ALBERTA ASSOCIATION ON GERONTOLOGY
Improving the Lives of Older Albertans

Healthy Aging Alberta

Alberta Communities in Action:

Showcasing Grassroots Leadership and Impact

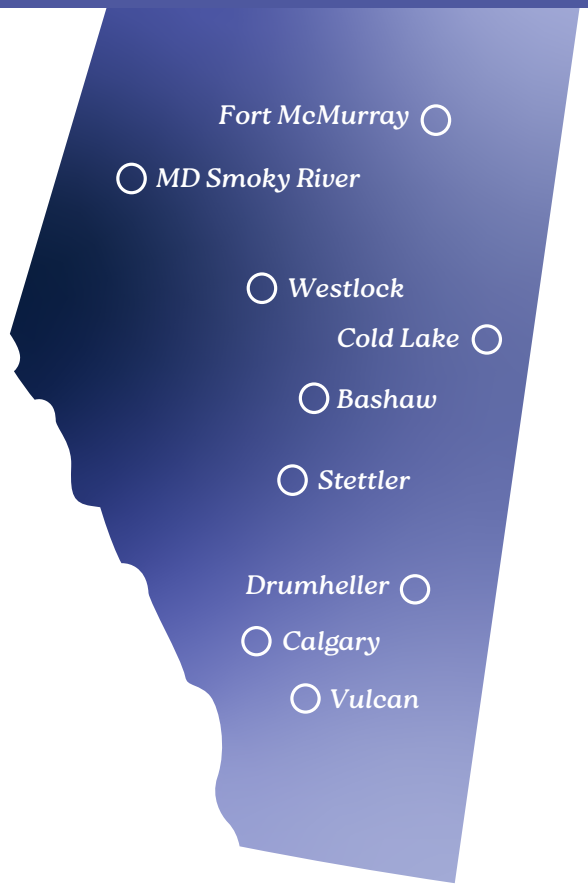
CASE STUDY OVERVIEW • DECEMBER 2025

Introduction

The Alberta Association on Gerontology (AAG) / Healthy Aging Alberta (HAA) Community Ecosystems Project conducted a case study of nine Alberta communities of varying sizes that have successfully built connected networks to support older adults.

Focus groups were conducted with diverse social support and health service leaders, to identify practices and implications that enable connected community networks (page 2 & 3).

Their success stories illustrate the promising practices that work now and demonstrate what will enable connected community networks to expand and be sustained over time, shifting the province from fragmented systems to woven networks—activated community ecosystems (page 4).



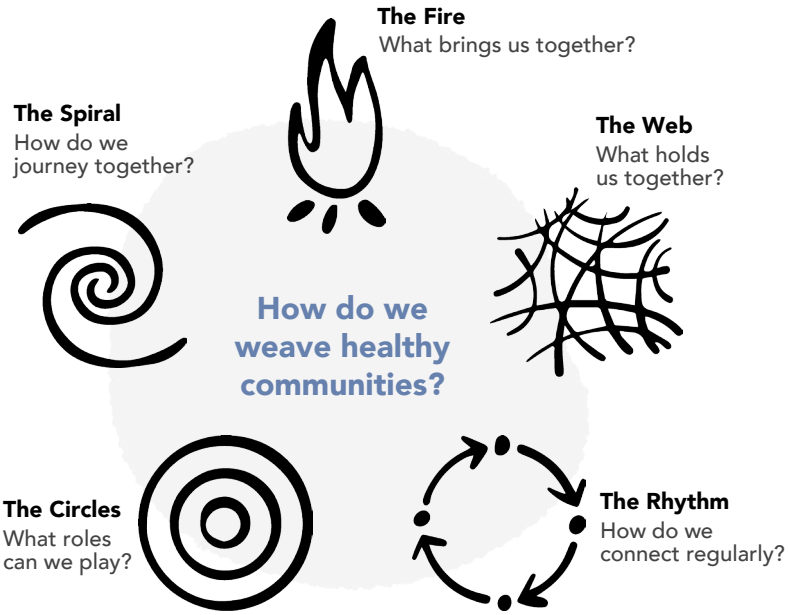
Case Study Resources:

1. The Community Weaving Framework. www.community-weaving.org
2. The full AAG/HAA Community Ecosystems Case Study Project Report will be available on the AAG website January 2026. https://albertaaging.ca

Listening to Communities

Introducing the Community Weaving Framework[1]

The findings from our focus groups were analyzed and categorized according to the elements of the *Healthy Communities Weaving Framework*—which defines five elements that help strengthen a community.



