using Indigenous knowledge systems, to build sustainable businesses and livelihoods in the Yukon, the Northwest Territories, and Nunavut.

Jumpstart Refugee Talent**\$ 100,000 | 2024-2026**

To support the capacity of Jumpstart Refugee Talent to launch a first-of-its-kind Refugee Impact Fund that addresses barriers to accessing capital for Refugee entrepreneurs, thereby increasing economic participation and sustainable employment for Refugees.



Thriving Communities (continued from previous page)**Relèven****\$ 500,000 | 2024-2027**

To support the development of a \$30 million Transition loan fund that will enable not-for-profits to acquire and repurpose faith properties across Canada, ensuring key infrastructure continues to be owned and operated as community spaces or affordable housing.

Scale Institute Society**\$ 25,000 | 2024-2025**

To create online content comprising capacity-building and investment readiness learning tools for nonprofit leaders and boards to enable the adoption of enterprising approaches that strengthen communities and the social economy.

SEED Winnipeg**\$ 312,000 | 2024-2026**

To lead the Manitoba Financial Empowerment Network to design a 3-Year Financial Empowerment Policy and Institutional Change Strategy to improve the financial well-being of Indigenous, Black and racialized people living on low levels of income.

Social Innovation Canada**\$ 15,000 | 2024-2025**

To support a convening of Indigenous leaders from across Canada to explore the possibility of Indigenous-led leadership for Wasan Island.



Sector Strengthening

Creating the conditions needed for a vibrant and resilient nonprofit sector.

Canadian Centre for Nonprofit Digital Resilience (Imagine Canada)

\$ 425,000 | 2024-2025

To build a digitally-enabled nonprofit sector, where Canada's diverse nonprofits use data and technology to advance their mission and multiply their impact.

Foundation for Black Communities (Calgary Foundation)

\$ 3,500,000 | 2024-2029

To contribute to the Foundation for Black Communities Fund, which addresses inequities in capital flow by supporting Black-led and Black-serving organizations across Canada.

Ontario Nonprofit Network

\$ 200,000 | 2024-2026

To support the capacity and sustainability of Ontario's nonprofit sector by developing resources, tools, training and research that will catalyze solutions and strengthen the leadership, capacity and sustainability of organizations.

Board directed grants

Adsum for Women and Children

\$ 12,500 | 2024-2025

Alberta Council of Women's Shelters

\$ 25,000 | 2024-2025

Elizabeth Fry Society of Mainland Nova Scotia

\$ 12,500 | 2024-2025

Society of Saint Vincent de Paul Edmonton Central Council

\$ 10,000 | 2024-2025

[List of all grants \(2022-2024\)](#)





Partner Story

Annaumakkaijiit (Annauma) Community Foundation

Annauma strengthens the nonprofit and charitable sector by supporting local community-led initiatives that improve the lives of Inuit across Nunavut. Their partnership with Definity Foundation is grounded in trust-based philanthropy that amplifies the importance of self-determination in Nunavut.



Overview

Annaumakkaijiit means “helping people stay ahead”, in Inuktitut, an Inuit language. It’s the name of the first ever community foundation and grantmaking foundation in Nunavut.

Annaumakkaijiit Community Foundation (Annauma for short) is dedicated to supporting organizations and community-led initiatives across the territory to help Inuit stay ahead. In the face of systemic barriers such as less flow of funding to Northern Canada, Annauma is harnessing the power of Inuktitut Philanthropy for the benefit of Nunavut.

“When we envision what success for us looks like, it’s that we’re reflective of our community, that our community sees themselves in us. We don’t ever want to be on a pedestal and a hard-to-access organization. We want to be open arms and very accessible,” says Danielle Gibbie, Executive Director of Annauma.

To date, there are 38 registered charities and over 200 nonprofit organizations in Nunavut that are offering community-led programs that are grounded in Inuit societal values and needs. Annauma aims to nurture the ground to grow those offerings.

Partnership

As an early supporter of Annauma, Definity Foundation aligned with their vision for sector development in Nunavut. Gibbie describes the partnership between Annauma and Definity Foundation as one with an “open-door policy”, underlined by a deep level of trust and a shared understanding of self-determination.

“Definity Foundation is really trusting in Annauma’s vision to use those funds and the resources in the most meaningful way, believing we know our communities, and Nunavut, best. That not only opens the door for what’s possible, but it also allows us to build similar trust-based relationships with the nonprofits and charities across the territory.” explains Gibbie.

Traditional Inuit knowledge informs Annauma’s approach to partnership. This knowledge teaches the importance of community responsibility for one another and collective wellbeing. These lessons exemplify how and why Annauma and organizations and charities in Nunavut do philanthropy differently.



Impact

Annauma has exceeded its own definition of success. This past year, the foundation supported 18 organizations. In January 2024, Annauma launched its consensus granting program that reflects “how Inuit have been making decisions and working together for generations,” says Gibbie. Through the program, participating organizations come together to share their work and collectively decide on how available funding should be allocated between them, putting decision-making power in the hands of local community leaders.

