

# Belonging in a community of contrasts



twenty seventeen  
**Creating Vital Solutions Report**

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# Understanding Inclusion. Building Belonging.

At The Oakville Community Foundation, one of our goals is to facilitate the funding of work that is vital to our local community.

To that end, we conduct research exploring Oakville's areas of greatest need.

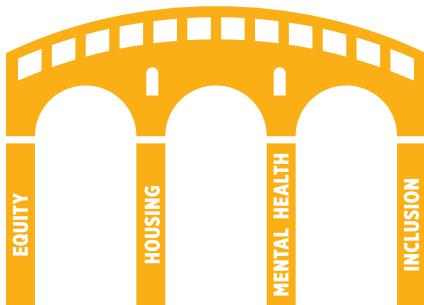




Our 2015 Vital Signs® Report

Every few years, we publish a benchmark report: our Vital Signs® Report. In our 2015 report we revealed that Oakville is a community of contrasts, facing four pressing concerns: **The Equity Gap | Mental Health | Housing for Everyone | Diversity & Inclusion**

### VitalSigns® 2015 PILLARS



The 2015 Vital Signs Report immediately served as a catalyst for new collaborations and partnerships in the community as well as deeper engagement with our Fundholders. It also shaped The Foundation's Strategic Plan for 2016 - 2018: **Building More Effective Philanthropy.**

In our 2016 update report, **Building foundations across Oakville** we presented emerging data about the issues identified in our Vital Signs 2015,

and we shared the **“Vital Solutions”**: what charitable agencies, families, businesses and local governments are doing to address them.

This year we have been **Creating Vital Solutions** with community partners in the priority areas of equity, affordable housing, mental health, diversity & inclusion. Working with leading agencies in these areas, along with Sheridan College researchers, our investigative efforts in 2016 - 2017 have included:

- Affordable Housing research
- Food (in) Security research
- Equity (employment) research
- Sense of Belonging survey

This research will guide our community granting as we shift our efforts from **“Creating” to “Funding Vital Solutions”**. We will fund the solutions created by our community partners and build more effective philanthropy.

This report also shares highlights of the Belonging Matters survey we conducted with the YMCA of Oakville and Town of Oakville to research our sense of inclusion and belonging.

A community prospers when all of its members can prosper and contribute. We are all connected; that's why it's so important to build our understanding – and build a sense of belonging for everyone in Oakville.

Everyone who lives, works and visits Oakville matters, because they, directly and indirectly, shape our community – and its future. We want everyone to feel a sense of belonging.

We are learning so much more about Oakville, and how people are longing for belonging, which we're sharing in this report.

Front cover – Photo courtesy of: Chris Dias



# Vital Signs – following the latest Oakville data.

The following pages include updated local data in the areas of **equity, housing, mental health, diversity & inclusion.**



# BRIDGING the EQUITY GAP

The gap between Oakville's wealthy and poor remains wide.



## \$34,742

after-tax low-income measure for a family of four (two children less than 16 years of age)<sup>1</sup>

## \$70,073

the living wage in Halton<sup>2</sup>

### CONTRASTS

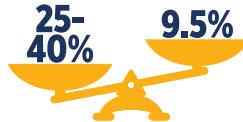
While the mean household income in Oakville is \$149,945<sup>3</sup>, what we don't see is...



**7.6%** of Halton residents were living below the low-income measure in 2016<sup>4</sup>



**12.4%** of Oakville children (under 18) were living in poverty in 2016<sup>5</sup>



Low-income Halton Region families and individuals spent **25-40%** of household before-tax income on food, while the Ontario average is **9.5%**<sup>6</sup>

### BRIDGING THE GAP FOR SENIORS

Food For Life launched a unique program in 2017 that focuses on ways to increase equitable access for seniors to fresh and healthy foods. The program considers other needs such as communal dining, culturally suitable foods, transportation barrier reduction, inclusivity, reduced isolation as well as social participation. This program also incorporates communication and information sharing, and community support and health services, all to assist with reducing isolation.

# HOUSING for EVERYONE

Already an expensive place to live, the cost of rent and housing in Oakville has continued to increase.



### CONTRASTS

While the average house resale price in Oakville in 2016 was \$965,604<sup>7</sup>...