What is important

The main themes emerging from the focus groups were summarized using the Community Weaving Framework, with direct participant quotes included in quotation marks.

The Fire

Bringing the Community Together

- A spark ignites the community's need for change.
- Concerned organizations come together to respond to the need
- Community grassroots connect services and lead with intent
- External opportunities (e.g., new initiatives, government funding) are seized to support action.

The Web

Relationships that Hold the Community Together

- A strong sense of community builds, "how can we help" mentality
- "Like-minded" people who care about others come together, "think outside the box"
- Shared values focus on the people being served, not the organization, "egos left at the door"
- Collaborative partnerships rely on building trust
- Volunteers, the backbone of the community, thrive with "intentional engagement"
- Link workers/ navigators are critical for timely access to coordinated care

The Rhythm

Staying Connected

- Solid communication needs formal and informal approaches
- Regular meetings (e.g., scheduled meetings, daily huddles, regional or interagency meetings) are important to share updates, needs and problem solve
- Co-location of services, including PCNs, improves service coordination, communication and connection.

The Circles

Roles in the Community

- All partners share assets, expertise or resources, "who can fill the gaps"
- The "right" partners commit and contribute to addressing community needs and services
- Administrative resources are shared (time, funding, expertise)
- All orders of government (local, regional, provincial) are informed and invested.

