

RADICAL RECOVERY

Objective: To emphasize the need for our community to come together and support a #RadicalRecovery, as we work to rebuild and take advantage of the opportunity to change our community for the better.

Why Radical change?

Radical change implies moving past a current practice to create a new one that better suits the obstacles presented. Incremental change is an attempt to solve our communities' problems with small, systematic steps that create change over time. As we come out from the pandemic, it is clear that we cannot just go back to 'normal' or simply 'recover' – we need a radical recovery!

Why now?

The pandemic gave us an opportunity to really look at the issues our community was facing before the crisis began. Homelessness, food insecurity, declining mental health, addictions, isolation, elder care and the digital divide were all issues our community faced a year and half ago – the pandemic only exacerbated them and increased the urgency and impact on our community. Some might say that for the first time, they really 'saw' and understood how these issues impacted others in the community and some experienced these issues for the first time themselves.

The pandemic further showed the disproportionate impact on women and marginalized groups such as BIPOC, persons with disabilities and low-income households. Individuals and families who were already struggling were pushed further into hardship.

As a society and a community we cannot return to the pre-pandemic 'normal' when it comes to social issues. We must seize the opportunity to learn, adapt and innovate. Together, we must speed up progress and take a giant leap forward towards equality and build back to an even stronger community.

Why now from a statistical point of view –

- 1 in 7 Canadians reported experiencing food insecurity during the pandemic; 76% of new food bank clients began accessing food banks because of COVID-19

- Since the onset of the pandemic, 5,148 apparent opioid toxicity deaths occurred between April and December 2020, representing an approximately 90 percent increase from the same time period in 2019.
- More people are reporting feelings of isolation, loneliness, and stress, and over the past year, people are drinking more, smoking more, and doing more drugs — the cascading effects of which are likely yet to come.
- 1 in 10 Canadians have experienced thoughts or feelings of suicide in 2020, and the stats are even higher for those who identify as LGBTQ2+, have an existing mental health issue or disability or who are Indigenous
- Domestic violence calls almost doubled during the pandemic because home hasn't been safe for Canadians facing abuse.
- Hate crimes are way up across the country and locally, Guelph is in the top four metropolitan areas for hate crimes per 100,000 residents.
- More than 5,000 unmarked graves at former Indian Residential School grounds have been found and that number continues to grow.

What is United Way doing to ensure a radical recovery?

We know we can't return to the status quo – so our approach to recovery is anything but. We are being radically local in our approach, with the goal of solving local problems with local solutions and empowering those closest to the issues to help us all learn, unlearn and work together to leverage each other's assets.

United Way has been working since early 2021 to ensure that we have the capacity for action, that our future responses to community needs are multi-faceted and diverse and that we can quickly pivot to respond to the changing environment. We will focus on building emotional wellbeing and resiliency. We will ensure people are connected to supports to help build connection and belonging. We will help individuals and families stabilize and recover by aligning supports for food, housing and financial security.

In addition, we will work to address the inequities that equity and rights seeking groups experience by offering dedicated funding to support their unique needs. We will put people at the centre of our work –prioritize learning and listening and work to remove barriers to access funding and resources across all of our programs. We will work with our community partners in new and different ways to ensure more collaborative processes, increase efficiencies, reduce duplication and begin large-scale systems change.

And most importantly, we will **mobilize a shared responsibility for social good**. We did this during COVID-19 and we have done this 365 days a year for the past 81 years. We will continue to do this to build back an even stronger community after COVID-19.

How can you be part of radical recovery?

Your support of United Way Guelph Wellington Dufferin is the best way to create lasting positive change in our community. A radical recovery relies on the harnessed power of all parts of our community – and that includes you. Your action is at the heart of our momentum – by donating,

volunteering, learning and unlearning – you fuel community change and help us begin the process of building an even stronger community that supports all who live in Guelph, Wellington and Dufferin.