



613 COM HOUSES

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE COALITION OF COMMUNITY HOUSES



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HOUSE FEATURE: CONFEDERATION COURT

THE ROOTS AND DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNITY HOUSES AND THE ONE THAT PAVED THE WAY

At the intersection of Walkley and Russell Roads in the south end of Ottawa, you may have passed by a block of uniform housing units, outfitted with grey (once green and yellow) mansard roofs. This is the home of Ottawa's first official community house – Confederation Court.

Built in the 1960s, Confederation Court has a rich history of

community and tenant organizing where tenants organized around social and political issues, shared information and opportunities and hosted community events.

"There has been long hours of struggling and battling for the rights of this community"

– RUTH JOHNSTON (1979)

This home-grown advocacy is how community houses across the city began to sprout up and establish themselves, eventually leading to official city funding in the 1990s.

Although there isn't a vast amount of preserved documentation of the history of tenant organizing at Confederation Court, a newsletter from the 1970s provided some insight (*continued on page 2*)

to the level of commitment and passion for the community. Content ranged from community news and updates on housing staff to a formal message from the president of the community association. Confederation Court also housed several prominent community organizations in its' earlier years including the Boys and Girls Club, Southeast Ottawa Community Health Centre and the Ottawa Legal Clinic. As these organizations branched out to other locations, the community house continued to work tirelessly to provide services and support to its' community and fill emerging gaps.

Although there have been many changes to the community house over the decades, the LINC (Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada) program has been a constant since 1991.

The LINC program is funded by Citizen and Immigrant Canada and first began as one class but has now split into two (beginners and advanced) for a more effective learning experience.

Funded as a women's only initiative, it provides a culturally sensitive environment for not only language development, but also reducing the experience of isolation that many newcomers may face.

Childcare is also provided for the participants in the beautiful childcare facility located on the lower level of the community house so that participants may relax and focus during their class.



Level 1&2 (beginner) LINC class in progress at the Confederation Court Community House, October 2021



Children play in the in-house childcare facilities while their parents attend LINC class, October 2021



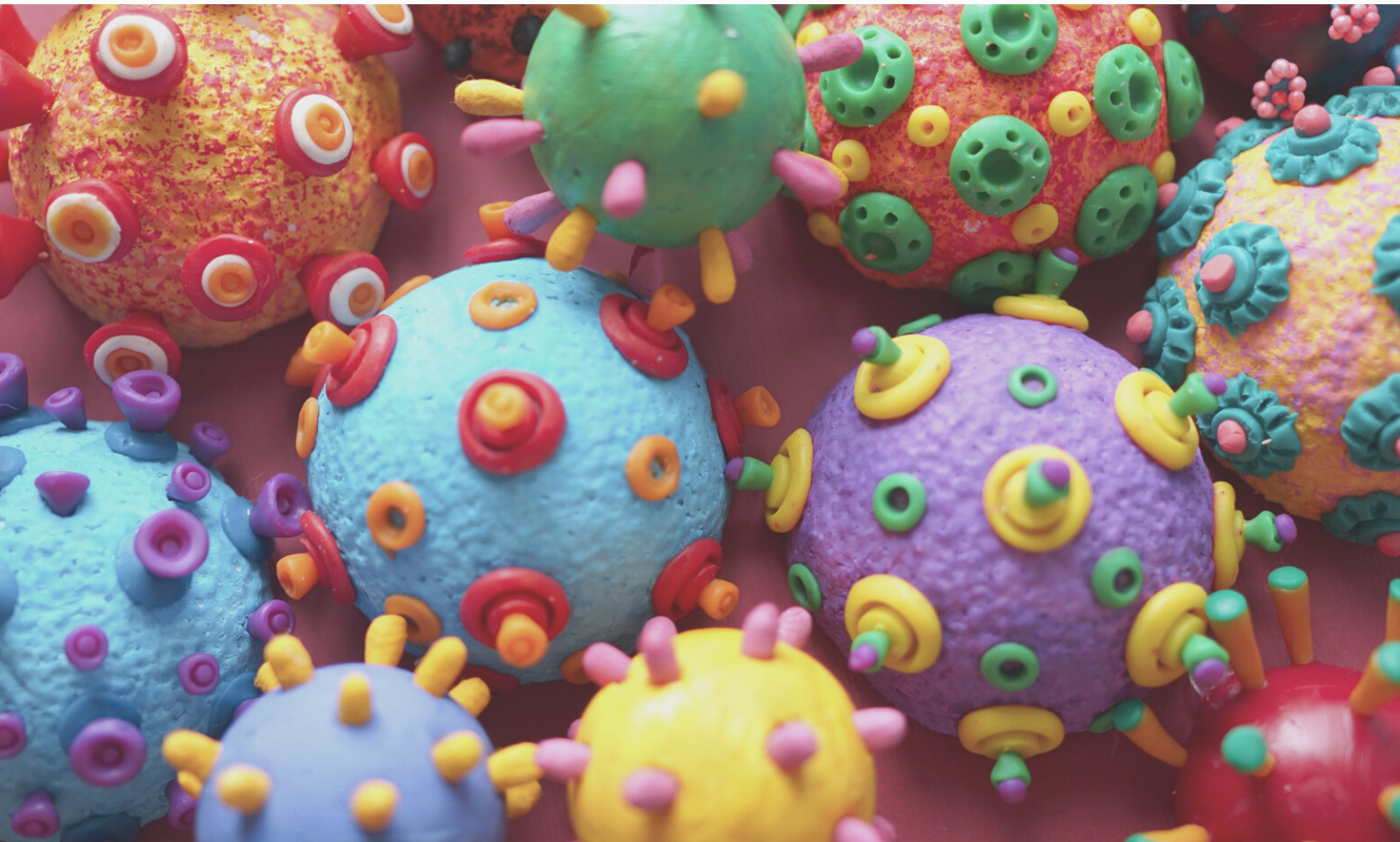
Andrea Thompson, Executive Director at the Confederation Court Community House, October 2021