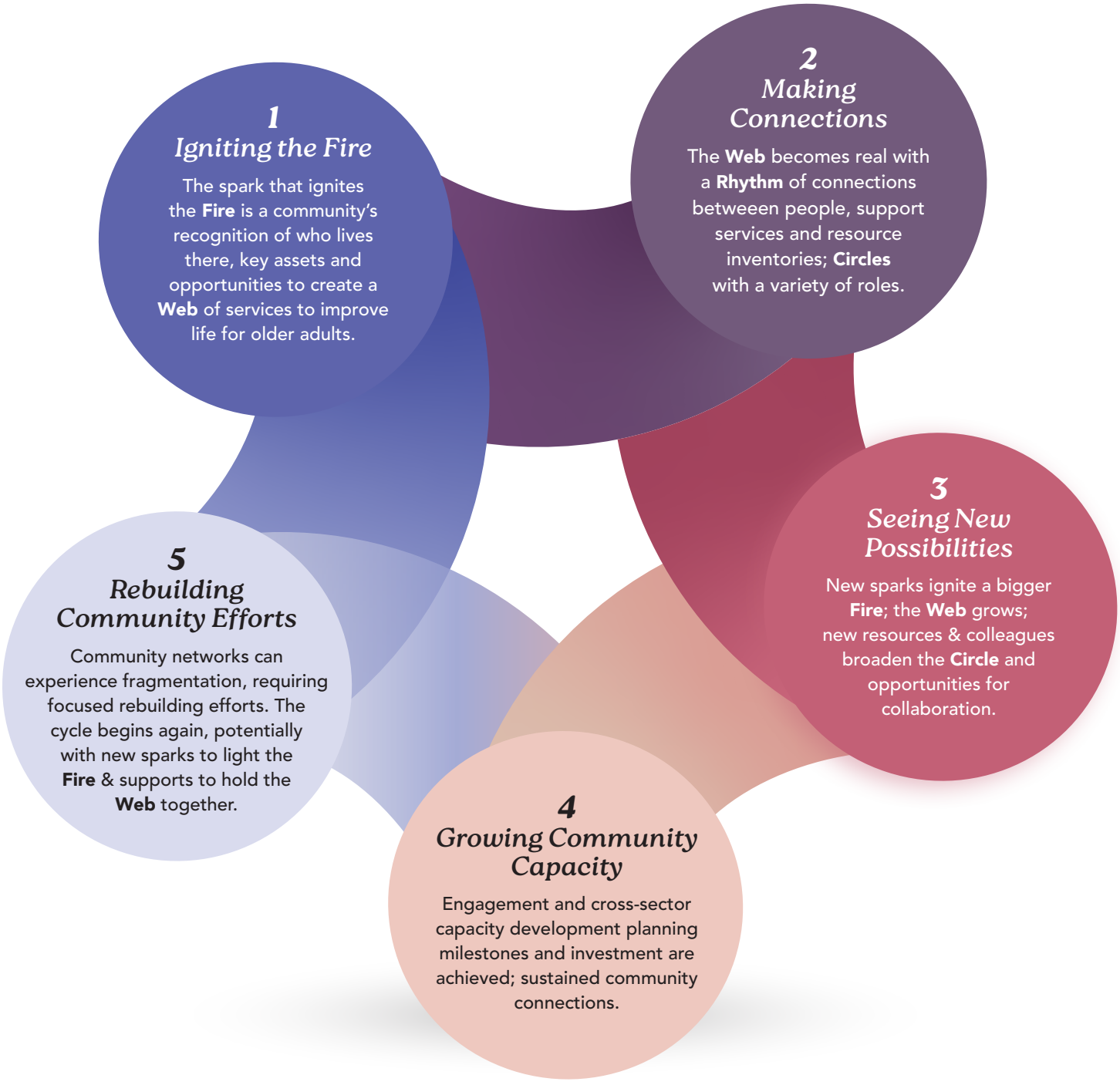
The Spiral

Journeying Together

- Keys to future success:
  - » Stabilizing funding
  - » Closing significant gaps (mental health, respite) in older adult services and supports
  - » Addressing social needs impacting health (transport, housing, food)
  - » Reducing admin burden (grant writing, operations, effective info systems)
  - » Overcoming geographic challenges including stable internet
  - » Strengthening PCN/primary care partnerships
- Local governments understand and prioritize older adults needs
- Services to diverse communities grow when trusted
- "Just do it and make it happen", "Find a new path around the obstacles"
- Spark ideas, fuel their growth, and cheer the outcomes

