



COMMUNITEA
INFUSION

A COMMUNITY BUILDING EXPERIENCE
IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD



CommunitEA INFUSION

Event Planner's Guide



1

About the CommuniTEA Infusion Van

The CommuniTEA Infusion Van is a mobile tea house on wheels that travels to your neighbourhood and generates a communal “town square” space in which people can come together, get to know each other better and strengthen connections. This type of communal space is important in today’s fast paced society, as we tend to spend less time forging meaningful neighbourly connections. By acting as a mobile catalyst for community and connectivity, the CommuniTEA Infusion van allows individuals to inspire stronger community relations.

CommuniTEA Infusion has no religious or political affiliations and is run by neighbors who are inspired by the potential for conversations to lead to strong, creative, safe, and well-connected communities.



Check out the [CommuniTEA Infusion Van documentary](https://vimeo.com/49282646) at vimeo.com/49282646.



2

Planning Your Event

The first key steps to planning a CommuniTEA Infusion Event will involve:

- selecting a time and date for your event;
- choosing a location for your event;
- recruiting volunteers to help you in the rest of the planning process;
- inviting community members and building some buzz around the event.

We recommend starting to plan your event at least one month in advance.

Choose a Location



When choosing a location, you'll want to consider the following factors:

- Is the location close and accessible to your community members?
- Is there enough space for everybody?
- Are there electrical outlets and running water at the site?
- Do you have permission to use the location?

You may also decide to select a Community-Building Activity from Chapter 5 of this guide (or even plan your own). The activity you choose may influence your choice in location.