The affordable housing threshold for purchase in Halton Region was **\$369,400**<sup>8</sup>

The previous year, the average market rent in Oakville increased **5.5%** from 2015 to 2016, to **\$1,375**<sup>9</sup>



**2/3** of low-income Halton families spend more than **50%** of their household income on shelter alone<sup>10</sup>

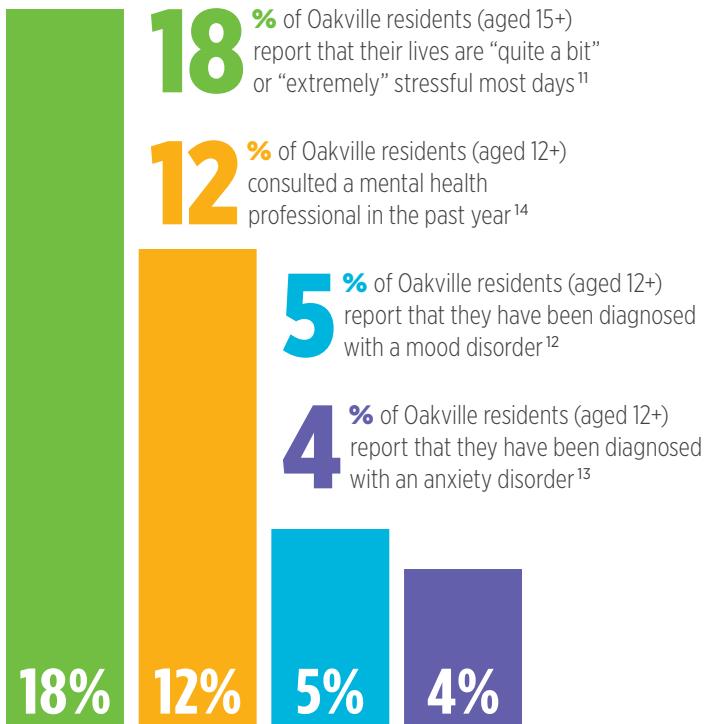
### HOUSING FOR YOUNG MOTHERS

Shifra Homes, a maternity home for young single mothers, launched an enhancement to their programs in 2017. They recognized the need for additional support to enable them to permanently stop youth and young families from returning to homelessness. The program offers onsite screening, assessment, referral, and individualized and group psycho-therapeutic care. These services address their mental health disorders, which is in line with evidence based interventions, to ensure they are better able to integrate into society to live successful independent lives.

*Vital Signs Follow-up Sources | Please see sources on next page.*

## Better MENTAL HEALTH

Mental health issues remain common in Oakville.



### BETTER MENTAL HEALTH THROUGH ART AND RESEARCH

ArtHouse is leading a collaborative project involving Oakville Galleries and Reach Out Centre for Kids, which focuses on providing youth ages 10-18, with opportunities to create art, while also receiving positive, mental health support.

Oakville Galleries facilitators work with the students to plan and execute art projects as well as participate in workshops on positive mental health, identity and employment.

Additionally, in partnership with Reach Out Centre for Kids, an extensive quantitative and qualitative research project to investigate the relationship between arts activities and people living with various mental health issues, focusing on areas of mood, self-esteem, ease of talking, sadness and anxiety will be conducted to help better understand the connections and how to support better mental health.

