

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN 2016 – 2020

**ADOPTED BY COUNCIL
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Our thanks to our dedicated YDS Project Team

Chantelle Chan – *Grade 12 Mt. Douglas*

Jack Snyder – *Grade 12 Victoria High*

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Hassaan Inayatoli – *Grade 8 Arbutus*

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Janet Lawson – *Saanich Youth Council*

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Alana Goddard – *Saanich Youth Programmer*

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Mike Goldsworthy – *Saanich Park Planner*

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Our thanks to our dedicated YDS Youth Research Team

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Michelle Ruhigisha – <i>Grade 10</i>	Berkay Ertugrul – <i>Grade 12</i>
Cortney Fraser – <i>University of Victoria</i>	Alexandra Ages – <i>Grade 12</i>
Janet Lawson – <i>Camosun College</i>	Delphina Kejo – <i>Grade 11</i>
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Our thanks to our dedicated YDS Interns:

Chantelle Chan	Janet Lawson
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1.2

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

“A youth strategy is not a youth strategy unless it challenges our conventions and comfort zones.”

(Adam Richards, Saanich Recreation Programmer, 2015)

INTRODUCTION

Saanich Parks and Recreation enjoys a legacy of leadership in youth recreation and youth development. This is reflected through the creation of three teen centres, a community skatepark, a large network of sports fields and quality youth programming and services. In addition, Saanich works to meet the needs of youth who find themselves on the fringes of mainstream parks and recreation offerings (e.g., new immigrants, those with accessibility challenges and disabilities, self-identified marginalized groups of youth).

Youth population in Saanich has been declining steadily since our last Youth Development Strategy (YDS) in 2003. While it would be natural to conclude that we could reduce resources for this generation, we believe this direction would serve only to exacerbate the current fragile state of what is being termed “Generation Zero”. Those whom we categorize as “youth” in our YDS, young persons ages 11-18 years, are experiencing unprecedented challenges from multiple social, economic and health-related forces. While some may perceive youth to be an entitled or privileged lot, our research has revealed that beneath the surface lies a very different picture for many of our youth.

YDS PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

The youth and public engagement phase of YDS involved over 1,100 persons in 44 engagements including youth, community members, schools and other youth-serving organizations. Our emphasis has been “strengths-based”, working with a process called “Appreciative Inquiry” which taps into the positive elements of recreation and parks, and captures participants’ dreams of the future. This process was complemented by an online survey, three Saanich staff review sessions and one cross-generational “Summit”.

In the data-collection phase of the project, the Core Team (staff and consultant), the Youth Research Team and the Community Project Team worked together to facilitate community events and compile initial findings. In the analysis and writing phase, extensive feedback from youth and stakeholders has been incorporated into the final plan. As part of our ongoing commitment to this foundation of engagement, we have included in this document specific goals, actions and outcomes which will ensure that we will continue to honour the youth voice in our community as we move forward with implementation.



What have we learned about the changes youth have experienced since 2003?

While a portion of Saanich youth continue to be successfully involved in sports and cultural activities, a growing majority of youth report being uninvolved in active participation. The following changes have influenced our strategic priorities:

Sedentary: Youth ages 15-18 are now sedentary 9.5 hours per day. The 2015 ParticipACTION Report Card states that only 5% of 12-17 year-olds meet the daily recommendation of physical activity. At the same time, school sports and extra-curricular options for non-elite athletes have seen steady cutbacks.

Anxiety: An increasing prevalence of youth stress and anxiety was reported by Saanich youth and school counselors. Youth explained that they were affected by a number of influences: family financial pressures, balancing studies with the need to earn income through part-time work, high expectations, and emotional vulnerability related to a steady flow of “likes” and “dislikes” coming through social media. These alarming variables were shown to compound mental health-related disorders while reflecting an already fragile state of self-identity in many youth respondents.

Changing Face of Youth: Increasingly, youth are identifying themselves as being distinct from the mainstream due to cultural identity, economic, physical, cognitive or other differences, and describing formidable barriers to participation in traditional recreation programming.

Over-Protection: A great number of youth reported feeling like “bubble-wrapped kids” protected by hyper-parenting. “Everything is just too safe” claimed one student. Parents continue to get caught within the ‘protection paradox’: If they protect too much when children are young then as these children age, they do not develop the resiliency, judgement or confidence to make wise decisions as young people.

Nature Deficit: Youth are reporting a lack of unstructured outdoor play opportunities and spaces that offer risk and chance for personal growth.

Costs: Due to increased cost of living for families in Saanich, youth access to programs presents many barriers including program fees, transportation time and cost. Recreation is often seen as a luxury expense.

Introductory Activities: Youth reported that they wanted more entry points to try new activities in an introductory, non-competitive, youth-friendly setting.

Skill Deficit: Due to reduction in Kindergarten to Grade 5 Physical Education emphasis, fewer youth are developing basic physical literacy skills, rendering them less capable and confident to try new sports in adolescent years.