Get People Involved

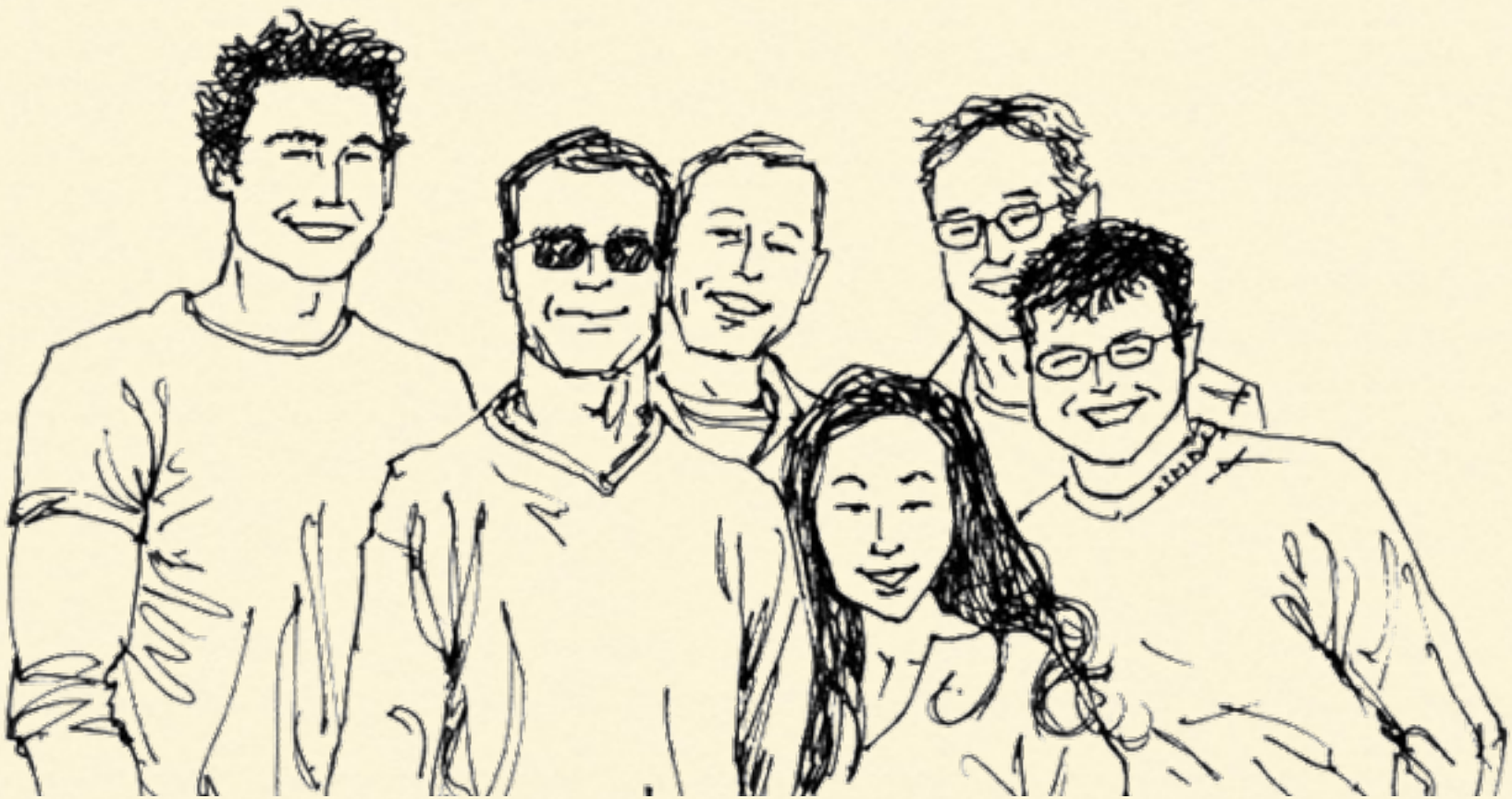


In order to ensure that your event runs smoothly, you will want to ensure that you have 4 or 5 committed volunteers from your neighbourhood to work with you.

There are many people you can ask to be volunteer organizers: your friends, your family, your neighbours, your coworkers, and members of your community organizations. Once you've recruited one or two volunteers, you could ask them if they have any friends or contacts who might also be interested in getting involved. If you get in touch with students about helping out, be sure to emphasize that this is a great resume-builder!

A really great event takes advantage of people's diverse skills and talents. Think about how you can make your event even better by reaching out to local musicians, entertainers, etc.

Invite Community Members and Reach Out to Local Businesses



In your **CommuniTea Infusion Kit**, you will find a package of customizable posters and invitations to garner interest in your event. Simply fill out the details (such as time, date, and location), and then you and your volunteers can hang these posters and hand out these invitations around your neighbourhood.

Remember, going door-to-door and delivering invitations in person is an easy and important way to build friendships and meaningful interpersonal connections.

Be sure to inform invitees that children and pets are welcome to attend!

It is also a good idea to contact local businesses who may be interested in participating in the event in some capacity. Reaching out to local businesses in, or near your community will help to strengthen the community. A local restaurant may be interested in providing food, or a local business (such as a grocery store) may have something else to contribute (like food, decorations, paper plates, garbage bags, etc.). When talking to local businesses, be sure to emphasize that they will receive free advertising at the event, and that they will be able to receive a charitable receipt for in-kind donations.