Feedback about the program has been overwhelmingly positive. People mention how fun and exciting it is to be a part of a reciprocal exchange, and a process where administrative work doesn’t get in the way. They also mention how grounding it is to know that Annauma believes that they are the experts on their community’s needs.

“When we’re doing our granting, the organizations... they’re the ones making all the decisions. We’re just facilitating the process,” says Gibbie.

Looking ahead

Annauma continues to model what equity, justice and community-led grantmaking means. Moving forward, Annauma will continue to build initiatives that support long-term sustainability for Inuit and the sector in Nunavut.

*“We really see [Annauma’s position] as a **bridge** between Nunavut and the rest of Canada in helping to connect Canadians with what’s happening to Nunavut and offering a way to support,” says Gibbie.*



Partner Story

EntrepreNorth

EntrepreNorth empowers Indigenous entrepreneurs to build sustainable businesses and livelihoods in the face of, among many systemic barriers, limited access to traditional funding. Their partnership with Definity Foundation is grounded in trust and support that extends beyond traditional financial assistance and helps build a culturally responsive philanthropic infrastructure that is led-by and for Northern Canada.



Overview

It's typical for the philanthropic sector to fund entrepreneurial projects that reflect a normalized Canadian worldview. But in Northern Canada such funding is infrequent and rarely reflects Indigenous worldviews and cultural practices.

This gap between business education and cultural programming sparked the idea for EntrepreNorth. Based in Yellowknife, EntrepreNorth supports Indigenous entrepreneurs in the Yukon, the Northwest Territories (NWT) and Nunavut, to build businesses and livelihoods from early-stage to sustainability.

To accomplish that, EntrepreNorth provides entrepreneurs access to culturally relevant business education that centres Indigenous knowledge, restorative business practices, storytelling and long-term funding. Their “Multi-Directional Business Compass” framework, created by Founding Director Benjamin Scott, encourages entrepreneurs to think holistically and relationally about value creation.

“From the beginning, our belief has been that Northern Indigenous entrepreneurs can be catalysts of prosperity and drivers of social change within their own communities. And the development of sustainable enterprises can help to address socioeconomic challenges in the North and strengthen Northern ways of life,” says Xina Cowan, Co-Director of EntrepreNorth.

Definity Foundation

Partnership

A shared understanding of systemic challenges facing Indigenous communities and self-determination brought Definity Foundation to support EntrepreNorth's vision. Their partnership demonstrates how funders can work at the pace of the organization and the importance of building trust.

“A lot of trust is given to EntrepreNorth for us to do our thing and reach out for support when needed...and they've been super generous with sharing some of their social capital, like bridging connections,” says Cowan.

EntrepreNorth practices trust through their Quarterly Funding Partners' Meeting, where funders, including Definity Foundation, gather together to learn about EntrepreNorth's work and impact. These meetings offer deeper insight and stories beyond quantitative data. Importantly, they lessen the administrative burden on EntrepreNorth of reporting to multiple funders separately, demonstrating the benefit of partnership rooted in trust and self-determination.



Impact

EntrepreNorth's impact is a story of stories. Their incredible reach is one story: over 275 Indigenous entrepreneurs have accessed their program. Misty Ireland, Dehcho Dene from Jean Marie River, NWT, is one of those people. Ireland was a part of the first EntrepreNorth cohort in 2018. Recently, she completed the EntrepreNorth facilitator training that now enables her to deliver the same education that helped her business.

The focus on building cultural community infrastructure is another story. 45% of EntrepreNorth participants are from Nunavut/Nunavik, 35% are from NWT and 22% are from Yukon. The potential for further expansion is underlined by the significance of strengthening existing work: "In philanthropy, in order to get funding, there's this pressure to do more and more...But at EntrepreNorth, what we need to be doing is deepening the work and what we're building," says Cowan.

The power of digital storytelling is another story. Through podcasts, social media and digital impact stories, EntrepreNorth is reaching people within and outside of Northern Canada, providing access to Indigenous stories and storytelling like never before.

Looking ahead

Cowan shares a story with many people in the North: Northern Canada is the love of her life, full of beauty and a strong sense of community. However, systemic inequities and colonization get in the way of them. But what nurtures the beauty and sense of community, in part, are the collective actions of self-determination that EntrepreNorth makes possible. Currently, the project is expanding to include financial tools such as first-loss capital and guarantees, to help entrepreneurs access repayable capital. EntrepreNorth is charting a path toward a sustainable future for (and by) Indigenous entrepreneurs in the North.

