

YOUTH COMMUNITY SUMMIT

2020

The Columbia Valley Community Foundation, a charitable organization connecting donors and non-profit organizations, hosted a Youth Community Summit inviting youth leaders aged 15-29 to share their experiences and insights. Hosted in partnership with RBC Canada and the Community Foundations of Canada, 15 youth leaders spent an afternoon in 'Vital Conversation' discussing the challenges, needs, and opportunities within our community.

Delegates had many positives to share in their experience living in the Columbia Valley. Highlights of their experience include:

- The outdoor lifestyle such as ski hills, trails, mountains, lakes, and hot springs
- A supportive school system with smaller classes and relationships with teachers
- The 'small town feel' citing our sense of community, the feeling of safety, a small-business based economy, and community events

Through a series of discussions, the youth leaders identified four primary challenges that they felt were of the greatest need in the community, or were personally important to them.

TRANSPORTATION ACCESSIBILITY

Acknowledging the current system in place, almost every participant, at some point, had been stranded and left without transportation or a way home. The current Monday-Friday BC Transit service was discussed as affordable, but insufficient for the transportation needs to/from recreation, work, or medical appointment needs outside of the community.

Vital Actions

- Additional bus stops, times, and routes; particularly weekends and evenings
- Affordable and timely busing to major centres including Banff, Calgary, and Cranbrook

- Ridesharing apps
- Highway between Invermere and Windermere: speed limit is too fast, there are too many entry and exits points

MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

Of significant concern is the mental health of their peers and community. Many felt that while resources exist, they are expensive and the need exceeds the current capacity. Most of the leaders identified that at some point, they had struggled with their mental health.

Vital Actions

- Collaboration through the schools for more counsellors and better awareness/availability of resources
- Training and education for parents and teachers; encourage conversations with youth and destigmatize mental health conversations
- Additional resources around addiction
- Conduct a study/collect research on causes to be able to act proactively on prevention



AFFORDABLE HOUSING

While few participants had personally struggled to find a place to live, many felt this was an important challenge facing our community. It was noted the number of short-term rental properties is limiting availability, and increasing the pricing for longer term accommodations.

Vital Actions

- Tiny house community
- A Hostel that is warm, welcoming, and feels safe; that is available to at-risk youth
- Limits on short-term rental properties

RECREATION

Amplified by the number of distance learners, the leaders identified a gap in clubs, programs, and structured recreation for youth between high school and parenthood. Many leaders involved with sports felt that if additional gym time was available, this would be well utilized; especially if it were in conjunction with improved transportation systems. Delegates in post-secondary school that are beginning to look at early career options, are looking for more ways to develop their professional skillsets in their free time.

Vital Actions

- Additional structured clubs and programs for youth under 30 (including back-country outdoor programs)
- Professional/career opportunities such as mentorship/internship
- Affordable (ie. student rates) and accessible drop-in sports and intramural programs (such as ball hockey, dodgeball)

OTHER NOTABLE CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED

- Access to healthcare resources – specialists and hospital resources
- Lack of diversity
- Drug abuse
- Lack of professional/career opportunities
- Lack of support for LGBTQ2+ community

The Columbia Valley Community Foundation would like to sincerely thank all of the participants that volunteered their time, insights, and experiences to make this program possible.

Hosted in partnership with:



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**Additional information on
the Columbia Valley
Community Foundation
can be found at
www.valleyfoudnation.ca**