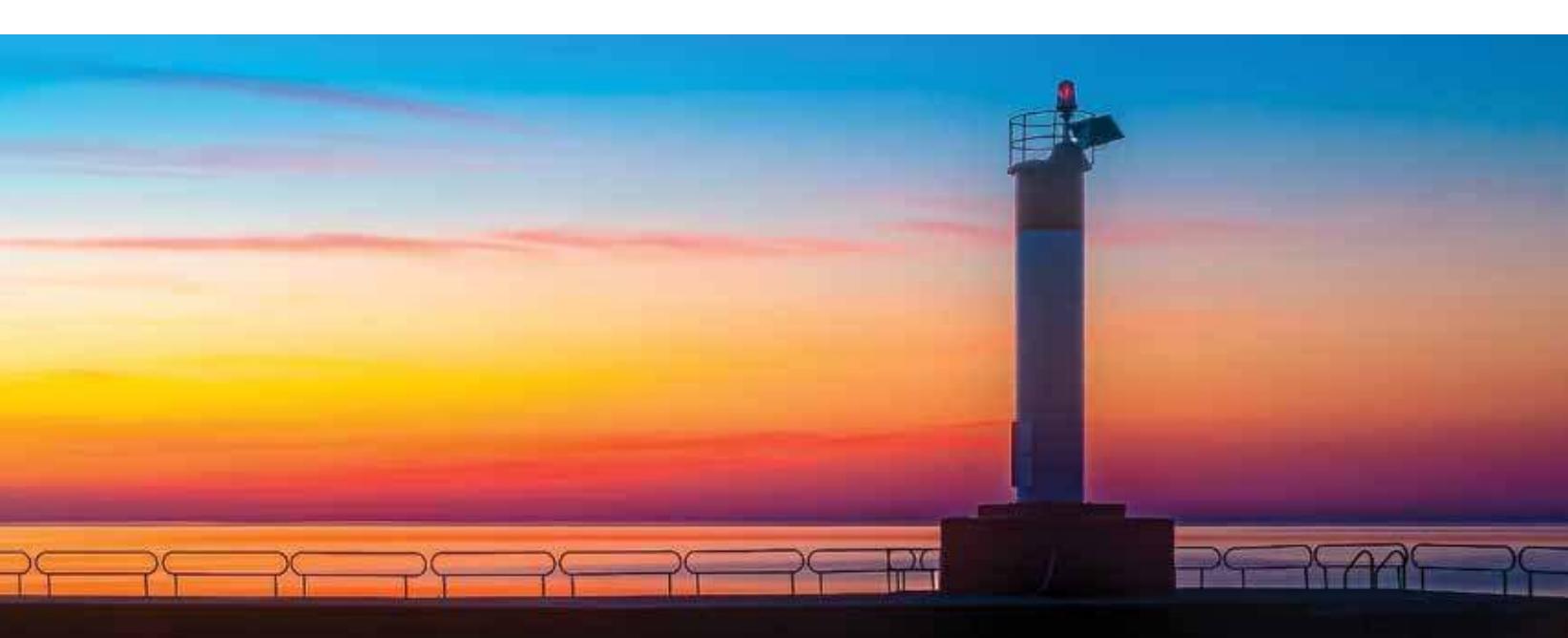


Photo courtesy of: Jeremy Alderton

## From DIVERSITY to INCLUSION

Oakville is a diverse and growing community.

2016 Oakville census data reported a population of 193,832 of whom:



An estimated **60,500** are foreign-born immigrants<sup>15</sup>



An estimated **51,800** are visible minorities<sup>16</sup>



An estimated **21,300** speak both **English** and **French**<sup>17</sup>



An estimated **19,400** of Oakville residents report religious affiliations that are not Christian<sup>18</sup>

Most recent data suggests that Halton's aboriginal population **aged 51 to 56** (those born between 1961 to 1966) **is substantially larger than the age groups immediately older and younger.**

### **INCLUDING INDIGENOUS STUDENTS AND FAMILIES**

**I AM AFFECTED** is a partnership project of the Halton Community Legal Services and Halton Catholic District School Board.

An education campaign held in October 2017, to help build awareness of Indigenous local issues and the impact felt in the Oakville area on students and families.

The campaign focused on the impact of the Indian Residential School System on students and their families in the Oakville area.

**Vital Signs Follow-up Sources** | 1. Community Development Halton Community Lens #112 (May 2016) | 2. Community Development Halton "Living Wage for Halton" Report (April 2017) | 3. Town of Oakville Environics Analytics Report 2016 | 4. Halton Region, "Community Safety & Well-Being Planning in Halton" | 5. Statistics Canada 2016 | 6. CDH Community Lens #118 (November 2016), Halton Region, Nutritious Food Basket Results, 2016 | 7, 8, 9. Halton Region, 2016 State of Housing Report | 10. Halton Poverty Roundtable | 11. Halton Region, 2013-2014 Life and Work Stress Indicator Report | 12, 13. Halton Region, 2011-2014 Mood and Anxiety Indicator Report | 14. Halton Region, 2011-2014 Consultation with a Mental Health Professional Report | 15, 16, 17. Town of Oakville Environics Analytics Report | 18. Community Development Halton Social Profile of Halton, 2014