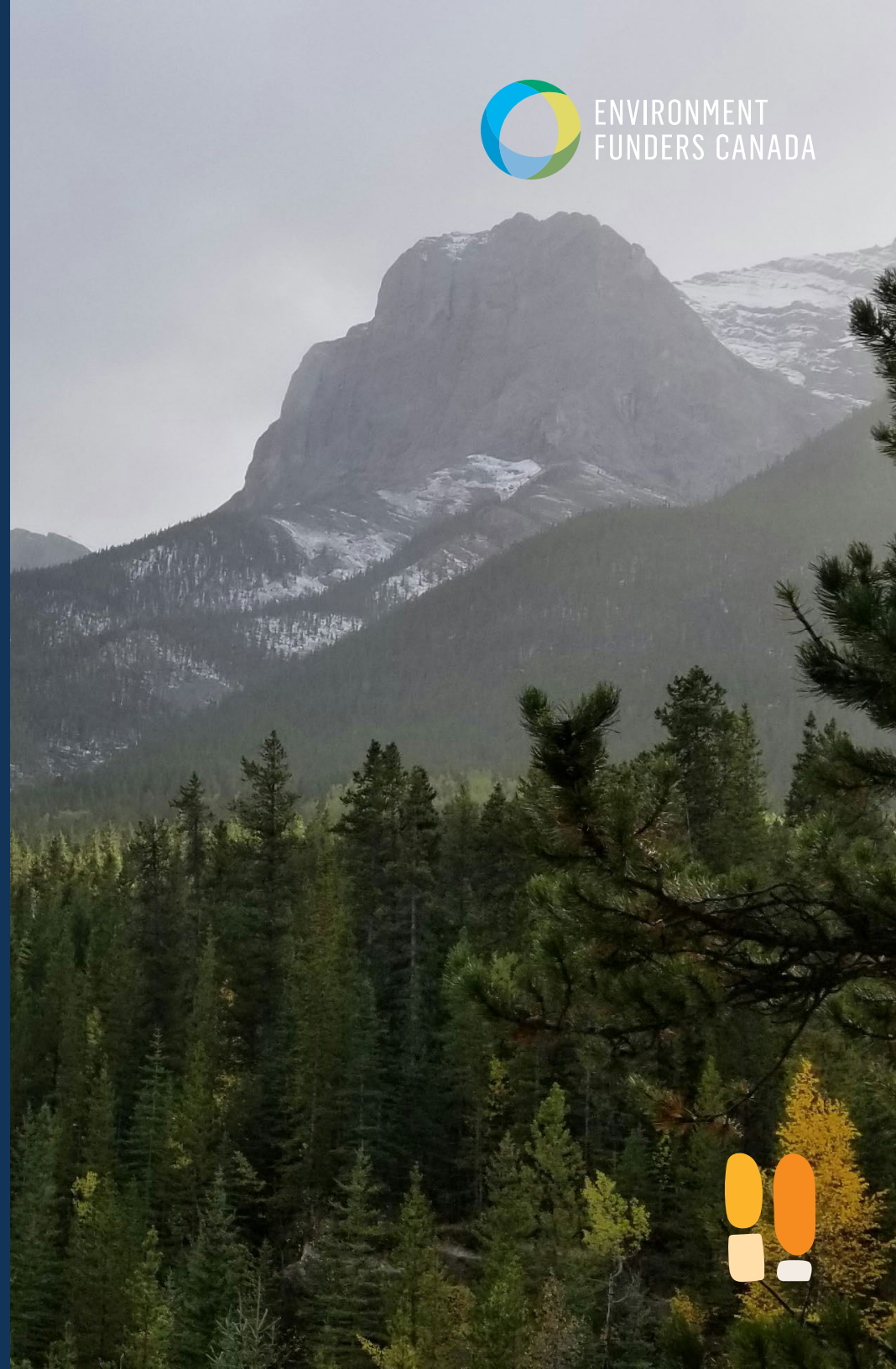
EntrepreNorth is a project on the Makeway Shared Platform.



Partner Story

Environment Funders Canada

Environment Funders Canada (EFC) is a network organization that focuses on fostering strong collaboration among environmental funders. Their Building Power for Climate and Nature Collaborative (BPCNC) pools funds to build national infrastructure for movement building that realizes the collective potential of community in addressing pressing challenges. The BPCNC is an example of how impactful collective philanthropy can be in fostering and strengthening power of the many to drive change.



Overview

How can philanthropic foundations better support communities impacted by climate change? One answer is a holistic approach to funding opportunities – joining forces with other funders to create systemic change that drives long-term climate solutions.

“EFC supports philanthropic organizations that are contributing funding to Canada’s environmental movement. We help those funders to work together and to have more impact than each of them would if they were acting on their own,” says Devika Shah, Executive Director of EFC.

In 2024, EFC launched BPCNC, an initiative aimed at increasing the impact of Canada’s environmental movement by integrating it with broader societal issues such as housing, affordability, and employment. This initiative supports funders to ‘learn by doing’ through shared grantmaking in national infrastructure for movement building. In addition, funders learn together about opportunities to advance systemic climate solutions.

For instance, approximately 50 individuals representing 30 different funders have participated in EFC’s monthly meetings over the past year and a half, working together to develop a shared model for understanding social movement ecology and have enlisted the expertise of 33 advisors to inform the focus of the pooled fund.