Involvement in Creating Recreation: An increasing number of youth want to be involved in decisions that affect them, including leadership, volunteering and program design.



How do we define “Youth”?

Youth are individuals between the ages of 11–18 years of age.



How do we define “Recreation”?

“Recreation is a fundamental human need and includes a range of activities. It is the experience that results from freely chosen participation in physical, social, intellectual, creative and spiritual pursuits that enhance individual and community well-being.”

(National Recreation Framework, 2015)

From our discussion and analysis of the results of our public engagement we have created a new Vision, Mission and set of Guiding Principles. Six strategic priorities supported by specific goals, actions and outcomes are detailed in our new implementation plan.

OUR VISION:

INSPIRED YOUTH, CREATING THEIR FUTURE

OUR MISSION:

- Create with youth, welcoming and inclusive experiences through programs, services and partnerships
- Seek out and facilitate innovative opportunities for youth
- Sustain successful programs and services for youth
- Create space for youth participation in our parks, facilities and services
- Foster youth citizenship and leadership initiatives throughout our community

OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES:

- Offering quality programs, services and facilities that support emotional, mental and physical health for youth
- Recognizing and responding to the diverse and changing needs of our youth population
- Reducing barriers and creating multiple ways for youth to participate in recreation and cultural experiences
- Engaging youth to participate in the decision-making process about the issues and services that affect them
- Nurturing respectful and positive relationships with youth
- Building community partnerships that increase youth recreational opportunities



Further description is available in Appendix 3.1 (page 44)

Our STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

1. *Increase Participation:*

With declining levels of youth participation in physical and cultural forms of recreation, our priority is to offer more affordable, accessible activities. We need to ‘go to where the youth are’, increase opportunities for introductory involvement, ensure activities are age-appropriate, provide programs and spaces that are youth-friendly and respectful of differences of identity (e.g., ethnicity, gender identity, economic), while involving youth in the co-creation of recreation initiatives.



Participation

2. *Collaboration:*

We intend to work strategically to increase shared responsibility for youth recreation with School Districts 61 and 63 and other community youth-serving partners, to strengthen partnerships and increase quality youth recreation opportunities.



Collaboration

3. *Risk and Outdoor Play:*

Responding to research and youth concerns, youth have been experiencing a deficit in unstructured outdoor experience along with a sense of being overprotected and “bubble-wrapped”. Youth are asking for more risk-related activity. This priority aims to change mindsets about the value of challenge, risk, failure and reward while increasing opportunities for more youth to engage in challenging indoor and outdoor activities.



Risk and Outdoor Play

4. *Social Wellbeing*

Day-to-day pressures on youth and shifting social norms have increased youth stress and anxiety. Many youth are struggling to find meaningful and rewarding ways to become involved in positive initiatives and leadership development. These reports have also challenged us to identify specific goals to expand opportunities for recreation to reduce stress and anxiety. We need to engage youth who find themselves outside the margins of current recreational offerings.



Social Wellbeing

5. *Youth Spaces*

Youth have confirmed the need to build programming and environments that respond to the unique needs and trends of their community. From this realization, we intend to reframe and expand current youth spaces with the aim of engaging a broader youth population.



Youth Spaces

6. *Communication*

Youth clearly stated they are not using our current system of communication. We intend to work with youth to align our communication methods with their preferred means of connecting with one another and their support systems. This will entail a multi-tiered, creative and responsive approach.



Communication

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STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

INTRODUCTION

From our discussions and analysis of the results of the public engagement sessions, we have refined six strategic priorities that will organize youth-focused actions for Parks and Recreation for the next five years of the Youth Development Strategy. The description and analysis of each strategic priority is presented in detail in the first section below. The second section is the Implementation Plan, presenting specific goals, actions and outcomes with timeframe and budget estimates for each of the six strategic priorities.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

- #1: Increase Participation
- #2: Collaboration
- #3: Risk and Outdoor Play
- #4: Social Wellbeing
- #5: Youth Spaces
- #6: Communication



Artwork by JoJo Zhuo

“I’d feel more welcome if we weren’t treated like children.”

(YDS Youth Survey, 2015)

What can Saanich do to increase youth participation?

“Activities that are new and interesting to me, but that make me feel ok as a learner.”

“If I’m not an expert by a certain age, I can’t join.”

(YDS Youth Survey, 2015)

WHERE CAN WE IMPROVE?

Participation of youth ages 12-18 years is in serious decline. Our consultations and survey uncovered several reasons.

Cost: Over recent years, general challenges of family life have intensified due to rising costs of housing and day-to-day living, reportedly causing many families to perceive recreation as a luxury more than a necessity. For many, the cost of participation has become prohibitive. On the bright side, several youth reported appreciation for the financial support offered through Greater Victoria Active Communities L.I.F.E. program (Leisure Involvement For Everyone), the Canadian Tire Jumpstart program, local Kidsport funding and Saanich KidsFUNd that help mitigate the initial expense of participation.