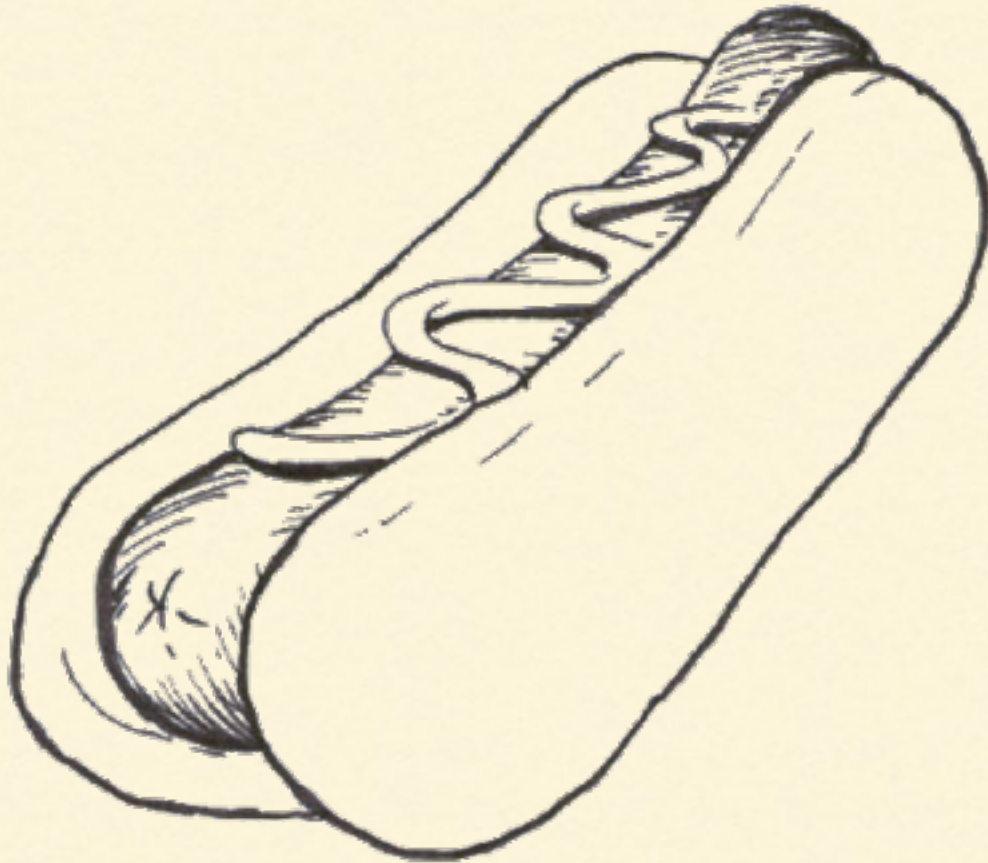
3

Preparing for Your Event

After you make initial arrangements for your event, such as planning the date, time, and location, recruiting volunteers, and inviting guests, you'll want to be sure that you make arrangements for some other logistical issues (such as noting electrical outlets and water supply sources at your event location, and planning how supplies will be brought to the location on the day of the event) well in advance of your event.

Rather than taking on all tasks by yourself, delegate preparation tasks to your volunteers.

Food



The CommuniTEA Infusion Van will arrive at your event fully stocked with tea for your event. However, if you would like other beverages, or any sort of food at your event, you will need to arrange this separately. For licensing reasons, the CommuniTEA Infusion Van is unable to serve food, but if you, your neighbours, and/or a local business or restaurant wish to supply food, go for it!

If you would like to involve a Community Cook-Off or pot luck as a fun Community-Building Activity in your event, see page 16 of this guide for more information.

Entertainment and Activities



Reaching out to local musicians and entertainers (such as magicians, face painters, etc.) can be a great way to spice up your event. Websites like Craigslist and Kijiji may be able to help you with this.

You may also want to come up with other ideas for ways to engage attendees. For instance, if you are expecting children to attend, you may want to consider some low-cost items such as water slides, kites, sidewalk chalk, butterfly nets, sports equipment, bubbles, etc.



4

On the Day of Your Event

As long as you and your volunteers are well-prepared, your event should go smoothly and be a lot of fun!

Getting people together to set up for the event can be a great way to break the ice, to connect, and to strengthen bonds with neighbours.

Remember to ensure that you and your guests clean up after yourselves. Be sure to have ample garbage and recycling receptacles at your event.

Be sure that you or one of your volunteers brings a camera and takes lots of photos at your event!

Setting Up the Van



For instructions on how to operate the van, watch the instructional how-to video at:



[TeaVan How-To Video](https://vimeo.com/45331663) at vimeo.com/45331663

If you have questions, call our Coordinator at 780-619-4277





5

Optional Community-Building Activities

The next few pages will outline various options for community-building activities you can run as part of your event. Including one of these activities will give community members a chance to forge even stronger and more meaningful connections.

Once you have selected an activity, locate the corresponding Instructions page in your **CommuniTEA Infusion Kit**, fill in the required information, make photocopies, and distribute this along with your invitations.

OPTION 1

Community Show-and-Tell

“We owe it to each other to tell stories.”
-Neil Gaiman

Guests will each bring one small artifact (a photograph, an object, or a written story or drawing) that has to do with the community.

(Be sure to hand out the **Community Show-and-Tell Instructions** along with your invitations, so your community members arrive at your event with something to contribute.)

Watch the video below to see an example!