Partnership

As an active member and a partner, Definity Foundation has supported BPCNC from the very beginning, by providing a scoping grant that set the stage for its development. “In addition to providing financial support, Definity Foundation was one of the funders that has actively participated in the funder collaborative to advance their own learning about how power is built,” says Shah. Definity Foundation contributed its knowledge and expertise in systems thinking, long-term capacity-building and breaking down silos within the philanthropic sector.

Shah adds that Definity Foundation was helpful in identifying organizations engaged in movement building work that could be supported by the pooled fund and/or directly by EFC members.



Impact

Despite being new, BPCNC is already showing promise. The decision to focus their learning and shared grantmaking to bring together changemakers from traditionally separate sectors has been energizing for EFC staff and funders, as it helps to lay the groundwork for a more interconnected, stronger environmental movement.

“We pivoted away from a short-term focus on grants for specific campaigns or policy priorities...we realized that movement-building is much less about achieving particular outcomes that you can predict in advance, and much more about strategic capacity-building and thinking with a much longer-term view”, says Shah.

This shift has helped focus on what Shah calls “strategic capacity”, which identifies changemakers and invests in their ability to do the work, rather than in the outcomes of the work itself.

Looking ahead

To deepen their impact, EFC is aiming to make additional grants that train new leaders and encourage stronger engagement with democratic systems that push for effective environmental policies. The BPCNC is playing a key role in encouraging funders to place greater emphasis on this strategy through opportunities for continuous learning.



Partner Story

Inclusive Prosperity | Fair Finance Fund

Inclusive Prosperity aims to create an inclusive farming future for equity-deserving farmers that addresses systemic barriers racialized groups face trying to access capital and land. Their partnership with Definity Foundation has grown into one that leverages each other's strengths to increase investment opportunities in and for Black, Indigenous and racialized farmers.



Overview

Developing an agricultural practice while navigating climate change requires patience, sustainable support and key elements, such as soil health and land access. It's a long-term responsibility with a reality that is not always attractive to investors. Furthermore, those key elements are often out of reach for BIPOC farmers, even if they've personally financially invested in them already.

"For you to get really good yield out of your land, you must build your soil's health...So, it takes a good one or two years or even more, to remove chemicals. If you're going organic, it's up to three years to get that soil to organic standards. You go the route of leasing or renting but you're never quite sure that you're going to get that land again..." says Afua Asantewaa, Executive Director of Inclusive Prosperity (IP), that develops infrastructure, builds community power and offers fair financial lending practices to equity-deserving farmers.

A prime example of the systemic barriers to agricultural farming is the experience of an African Canadian farmer in Nova Scotia. He was denied a \$90,000 loan after presenting a detailed business plan for his current goat farm. Despite high demand for goat meat in the Atlantic provinces, the loan was turned down because the project apparently didn't seem viable.

Asantewaa points out, "Racialized people's applications are not often accepted because they don't take into consideration the historical injustices or the barriers that racialized people continue to face." She adds, "Fair Finance Fund (FFF) makes sure that the lens continues to be on systemic change."

Partnership

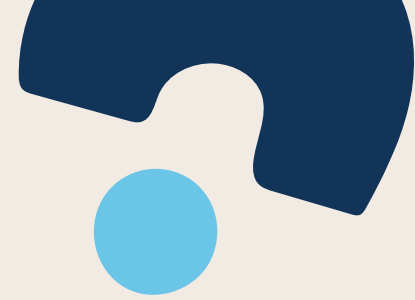
Addressing historical injustices and barriers were significant in establishing the partnership between Definity Foundation and Fair Finance Fund. In 2023, they conducted a feasibility study to examine the barriers faced by BIPOC farmers.

The study revealed two major findings:

1. There is a lending bias that perpetuates systemic barriers in accessing land and capital
2. 71% of African Canadian business owners rely on utilizing their own resources (bootstrapping) to start their businesses.

The partnership evolved to build on those findings, including working together to develop a business case that can increase investment opportunities for BIPOC farmers. Ongoing support has been key to the success of the partnership. "That guidance has been critical every step of the way...along with, at all times, Definity has been speaking to other organizations and funders about Fair Finance and this new incorporation (IP)," says Asantewaa.





Impact

IP has been “a light to the support racialized people can access,” describes Asantewaa. The work has led to the creation of the African Canadian Farmers Fund (ACFF), the first fund of its kind. It will address the systemic exclusion of African Canadian farmers by providing them with the capital needed to acquire farmland.

What’s exciting about ACFF is that it uses a rent-to-own model to build equity in the land over a ten-year period—providing farmers with a pathway to ownership, while increasing control over culturally relevant food, enabling investments in soil health and long-term community resilience.

Looking ahead

The ACFF continues to establish partnerships with organizations led by people of African descent across Canada, focused on food sovereignty, food security, and agriculture, to better support the pipeline of farmers who are waiting for loans. As IP prepares the African Canadian Farmers Fund to attract more investment, they currently have a waitlist of farmers across Canada. Through collaboration, the African Canadian Farmers Fund illuminates what long-term success for African Canadian farmers can be. It’s no wonder that Asantewaa calls the project “groundbreaking”.