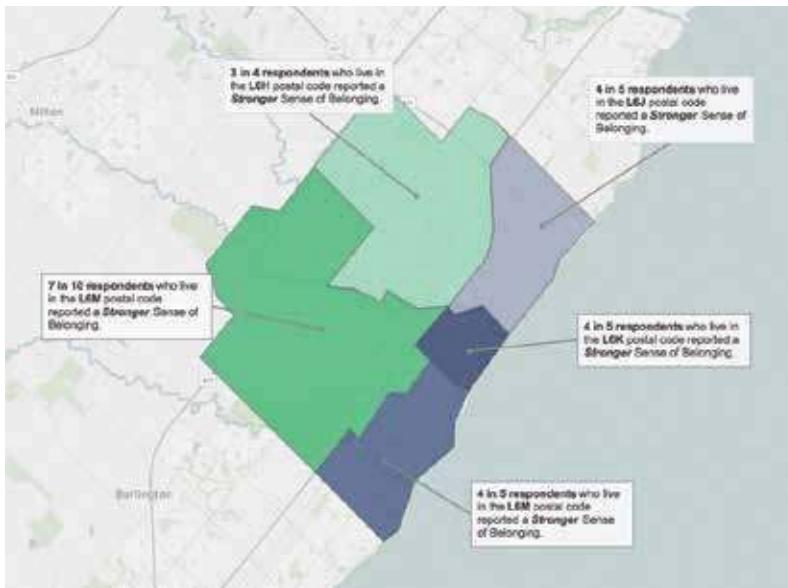


# Longing for **belonging** – connecting people to place and community.

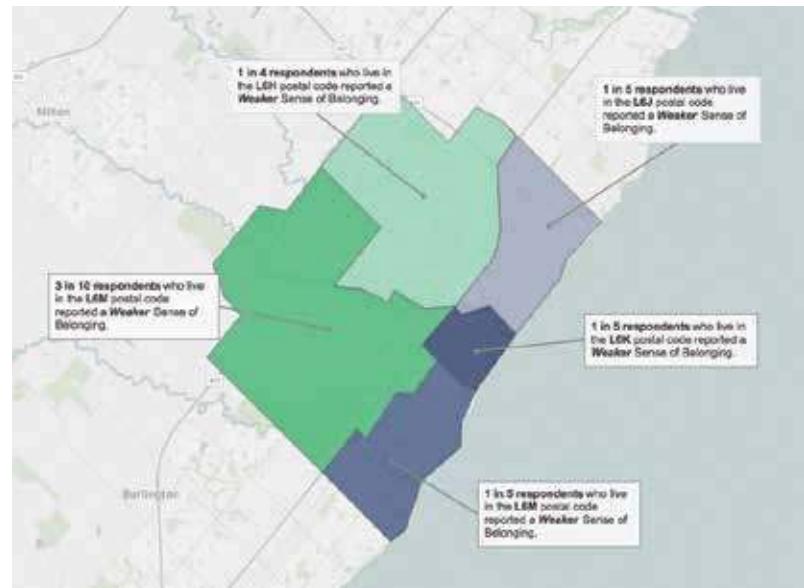
How do we research inclusion in our community? First, we must understand what it takes to create a sense of belonging. We launched our Sense of Belonging survey with over 1,200 respondents, gathering an understanding of how they perceive their own personal belonging and also what belonging means in Oakville. The following pages present the survey highlights.



*Photo credit: Oakville Beaver*



Stronger Belonging by Postal Code



Weaker Belonging by Postal Code

## Overall sense of **BELONGING**

The Sense of Belonging survey map by postal code reveals that those residents living in the faster growing communities in the North have a weaker sense of belonging. More prominently...

**31%** of respondents report a very strong sense of belonging while **56%** strongly agree that it is very important to have a sense of belonging indicating that they desire stronger community attachment.

Almost everyone, **96%**, strongly agree or agree that it is very important to have a sense of belonging where they live, work, and visit.

### SURVEY INSIGHTS

Similar to our 2015 Vital Signs Report, our Sense of Belonging survey reveals a community of contrasts where almost 1 in 3 has a strong sense of belonging contrasting to a significant portion, more than 1 in 4, that have a weak or somewhat weak sense of belonging.

*“Over the last 30 years that I’ve lived in Oakville, it has become much more diverse. It’s great to see a wide variety of cultures represented in Oakville. In general, Oakville is a very liveable, family-oriented community and I’m proud to be a resident of Oakville.”*



Photo credit: Oakville Beaver



Thanks to our partners,  
**The Town of Oakville**  
and **YMCA of Oakville**



# Place and BELONGING.

Feeling safe in public and private spaces enables us to feel connected and welcomed in our social networks and the larger community. Our sense of belonging is extended into a sense of pride and identity, where living in Oakville becomes a part of who we are rather than just where we reside.



*Photo credit: Snapd Oakville*



Photo courtesy of: Christopher Dias

## How **PLACE** impacts belonging

To help people feel they belong, a place must be welcoming, provide all necessary and desired amenities, and make the citizen feel safe, comfortable, and included.

