



Institute for
Community Prosperity

COMMUNITY INVESTMENT PROFILE

Bell Canada

Dialing in on mental illness

Background

Industry: Media and Communication

Company founded: 1880

Headquarters: Montreal

Customer: Business to consumer

Legal Type: Publicly Traded Company (BCE)

Owned: Canadian owned

Years dedicated to Community Investment (C.I.): 100

Region of Focus: Canada

Investees/ Partners include:

- Kids Help Phone
- Canadian Centre for Child Protection (founding partner) /Cyber Tip
- ImagineNATIVE
- Banff World Media Festival
- True Patriot Love Foundation

Community Investment Strategy:

As a Canada's largest communication company, Bell helps people connect with each other every day. Bell's contributions to the community are closely tied to its core mission of enabling people to communicate. The majority of their community investment strategy is Bell Let's Talk, an initiative focused on increased communication surrounding mental illness. Bell's support of Kid's Help Phone is an initiative is to help youth through increased communication in the form of web and phone counselling. Last year, (2014) was the 25th anniversary of Kid's Help Phone. To celebrate, Bell donated \$2.5 million to the organization, the largest corporate donation to date.

Bell encourages their employees to give back to the community through its Employee Giving Program. Through this program, Bell grants up to \$500 to organizations where employees have volunteered a minimum of 50 hours. Bell also matches employee donations to The United way, Canadian Mental Health and Canadian Universities and Colleges.

CI Dashboard: This dashboard is one way to illustrate how companies invest in community, providing a tool to compare across different company CI profiles. It is important to note that no category is privileged over another.

Geographic scope



CI staff ratio (Presented as percentage of total staff)

$$\frac{N/A}{57,000} = N/A$$

Granting or sponsorship approach

Responsive

CI responds to existing or emerging needs and opportunities articulated by the community

Strategic

CI approach is intentional, driven by the company's interests and/or theory of change

Flexible

CI is not tied to the company's core business

Aligned

CI approach is integrated or in line with the company's core business

FOCUS Investment: Bell Let's Talk

Issue:

Mental illness is a prevalent problem in Canada; 1 in 5 Canadians will experience some form of mental illness in their lifetime.¹ Despite how common it is, there continues to be stigma surrounding mental illness and those facing it. Due to stigma, 2 out of 3 people facing mental illness do not seek help, fearing judgement from others.² Mental illness can also cause financial issues; every week 500,000 Canadians stay out of work which costs 6 billion dollars in lost productivity annually.³ In fact, mental health is the leading cause of workplace disability in Canada.⁴

Solution:

To break the silence surrounding issues of mental health, Bell Canada opened up the conversation creating the Bell Let's Talk campaign in 2010. Bell's Let's Talk aims to end the stigma around mental illness and by encouraging the public to talk about it. On Bell Let's Talk day, (January 28) Bell donates 5 cents to mental health initiatives for every text or call made by Bell customers and every time someone joins the campaign on Facebook or Twitter.

The 4 pillars of the program are anti-stigma, care and access, workplace health and research. The first pillar is focused around the increased education, awareness and openness around the topic of mental health. To open the conversation, famous Canadians; Clara Hughes, Howie Mandel, Mary Walsh and Michael Landsberg shared their own personal struggles with mental illness. The second pillar, care and access is achieved by supporting organizations helping people living with mental illness. Workplace health is the third pillar, Bell addresses this issue by adopting the Standard for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace. They are also working with the corporate and healthcare sector to develop mental health best practices. The fourth and final pillar is research, Bell is investing in research to further understand mental illness and to improve treatment.

As part of the Bell Let's Talk campaign, Clara's Big Ride aimed to end stigma around mental health. In 2014 Clara Hughes rode her bicycle for 110 days through every province and territory, reaching 105 communities across Canada. Over the course of her journey, Clara connected with many people living with mental health issues and educated others on the importance of treating those suffering with empathy and respect.

The creation of the Let's Talk campaign goes far beyond traditional corporate philanthropy. Bell Let's Talk demonstrates how community investment can align with the values of a company while increasing awareness and striving to change perceptions and behavior around mental illness.

Impact:

Since its creation, Bell Let's Talk has contributed \$73.6 million to mental health initiatives across Canada.⁵ In 2014 Bell Let's Talk day raised close to \$5.5 million.⁶ One million dollars of the money raised is being used to fund community mental health resources in the Yukon, Nunavut and North West Territories.⁷ This support is of particular importance as suicide rates for Inuit people are one of the highest in the world at 11 times the Canadian average.⁸

Endnotes

1. Bell Let's Talk, "Let's End the Stigma" Para. 1, Bell Canada, 2015, <http://letstalk.bell.ca/en/end-the-stigma/facts/>.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Bell Let's Talk, "Our Initiatives" Para. 1, Bell Canada, 2015, <http://letstalk.bell.ca/en/our-initiatives/>.
6. Bell Let's Talk, "109,451,718 tweets, texts, calls and shares: Thank you Canada for another record setting Bell Let's Talk Day!" Bell Canada, January 29, 2014, <http://letstalk.bell.ca/en/news/110/109-451-718-tweets-texts-calls-and-shares-thank-you-canada-for-another-record-setting-bell-lets-talk-day>
7. Bell Let's Talk, "A strong impact across Canada," Para. 1, Bell Canada, 2015, <http://letstalk.bell.ca/en/impact/>.
8. Mental Health Commission of Canada, "The Facts" para 9, Health Canada, 2012, <http://strategy.mentalhealthcommission.ca/the-facts/>.