Partner Story

Relèven

Relèven is a Canadian charity that transforms religious properties into community hubs across Canada. Their partnership with Definity Foundation includes support for the development of their \$30 million Transition Fund. The Fund enables nonprofit organizations to acquire properties, build wealth and increase access to community space.



Overview

A willingness to embrace calculated risk can strengthen impact and be a catalyst for systems-level change within communities.

Relèven revitalizes underused religious properties by transforming them into community hubs and affordable housing. Their goal is to build local community infrastructure that advances social inclusion. Financial and social risks underline Relèven's work.

"Many of these charities and nonprofits are being outpriced by a significantly rising property market and very significant inflation costs, which have a direct impact on the financial operations of those nonprofits as well as...donations and grants, which are under increasing pressure. But if we do [our work], the nonprofit sector becomes stable in a really helpful way," says Graham Singh, CEO of Relèven.

To transform religious properties, Relèven convenes key stakeholders in ways that reinforce their core values of reconciliation, resilience and stewardship and handle transformations with the utmost care and respect.

Partnership

Mutual alignment in values, social purpose impact and community-led innovation, is at the core of Relèven's partnership with Definity Foundation. This partnership also reveals the value of embracing calculated risks in the philanthropic sector to drive innovation.

By enabling the development of the \$30M Transition Fund, Relèven is building a new model for infrastructure ownership that contributes to local wealth-building. With more testing, it can enable rapid and efficient scaling to meet community needs. Catalytic funding ensures that the transformed properties remain accessible and available to the most vulnerable communities. It also lowers the borrowing costs for community organizations.



Impact

Relèven's recent successful convening of community tables in Montreal led to the identification of 17 priority church properties as an example of the opportunities to retain buildings for community benefit.

Yet, there is a risk of inadequate return: Congregations may not receive a big financial payout. One way that Relèven navigates that risk is through an inclusive reconciliation process. With all of their projects, Relèven ensures that the benefit from the property transformations reaches equity-deserving groups, many of which have complex relationships to the Church.

"You can't separate out the land from the social impact in its original story when you're talking about religious property," Singh says. In many ways, the land, with Canada's history with colonization embedded in it, is where Relèven's work begins.

The impact of Relèven's property transformations is also apparent in their growing backlog of projects that need funding. There's a Congregation, for instance, that purchased a post office that is now a community centre, but they're short \$2 million. Projects like this demonstrate why sustained investment in community-led initiatives matters.

Looking ahead

Relèven is currently working with over 25 congregations, non-profits and dioceses across Canada to develop community hubs and affordable housing that will provide vital services and create spaces for connection. While there are challenges to building community-owned infrastructure, such as securing funding for projects, Singh and the Relèven team is committed to realizing the long-term social impact of its work. They aim to continue growing, building community power and addressing their project backlog. Through their work, Relèven is creating a long-lasting legacy of community ownership for generations to come.





Partner Story

Urban Climate Leadership

Urban Climate Leadership (UCL), a project of MakeWay, advances equitable climate action through systems change by scaling up collaborative approaches that centre the voices of vulnerable communities. Designed and launched in partnership with Definity Foundation, North Family Foundation and Trottier Foundation, UCL enables innovative approaches to philanthropy that support community building and collective action.



Overview

Collaboration is key to designing climate solutions that are long-term, inclusive and equitable. As a Pan-Canadian project, Urban Climate Leadership (UCL) aims to remove barriers for cities and local governments to implement climate solutions that are collaborative, inclusive and sustainable.

“Our job at Urban Climate Leadership is to support local governments in advancing the health, safety, and resilience of our communities. We know that governments can’t do it alone so we engage people from across all sectors to help them respond and deliver tangible solutions,” says Shauna Sylvester, Founder of UCL.

UCL uses innovative collaboration practices that includes sensemaking and facilitated dialogues to address climate change in feasible and accessible ways. Their work on financing heat pump transitions in low-rise Multi-Unit Residential Buildings (MURBs) in British Columbia is one way they’ve used such practices.

UCL set out to map the ecosystem and research all the various policies and programs that could be brought to bear to support these residents.

“If you want to go from mapping barriers to mapping solutions, you have to look at the ecosystem of solution providers, BC has an incredible community of public, private and nonprofit leaders that can see the problem and want to solve it. Everyone has a piece of the puzzle, but the voices of those most impacted must be at the centre. Bringing an equity lens is critical,” says Sylvester.

Partnership

UCL’s commitment to equity is a core organizing principle, along with being collaborative, transparent and data-driven. It is key to how UCL approaches systems change and it is embedded in the design of all its programs.

UCL’s work on advancing equitable climate action was also key to its partnership with Definity Foundation. UCL’s dedication to amplifying the expertise and experiences of vulnerable communities aligned with Definity Foundation’s priorities and values.

“I’m really intrigued in watching Definity because they went beyond just talking about equity and philanthropy. Definity is helping to shape broader thinking in the philanthropic movement and shift narratives about where and how to invest in systems change...” says Sylvester.



Impact

The impact of UCL's work is underlined by their process of establishing the infrastructure to sustain cross-sector and community relationships.