[Debbie's Brick Video](https://vimeo.com/78382575) at vimeo.com/78382575



Get kids involved by having them contribute a drawing or short piece of writing, or by having them circulate at the event and ask community members about their artifacts

Community Time Capsule

**By building relations we create a source of love and personal pride
and belonging that makes living in a chaotic world easier.**

-Susan Lieberman

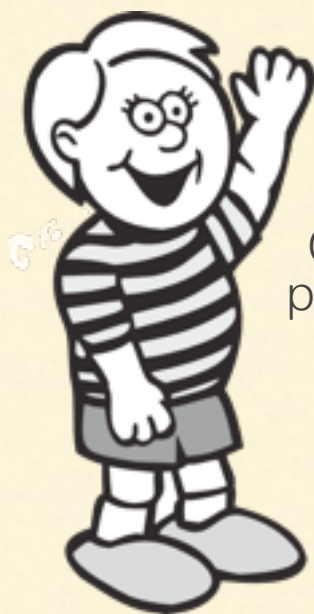
Community engagement and in-person interactions shouldn't just be a one-time thing. Rather, communities should aim for sustained and repeated engagement. Creating a Community Time Capsule is a great way to achieve this. You and your community members will fill the time capsule with objects and ideas that answer one or both of the questions: "What makes our community special?" and "How can we make our community even better?". Guests at your event can each bring one small artifact (a photograph, an object, etc.) that carries significance for them in relation to these questions, and/or fill out a **Community Question Card**.

(Be sure to hand out the **Community Time Capsule Instructions** along with your invitations, so your community members all arrive at your event with something to contribute to the capsule.)

At your event, guests will place these items in the Community Time Capsule. You and/or your guests will then seal the capsule, and bury it in a location where it will remain undisturbed (alternately, it could be placed in a secure location, perhaps locked in a community centre).

One person (either yourself, or one of your guests or volunteers) will be responsible for planning a Community Capsule Excavation Event at a prearranged time in the future (we recommend no less than six months between events... It's not a very exciting time capsule if you dig it up right after you bury it!). At the Community Capsule Excavation Event, community members will reconvene to dig up the time capsule and to examine and discuss its contents.

The organizer of the Community Capsule Excavation Event might want to come up with some discussion questions ahead of time to provoke more meaningful conversation. For instance, when looking at individuals' responses to the question "How can we make our community even better?", you might then pose the question "how many of these goals have been reached?".



Get kids involved by having them contribute a drawing or short piece of writing to the time capsule.

Community Cleanup

“Here is your country. Cherish these natural wonders, cherish the natural resources, cherish the history and romance as a sacred heritage, for your children and your children's children.”

-Theodore Roosevelt

Cleaning up your neighbourhood makes it a better place to live, not just for humans, but for plants and animals too. By working together to beautify your area, you and your guests will feel a stronger sense of pride and connectivity.

Prior to your event, make a list of the various cleanup tasks to be completed. These may include:

- Picking up litter
- Repainting run-down fences or walls
- Weeding
- Planting trees/flowers
- Raking leaves
- Hanging birdfeeders

You will need to ensure that you have the right supplies for the tasks at hand. At the very least, this will include garbage bags and gloves for your volunteers. Depending on the cleanup tasks, you may need to have other supplies on hand, such as gardening tools, or paint and paintbrushes.

The tasks required will depend on your neighbourhood and may also influence your choice of event location.

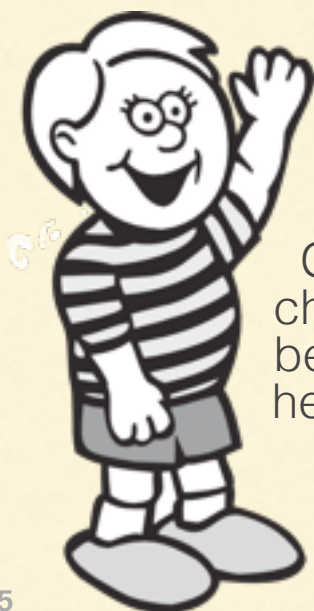
Be sure to pre-plan where the trash will be taken at the end of your cleanup. You can contact local trash or waste haulers and ask if they will donate a dumpster or a pick up. Local business might be willing to let you fill their dumpster as well. If large pieces of trash are in the area, you will need to contact a specific hauler to help remove them and take them away. Two special kinds of trash are tires and shopping carts. Tires are considered hazardous waste in some areas and take special handling. When you call the trash hauler, ask if they take tires. If not, you may need to find a special place to accept them or recycle them. Shopping carts can be returned to their store. This makes for great press and good photo opportunities.