Andrea Thompson, Executive Director of Confederation Community House has been with the organization for 31 years, where she first started out as a child and youth worker and shortly transitioned into her present role.

Upon reflecting on the triumphs and challenges over the years the pointed question was asked - does she enjoy her position? After a brief pause, she exclaimed - "yes, of course! I love it!"

Andrea went on to explain that although there are many challenges with running a community organization, it is always interesting - each day is different. This is not a position where you will become lost in the banality of day-to-day tasks, but rather, become energized by them. This energy is fuelled by the proximity of the work of the community house; being place-based means having a constant pulse of the community.

Daily contact with community members creates genuine, trusting relationships. This gives the community house staff the ability to connect and be responsive to the needs of the community, and most importantly, provide a space for community voices to be heard and understood.



United Way

COVID-19 COMMUNITY RESPONSE TABLE

Since March 2020, the COVID-19 Community Response Table pooled resources, shared data, gathered input from those with lived experiences, and spoke up with one voice to tackle social challenges in our communities.

This group has advocated for, re-imagined, and funded programs, partnerships and policy changes to respond to the urgent needs of the most vulnerable people throughout the pandemic.

On October 5, United Way East Ontario honoured and celebrated the work that these partners have accomplished with the #CommunityBuilder COVID Responder award.

This group was recognized for their innovation, creativity, nimbleness, and ongoing efforts to address the social challenges made worse by COVID-19

The Ottawa Coalition of Community Houses was honoured to be a part of the Community Response Table over the last year and a half.

We would like to take the opportunity to thank United Way of Eastern Ontario for their leadership in learning from and supporting community-based organizations during the pandemic!



BEHIND THE BUZZ WORDS

DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN COMMUNITY-BASED AND PLACE-BASED

Industry terminology is something each of us becomes familiar with when operating in our daily professional roles.

Community work is no exception to this; we have our own terms and phrases that often appear in our mission statements and best practices.

We want to take a closer look at some of these popular terms and deconstruct their meaning using the community house perspective.

Community-based and place-based are two terms that may appear to be interchangeable. For community houses, there is a crucial distinction between them.

A community-based approach is more philosophical in nature and less specific in application. This approach encompasses values of place-based approaches, such as community members having an active role in addressing issues that impact them but does not wholly represent place-based approaches.

Place-based approaches are delivered in a defined geographic location and are designed to be collaborative, sustainable, and specific to a community.