For instance, UCL consulted over 200 people, communities, leaders, researchers and more to identify and prioritize the system change initiatives. UCL also secured \$1.72M in multi-year funding to sustain their work.

As UCL continues to grow, the challenges, lessons and successes of the first year are shaping a path forward where UCL embraces uncertainty in solutions design. "The moment you try and converge and say, we're going to co-design solutions now, it can be very threatening. Some people don't want to define solutions because they fear they might get it wrong...And what we need to do is to create the conditions that it's OK to try something and potentially fail. What's not okay is when we don't evaluate what we have done and learn from our mistakes."

Looking ahead

UCL will continue to drive more systems change initiatives forward and convene governments of all levels alongside other key stakeholders. UCL will also find ways to scale their collaborations in other jurisdictions across Canada, to pave a way for a more just and sustainable future in climate action.



Impact Investments

Impact Funds

In 2024, the Definity Foundation invested \$2M into 3 impact funds, growing our impact investment portfolio to \$3.5M.

We have committed to investing 10% of our portfolio into impact investments to intentionally generate positive social and environmental impact aligned with our priority areas.

To further advance the Foundation's mission, we revised our Investment Policy Statement to consider critical Environmental, Social, and Governance factors across our entire investment portfolio.

In the coming years, we will align our portfolio to purposefully:

1. Avoid harm;
2. Benefit stakeholders of the investments; and
3. Contribute to solutions in our priority areas.



Impact Investment Portfolio

Spring Impact Capital Fund

\$ 500,000 | 2024

Liveable Planet | Intersection of Climate & Health

Potential impact:

- 50,000 tonnes of greenhouse gases mitigated.
- 805,000 patients served with healthcare innovations.
- 210,000 tonnes of waste mitigated.

Raven Indigenous Outcomes Fund

\$ 750,000 | 2024

Thriving Communities | Indigenous community-led solutions

Potential impact:

- Improved and equitable flow of capital into Indigenous communities tackling diabetes and building renewable energy infrastructure.
- Greater economic sovereignty for Indigenous communities through alternative capital flow approaches.

Active Impact Fund III

\$ 750,000 | 2024

Liveable Planet | Cleantech

Potential impact:

- 10 million tonnes of CO2e emissions mitigated.
- Accelerated transition to renewable energy, clean transportation, green buildings, and a circular economy.

Windmill Microlending Community Bond

\$ 750,000 | 2023

Thriving Communities | Economic inclusion of newcomers

Potential impact:

- Break the cycle of poverty and underemployment to foster economic prosperity, diversity, and inclusivity.
- Newcomers grow their income by 3.5x
- Drop newcomer and refugees unemployment rate from 41% to 8%.

Raven Indigenous Impact Fund II

\$ 750,000 | 2022

Healthy People & Livable Planet | Access to capital for Indigenous entrepreneurs

Potential impact:

- Build the cultural, creative and economic strength of Indigenous Peoples across North America.
- Address the fundamental shortage of capital and connections available to Indigenous entrepreneurs in Canada and the United States.
- Invest in 15 to 20 Indigenous enterprises in the areas of technology, food sovereignty, health and health informatics, or natural products.



Strategic Plan in Action





2024 marked a pivotal milestone as we began implementing our first strategic plan and actioning our imperatives.

Our Strategic Imperatives shape how we build partnerships and contribute to systemic change in pursuit of our mission. Below are a few highlights of our strategy in action.

Strategic Imperative

Our Actions

What we learned

 <div>Flowing Capital to Underfunded Regions and Communities</div>	<p>Partnered with Data for Good to analyze philanthropic capital flows across Canada (Report).</p> <p>Partnered with New Power Labs to develop a Diversity Geomap Dashboard.</p>	<p>Data revealed the need to prioritize Northern Canada, the northern regions of most provinces, and Newfoundland and Labrador.</p> <p>Making data accessible to the nonprofit sector and beyond will strengthen our collective ability to drive change.</p>
 <div>Take a Holistic Approach to Philanthropy</div>	<p>Welcomed our inaugural Senior Fellow in climate equity, Shauna Sylvester.</p> <p>Supported key sector convenings across five provinces.</p>	<p>Deeper ecosystem understanding strengthened our relationships, and sparked reflection to guide new directions.</p> <p>Amplifying voices and actively removing barriers to engagement for underrepresented communities requires intentionality.</p>
 <div>Advance Collaborative Innovation</div>	<p>Deepened engagement in pooled funds.</p>	<p>Pooled funds provide financial leverage, deeper impact and insights into trust-based and participatory philanthropy.</p>
 <div>Strengthen Organizational Effectiveness</div>	<p>Feedback surveys of partners informed intentional improvements to our approach.</p>	<p>Responsive, relevant practice requires co-creation rooted in trust, feedback, and agility.</p>