Have guests break into teams, and assign each team a task. For tasks that cover a large area (such as garbage cleanup in a field), assign different zones to different teams.



Be sure to hand out the **Community Cleanup Instructions** along with your invitations, so your community members arrive at your event prepared to pitch in and clean up!

Be sure to get before and after photos of your Cleanup area!



Get kids involved by giving them a safe task in an area that has been checked over for potential hazards (like needles or broken glass) beforehand, and by engaging them in a discussion of the importance of helping the environment.

Community Swap

“One of the marvelous things about community is that it enables us to welcome and help people in a way we couldn't as individuals. When we pool our strength and share the work and responsibility, we can welcome many people...”
— Jean Vanier

One man's trash is another man's treasure. A Community Swap (also known as a Community Yard Sale) is a great way for community members to clear out their own clutter, and find some new treasures. Swapping items highlights the benefits of reusing and repurposing objects, rather than continuing to purchase new things all the time. Furthermore, involving a Community Swap in your CommuniTEA Infusion Event will encourage conversation, and will give individuals the opportunity to share stories about the items they are selling.

Be sure to hand out the **Community Swap Instructions** along with your invitations, so your community members can comb through their homes and prepare items to bring to the swap.

In preparation for your Community Swap, you will also need to arrange for several tables to be set up, upon which items can be displayed. You may or may not also want to get several sheets of price tags/stickers (these can be found at most dollar stores) so that participants can label their items with prices. (Of course, if you choose not to do this, participants can set prices verbally on the spot. In either case, low prices, bartering and bargaining are strongly encouraged!)

It might also be a good idea to make arrangements for a trip to a dumpster or garbage dump after the event, so that any unwanted items can be disposed of.



Get kids involved by encouraging them to choose some of their own belongings to sell (such as toys they no longer play with) and by telling them that they can keep the money they make from their items.

Community Cook-Off

“One cannot think well, love well, sleep well, if one has not dined well.”
-Virginia Woolf

Having a Community Cook-off or pot luck at your event will keep everyone’s bellies satisfied, and also give community members the chance to bond over food.

Community members will each contribute one dish to the event. Be sure to hand out the **Community Cook-Off Instructions** along with your invitations, so your community members arrive with their food! On the printout, be sure to specify the theme of the Cook-Off, or the type of dish they are to make. For instance, you could choose a theme such as “Heritage Dishes”, in which everyone must cook and bring an item that represents their ethnic/cultural heritage. Or perhaps everyone must bake some sort of cookie. But remember to keep the theme seasonal... you don’t want to be slurping hot soup on a scorching summer day!

Also, feel free to turn the Cook-Off into a friendly competition! In order to do this, you’ll need to plan some kind of judging system (such as ballots that guests fill out and then place into a voting box, or you could choose a few community members to act as a team of judges). And no competition is complete without prizes!



Get kids involved by having them help with cooking/baking, or by allowing them to act as judges.

OPTION 6

Community Placemaking Project

“Interest and enthusiasm are the wellspring of continually evolving community life: they create bonds which unite us whether we are young or old, nearby or far from each other”

-Henning Hansmann

Placemaking refers to the creative transformation of a *space* within your community, into a *place* (a location invested or infused with value) that strengthens your community. Creating public art in your neighbourhood can help create a strong sense of place, whether it is a mural, sculpture, temporary art like chalk drawings or functional art pieces like benches or lampposts. Public art presents an opportunity for a neighborhood to tell its history, express local culture and have a fun project for everyone to get involved*.

Your CommuniTEA Infusion event could be used to begin discussions of, plan for, or launch a placemaking project, which would be a longer-term initiative that your community would undertake.

For ideas and examples of placemaking projects, see the links and videos below.

*Placemaking inspiration has been drawn from cityrepair.org/about/how-to/placemaking/ (City Repair organization of Portland).





Short intro Video to Placemaking



Longer Informational Video about Placemaking

If you and your community are interested in pursuing a placemaking project, contact your local community league, as well as makesomethingedmonton.ca

Placemaking projects are longer-term endeavours that build community through the collaboration and combined work effort of the group. It's not just about the end product!



Get kids involved in any way possible! Instilling strong community values in children will help them to grow into community-minded adults.