### What we learned about **BELONGING** in **OAKVILLE**

#### Places People **DO FEEL WELCOME**

Most Common Responses	# of Respondents that Included the Word	Total Mentions
Community & Cultural Locations	1 in 3 respondents	397
My Neighbourhood	1 in 4 respondents	338
Local Businesses, Shops, & Restaurants	1 in 5 respondents	248
Public Parks & Spaces	3 in 20 respondents	198
Everywhere	1 in 10 respondents	108

#### Places People **DON'T FEEL WELCOME**

Most Common Responses	# of Respondents that Included the Word	Total Mentions
Nowhere	3 in 20 respondents	162
Business, Shops & Restaurants	1 in 10 respondents	120
Oakville	1 in 12 respondents	101
Downtown	3 in 50 respondents	83
Neighbourhoods	1 in 20 respondents	63

### **SURVEY INSIGHTS**

Among the top places people do feel welcome are community and cultural locations such as libraries, community centres and museums. However, survey respondents indicated it's often a lack of budget, or time that prevents them from participating in neighbourhoods, hobby or cultural activities.

**A certain number of people expressed issues around belonging and:**

- Ableism
- Accessibility
- Mental health challenges
- Children with special needs in school

*"I am a person with mobility disabilities and you do not investigate disabilit[y] issues in Oakville. The number of inaccessible places is huge and equity is lacking in Oakville. Since returning to Ontario I have been assaulted 3 times in 3 years and 2 of them [were] because of disability."*



Photo courtesy of: Christopher Dias

## How **COMMUNITY CONNECTION** impacts belonging

Community connection and feeling welcome in public spaces is important for us to feel like we belong.

### What we learned about **BELONGING** in **OAKVILLE**

Respondents with a strong sense of belonging are:

**6X MORE LIKELY** to belong to a hobby, recreation, or social group

**6X MORE LIKELY** to belong to a dance, music, or theatre group

**5X MORE LIKELY** to belong to a religious group

Respondents with a weak sense of belonging are:

**9X LESS LIKELY** to belong to a political, or lobby group

**5X LESS LIKELY** to belong to a business, professional, or union group

**4X LESS LIKELY** to belong to a sports or fitness group

### **SURVEY INSIGHTS**

Those with a strong sense of belonging are more likely to volunteer, attend community events, and go to cultural spaces.

Respondents wanted to become more involved community members – the survey has prompted them to start to take action by increasing authentic interactions with neighbours and other community members. A number of respondents offered to support newcomers and others who have a weaker sense of belonging.

*“For me there were two things that made all the difference when I moved to Oakville – my willingness to become involved with the community and the willingness of my neighbours to welcome me. It is through the opportunities the community provides to engage people and the openness of others to welcome new people that people establish that sense of belonging.”*

# How **SOCIAL CONNECTION** impacts belonging

As we become closer with members of our community, our bond builds and we begin to invite people into our inner and more private social circle of family and friends.

## What we learned about **BELONGING** in **OAKVILLE**

**43%** of respondents smile and say hello to their neighbours. Of those who do... Respondents with a strong sense of belonging are **2X** more likely to do so.

**54%** of respondents are on a first name basis with their neighbours. Of those who are... Respondents with a strong sense of belonging are **4X** more likely to do so.

Just over **27%** of respondents get together with their neighbours. Of those who do... Respondents with a strong sense of belonging are **7X** more likely to do so.

## **SURVEY INSIGHTS**

There was a strong trend in respondents questioning those around them and wanting to become a more inclusive and welcoming Oakville. This was often connected to a realization that they are the ones that need to become more welcoming and help create the sense of belonging for those who have been judged and socially isolated.

*“There also seems to be with some residents a feeling that newcomers are not being integrated into the social fabric but remain isolated in their ethnic groups. When asked what they have done to bring newcomers into the mainstream of Oakville they usually have no answer. So begins a divide. A divide that also include First Nations People.*

*The community needs to take a more proactive role in fostering inclusivity for all and working against common stereotypes.”*



Children's Festival - Photo Credit: Oakville Beaver



Pride Flag Raising – Photo Credit: Nathan Howes

## How **SAFETY** and **FEELING** impacts belonging

Feeling safe is an important factor in creating a sense of belonging. By having a safe space you can begin to lay down your roots and develop your sense of belonging.