For community houses, a place-based approach is crucial in order to effectively serve our individual communities – none of which are the same.

A place-based approach is a holistic one, where all aspects of the community are considered.

CHILD & YOUTH PROGRAMS AND SUPPORTS

A GLANCE AT OCCH'S APPROACH TO PREVENTION-BASED PROGRAMMING

In 2019, the OCCH developed a Community Child & Youth Program framework. This was built on 20 years of collective work supporting children and youth through after school and summer program delivery.

The mission of this framework was to support children and youth of low-income families with safe and supportive community-based programs and services that also promoted positive youth development.



Areas of focus were broken down into 6 categories:

Community Cohesion: Focusing on social connectedness, social capital and civic engagement.

Skills Development: From soft skills, academic, STEM, leadership and employment.

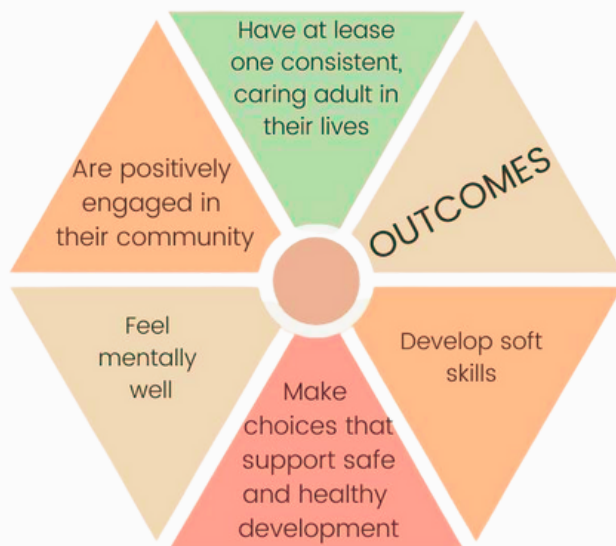
Recreation: Ranging from planned social activities (games, interest groups), sports, visual and performing arts.

Mentors and Positive Roles Models: Fostering caring relationships that support the development of youth and instill qualities for them to become positive role models.


Opportunities for Contribution: Valuing the assets of children and youth and creating opportunities for them to get involved.

Mental Health and Well-being: Building the protective factors around children and youth to promote mental health and positive well-being.

Community House Youth Program outcomes are primarily focused on prevention and early intervention strategies to build protective factors and lessen risk factors for children and youth living in priority neighbourhoods.



The outcomes outlined in the above-graphic are guided by Ontario's Stepping Up Framework to support the well-being of Ontario's most vulnerable and marginalized child and youth populations.



Thank You

ACCOLADES & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

OCCH wouldn't be where we are today without the support and dedication of our community partners. Each month, we would like to take the opportunity to dedicate a space to show our appreciation and gratitude towards the immense generosity we witness in supporting our initiatives.

MATTRESS MART

When COVID hit, sadly like many retailers, Mattress Mart had to close its stores temporarily.

That's when in lieu of laying off their delivery drivers, they looked for ways to keep them employed while giving back to the community, and happily they found Caldwell Family Centre.

They provided a truck and driver to deliver groceries to families twice a week. This made a huge difference in our ability to stretch our resources and meet increased demand.

Thank you, Mattress Mart for enhancing our ability to address food insecurity in our communities.



TELUS MOBILITY: FRIENDLY FUTURE FOUNDATION

Confederation Court and Banff Avenue Community Houses were successful applicants of the Telus Mobility Friendly Future Foundation grant. This grant has enabled the two houses to run Y.E.S.P. (Youth Education Support Program), which provides academic support to youth who are transitioning from grade 8 to grade 9.

The program will support 20 youth in total and will run the length of the 2021/2022 academic school year (September-June).

Thank you, Telus Mobility for giving back to communities and supporting our youth.

KHALSA AID VOLUNTEERS

Debra Dynes Family House would like to express sincere appreciation for Khalsa Aid and all of the generous volunteers who donate their time and effort to supporting our communities.

This year they have assisted with supplying Mother's Day Gifts, Food Bank support and school supplies for over 200 children!

These contributions from Khalsa Aid greatly impacted the community, enabling Debra Dynes to assist 615 children and youth this year.