2024 NEW GRANTS

23 new grant partners,
totalling \$11,769,144
in multi-year commitments

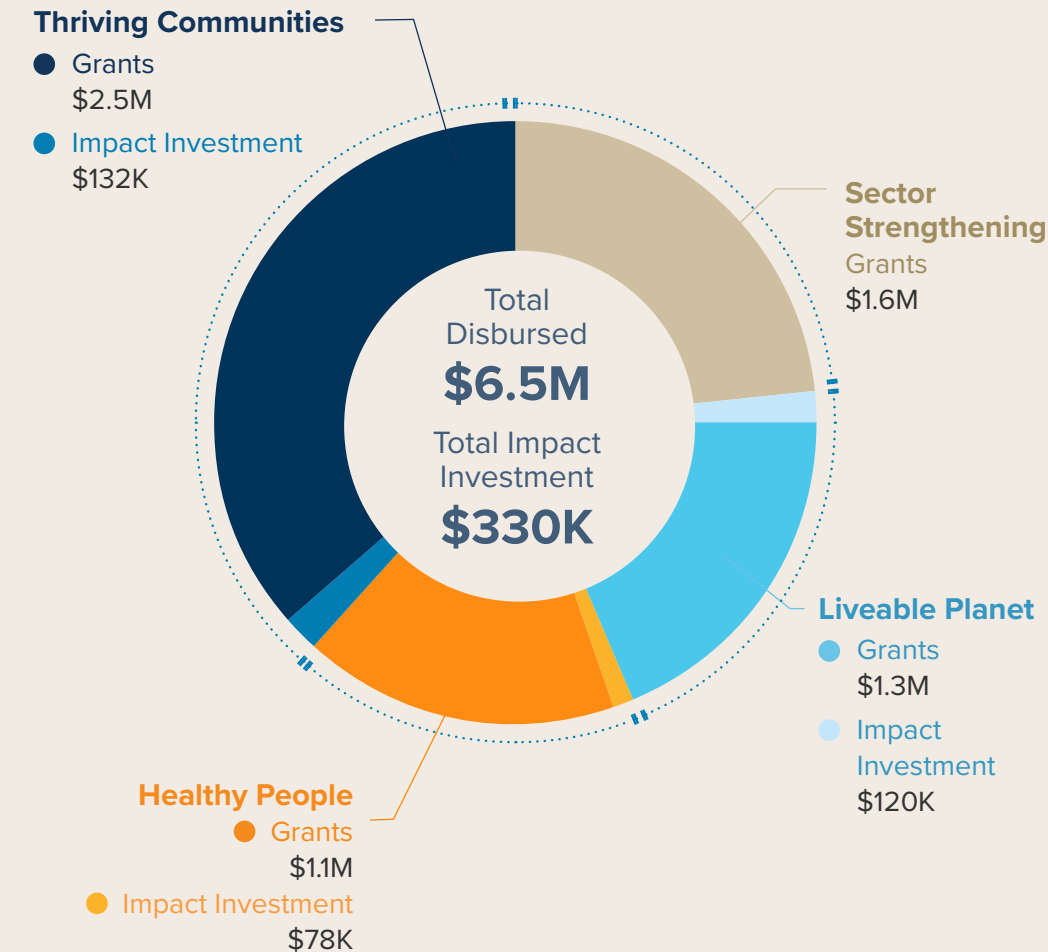
% of grants that support Black, Indigenous
and/or racialized communities

78%

% of grants supporting
Indigenous communities

57%

Between 2022-2024, Definity Foundation
has committed over \$27M to advance
climate, health and socioeconomic justice.



Figures are rounded to the nearest 0.1





For every \$1 granted
\$3.67 in co-investment
from **74 funders**

Definity Insurance Company (DIC) recommended grants represent a portion of the company's contribution of 1% of pre-tax profits to the Foundation to support the betterment of communities across Canada.



Continuing on our Learning Journey

Definity Foundation will continue to learn, reflect, and grow. Taking the lead from community and building on our work to date, we will deepen our focus in areas where we see the strongest signals for change, aligned with our mission. By becoming more strategically focused and continuing to practice a trust-based approach, we can better address pressing injustices, shift power, and drive meaningful, lasting impact—particularly in underserved regions and communities. We remain committed to reducing barriers to funding, fostering long-term relationships, and ensuring greater access to capital for those historically excluded from traditional funding streams.

Over the next two years, we will test and refine our funding priorities through research and stakeholder engagement. Throughout this refinement period, we will maintain our existing commitments to partners and communities.

Recognizing that philanthropy must evolve, we have a responsibility to go beyond grants. We will intentionally deploy all our assets—human, financial, social, political, and intellectual—to

advance our mission. This means strengthening our approach to social finance, impact investing, and leveraging our senior fellows, external advisors and network to advance key issues, contribute to sector-wide learning and building knowledge assets.

Our commitment to effectiveness and impact requires us to continuously learn for accountability, decision-making, and long-term impact. We will invest in measurement, evaluation and learning, and gathering real-time feedback to ensure we remain adaptive and responsive to the communities we serve. Through thought leadership, convening partners, and growing our digital presence, we aim to amplify philanthropy's potential and the voices of those driving change.