### What we learned about **BELONGING** in **OAKVILLE**

Respondents with a strong sense of belonging are:

**7X MORE LIKELY** to get together with their neighbours

**6X MORE LIKELY** to trust their neighbours to watch their home while they are away

**4X MORE LIKELY** to be on a first name basis with their neighbours

Respondents with a weak sense of belonging are:

**6X LESS LIKELY** to get together in person, in Oakville, with friends and family

**6X LESS LIKELY** to feel proud to live in Oakville

**3X LESS LIKELY** to feel safe walking alone at night

*“Would love to see better security for bikes at GO stations or any venue. We need to make biking a priority and make the roads available for people on bikes. This does not mean sharing the road with cars. Maybe our own lane for bikes.”*

### **SURVEY INSIGHTS**

While many respondents said their sense of belonging related to how safe they feel in Oakville, those who did feel unsafe did so while driving or riding their bikes on the streets of Oakville.

There was also a trend in the data indicating that GO commuters have a reduced sense of belonging; partially related to commuting time and also related to tension between those who live and work in Oakville and those that only live here.

Some of those who identified as LGBTQ felt safe in Oakville, others did not feel as protected: a lack of LGBTQ community was noted.

Other cultural minority members indicated that they faced discrimination in both intended and unintended ways and would love safe spaces where they could connect with each other.

# How **PRIDE** and **IDENTITY** impacts belonging

Once we are feeling safe in public and private spaces, we feel connected and welcome in our social networks and the larger community. Our sense of belonging extends into a sense of pride and identity, where living in Oakville becomes a part of who we are rather than just where we reside.

## Things that **CONTRIBUTE TO MY PRIDE**

Most Common Responses	# of Respondents that Included the Word	Total Mentions
Parks & Public Spaces	1 in 3 respondents	382
People	1 in 4 respondents	312
Community Events	1 in 5 respondents	236
Waterfront	1 in 5 respondents	227
Downtown	1 in 7 respondents	180

## Things that **REDUCE MY PRIDE**

Most Common Responses	# of Respondents that Included the Word	Total Mentions
Vacant Storefronts & Homes	1 in 10 respondents	133
People's Attitudes	1 in 10 respondents	130
Housing Density	1 in 12 respondents	103
Income Inequality	1 in 12 respondents	97
Maintenance & Infrastructure	1 in 12 respondents	92

## **SURVEY INSIGHTS**

While those with a strong sense of belonging indicated pride and identity in the growing diversity of Oakville, people who reported a weaker sense of belonging were those who experienced discrimination and prejudice.

A surprising but significant trend in the data illustrated a sense of pride and identity related to how respondents maintained their gardens and judged those who didn't meet their expectations. Respondents referring to property maintenance directly or indirectly related the issue to newcomers to Canada.

*“Our neighbourhoods take pride in maintaining well cared for properties—cut grass, flowers, etc. One concern is people moving in and not maintaining their properties to the same extent as in the past. Newcomers may not be culturally aware that this is important.”*



Multicultural Night – Photo Credit: Oakville Beaver

## **NEXT STEPS**

The Foundation will be undertaking new initiatives in 2018 to build a greater sense of community and foster our sense of belonging. With 12.4 % of our children living below the poverty line, we will launch a school-based Arts, Culture and Heritage program to benefit K-8 students in Oakville's publicly-funded schools.

Visit our website to help The Foundation create greater local connections for all 22,000 Oakville students with this initiative. Please consider giving to support our community at [www.theocf.org](http://www.theocf.org).

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**OAKVILLE**

**ABOUT THE OAKVILLE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION**

**We connect people who care to causes that matter**

Since our founding, The Oakville Community Foundation has provided over \$21 million in charity grants and has accumulated \$108 million in assets, growing our pool of resources to support the community.

Our accomplishments include:

- Establishing over 175 family and organization funds
- Building Oakville's Heritage Trails, in partnership with the Town of Oakville
- Designating endowment funds to support youth, the environment, heritage and others

**Building more effective philanthropy**

We connect people, families and companies with causes that inspire them. We pool resources, knowledge and expertise, working with others for even greater impact. And we help donors realize their philanthropic goals by matching their interests with community needs and finding innovative ways to make every donation count.



The Oakville Community Foundation recognizes that Oakville resides on the treaty lands and territory of the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation, part of the Anishinaabe nation.



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for community. ensemble pour tous.

The Oakville Community Foundation is a proud member of our National Organization, Community Foundations of Canada.

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