Creating Connected Community Services

...an iterative journey

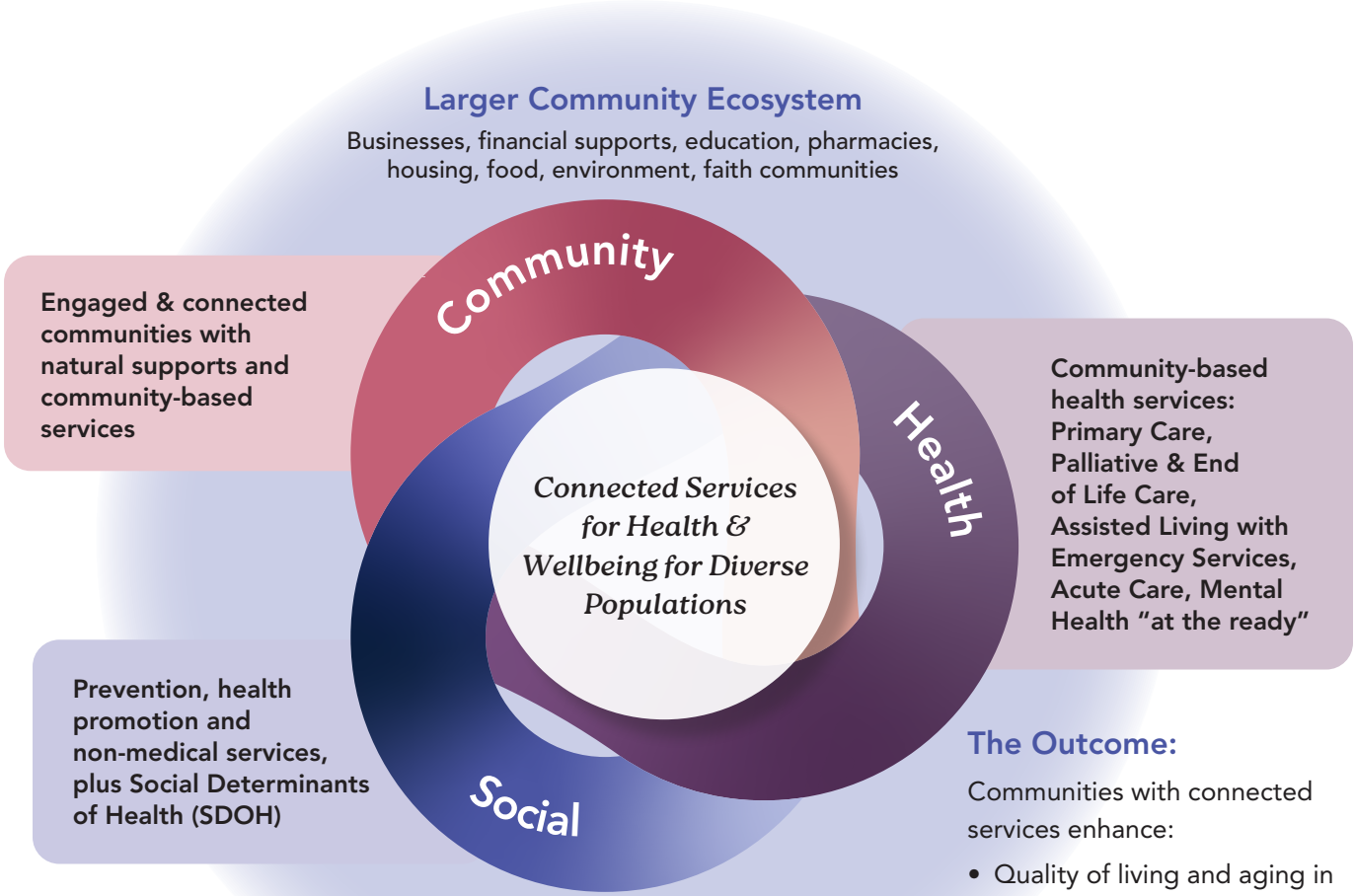


Significant Learnings and Implications for Sustainability

1. **Community engagement requires intentionality, support and infrastructure** to build connected relationships and service networks.
2. **Capacity development is the foundation for any community making a difference...**but requires sustained funding, changed practices & processes, and flexible policies, **including shared outcome measures that focus on the impact of community ecosystems.**
3. **Each community is unique**... local connected community networks evolve and vary depending on local assets, circumstances and history.

The Opportunity: Woven Networks of Services

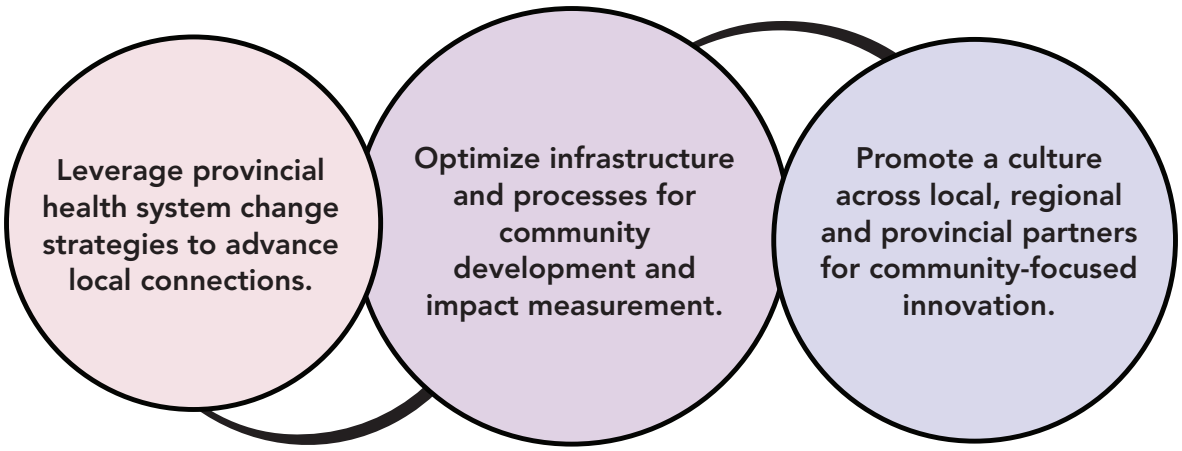
...refocusing Alberta's health system



Scan to watch videos showing this in action: Bashaw: Drumheller:

The Outcome:

Communities with connected services enhance:

- Quality of living and aging in the right place for older adults
- Supports for family caregivers
- Working relationships among providers
- Service capacity through partnerships
- Local economic gain

Moving Forward: Sustaining a Community-Focused System