Grounded in our values of community, justice, and integrity, we are committed to reimagining what is possible in philanthropy—moving beyond traditional models to create systemic, long-term change that builds a more just and equitable society.



Board Members

amanuel melles
Brendon Hunt
Innes Dey
John Bowey
Justin Wiebe (Chair)
Katie Wheatley
Marcel Lauzière
Mritunjay (MJ) Sinha
Nicole McDonald
William (Bill) McCrea
Zeina Osman

Staff Members

Abby Wong
Angela Lee
Arti Freeman
Dana Decent
Floriane Lemoine
Jennifer Torrens
Wayne Miranda

Missing from photo: Justin, Innes, MJ, Angela, Wayne

*Photo taken at Asitu'lisk Learning Centre (Nova Scotia).
Thank you to Ulnooweg for hosting us!*



Thank you

We've said it numerous times, but truly, we could not have built this Foundation without the support of so many of you, helping us become the foundation we are today and being committed to the work that we're doing. To all our partners, who's belief in us allowed us to work with them. We're so grateful that you were all alongside us in our journey. And the journey hasn't finished yet. So, big thanks and really looking forward to continuing working with everyone.

We want to thank the founding board members who embraced a vision that required them to step into an area that they didn't know a whole lot about and with a keen commitment to learning. We want to thank, the Definity Insurance Company, for their ongoing partnership and support they have provided to the Foundation to do this exciting and impactful work.

We want to thank the staff team who's really worked alongside the board, to build a vision for a foundation that's already achieving really transformative things. We want to thank our peers in philanthropy who ask us questions, who are eager to learn from us, but more importantly, who are willing, and committed to sharing with us as well.

With much gratitude,
Justin and Arti

Thank to you our External Advisors for their invaluable insights and perspectives.

Andre Vallillee
Andrea Clarke
Bhavana Varma
Devika Shah
Julie Price
Marie-Josée Parent
Narinder Dhami
Pamela Uppal-Sandhu
Wanda Brascoupé



Thank you to our partners for welcoming and engaging us in your work!

Annaumakkaijiit Community Foundation
Arctic Indigenous Fund
CAN-RAC
Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment (CAPE)
Canadian Women's Foundation
Centraide du Grand Montreal
Community Climate Resilience Lab
Community Foundations of Canada
East Scarborough Storefront
EcoTrust Canada
EntrepreNorth
Environment Funders Canada
Fair Finance Fund
Finance, Sustain, Engage (FES)
Food First NL
Foundation for Black Communities
Gaagige Zaagibigaa
Imagine Canada
Impact Organizations of Nova Scotia
Indigenous Climate Action
Indigenous Peoples Resilience Fund
Makeway Charitable Society
New Power Labs
Nonprofit Chamber
Northern Manitoba Food, Culture & Community Collaborative (NMFCCC)

Ontario Nonprofit Network
Prosper Canada
RADIUS SFU
Raven Indigenous Impact Foundation
Refugee Career Jumpstart Project
Rideau Hall Foundation
Scale Institute Society
SEED Winnipeg Inc.
SETSI
Small Change Fund
Social Innovation Canada
Spring
Sustainability Institute of Canada
SVX
Tamarack Institute for Community Engagement
The Circle on Philanthropy
The Depot Community Food Centre
Trinity Centres Foundation / Releven
Ulnooweg Education Centre
Victoria Forum
Yellowhead Institute



Definity Foundation's Board Directed Grants

Adsum for Women and Children
Alberta Council of Women's Shelters
Elizabeth Fry Society of Mainland Nova Scotia
Society of Saint Vincent de Paul Edmonton Central Council

Grants funded at the recommendation of Definity Insurance Company

BC Children's Hospital Foundation
Brigadoon Children's Camp Society
British Columbia Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
Calgary Humane Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
Canadian Cancer Society
Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario Foundation
Dalhousie University
Evergreen
Fondation l'intermède
Food Banks Canada
FORA Network for Change
Foundations Learning and Skills Saskatchewan

Furniture Bank
Green Learning Canada Foundation
Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital Foundation
Hopeful Tails Dog Rescue
KidsAbility Centre for Child Development Foundation
Langley Animal Protection Society
L'Arche Association of Calgary
Learning for a Sustainable Future
MEOW Foundation for the Adoption of Abandoned Cats
Nature Canada
Northwest Territories Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
Saving Animals from Euthenasia
Sexual Assault Support Centre of Waterloo
Small Change Fund
The Canadian Mental Health Association
The Chalmers Foundation Inc.
The Hospital For Sick Children Foundation
The Humane Society of Kitchener Waterloo & Stratford Perth
The Mosaic Institute for Harnessing Diversity
The Nova Scotia Society for the Prevention of Cruelty
The Toronto Humane Society
The Winnipeg Humane Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
Trans Wellness Ontario
Tree Canada/Arbres Canada
Winnipeg Pet Rescue Shelter Inc.
Women Transforming Cities International Society
Youth Impact Jeunesse Inc.





Definity Foundation

300 – 2 St. Clair Avenue East

Toronto, ON, M4T 2T5

definityfoundation.org