Transportation: Youth described the challenges they face trying to travel to the events they deemed worthwhile. The expense, the time associated with awkward bus routes, or the pressures on parents to shuttle youth to distant places make participation difficult for those who don’t live in the proximity of recreation or parks. Many youth find the cost of public transportation, combined with the fees to participate, causes recreation to be more than they can afford.

Shifting Interests: A significant number of youth offered us stories of how their younger years were spent fully involved in recreation, sports or arts and how things changed in their early teen years. Factors cited included the activity demanding too much time and commitment, a desire to diversify activities, to have less stress and more fun, personal injuries, negative pressure from coaches and sometimes, they simply lacked the drive and motivation to keep pace with rising expectations of involvement. Across our consultations we noted a consistent pattern of participation “drop-off” in ages 12-14, when youth seem most likely to disengage from, or reduce, their participation in recreation.

Not Feeling Welcomed: We heard from youth in our community that they sometimes don’t feel welcome in our recreation centres and parks. Being misunderstood, being judged based on stereotypes, and the feeling that our centres and parks are for ‘little kids and old people’ all work towards a decrease in participation levels from youth.

Worried about starting something new: Another discovery in our project helped us understand why youth in the 12-16 age range have been reluctant to join new activities. Many described having a strong interest in starting a new sport or recreational activity, but being derailed by a variety of barriers. In some circumstances, they didn’t know where or how to get started in something new. Others were concerned they didn’t have the necessary ability, capacity or adequate equipment to join a new sport or activity. Some lacked the confidence to tackle new skills and others lacked the foundational physical skills to get started. Some feared they would not find a supportive, welcoming environment and others

thought they would be in a place without friends to support them. Some reported concern that their appearance and self-image would be mocked or were worried about looking stupid in the eyes of peers, while others said they were affected by perfectionistic instincts.

Diverse Identities: Other barriers described by youth were related to the unique set of challenges, abilities, identity and self-esteem issues faced by today’s youth. Youth affected by cognitive or physical abilities, challenges of poverty, lack of family support, as well as those whose diversity is shaped by their sexual orientation, gender identification (i.e. Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Queer Two Spirit (LGBTQ2+)), social groups or cultural identification explained how difficult it can be to engage in recreational activity.

Youth who identified as children of recent immigrants suggested that their orientation to recreation was impacted by family values that did not necessarily embrace the merit of recreation. The consultation reminded us of the importance of being respectful of the unique experiences and perspectives of Saanich’s immigrant populations, and being responsive to the unique needs of immigrant youth.

We learned that traditional recreation, culture and parks venues can serve mainstream youth effectively, but more intentional or focused effort to create programs and services may welcome participation of youth who perceive themselves on the “outside”.

Stress and Anxiety: The degree of stress and anxiety experienced by today’s youth was repeatedly cited as another factor that lessened their chance of participating in recreation and cultural activities. (This is explained further in the Strategic Direction: Social Wellbeing).

BUILDING THE YOUTH VOICE:

We were reminded throughout the public engagements that there are multiple benefits in ensuring that youth play an integral part in the decision making that affects them. This statement captures a core value that guides our new YDS. We want to move from a position of delivering products to youth consumers to engaging youth fully in the co-creation and stewardship of meaningful recreation experiences. This has emerged as one of the most significant priorities in Saanich’s new YDS. Chief Medical Officer of Island Health, Dr. Richard Stanwick, urges communities to embrace the importance of capturing student wisdom in planning and decision making: “Their [youth] voice can be really powerful when they share their stories and we need to ensure they have opportunities to do so” (Island Health, Fall 2015).

69% of respondents stated that addressing anxiety and mental health issues for youth would help improve participation.

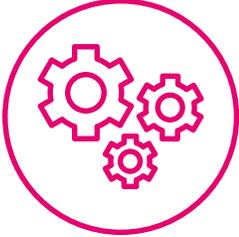
(YDS Youth Survey, 2015)

“Don’t ask youth what they want. Give youth the opportunity to do something and see what they do. That is what they want.”

(David Sadler, Community Services Coordinator, City of Surrey)

#2

STRATEGIC PRIORITY



“Working in partnership with community, we create opportunities for enrichment, sustain quality environments and support healthy lifestyles.”

Mission Statement of
Saanich Parks and Recreation

COLLABORATION

As described in Strategic Priority #1, we need to initiate actions that mitigate the deterrents of time, money and transportation. Testimonies by youth forced us to look beyond the traditional expectation that youth will travel to Saanich Recreation Centres and Teen Centres to access recreational opportunities. With a clearer understanding of the barriers to participation, we have begun to connect more directly to youth’s schools, supports and partners in our community.

Saanich has a long history of successful partnerships and collaboration. However, during the YDS consultations it became evident that Saanich Parks and Recreation could better serve youth recreation with a stronger effort to refresh and build relationships with the renewed purpose of working toward shared goals with partners. As we do not have the capacity to meet all of Saanich youth’s recreational needs, we must collaborate more often with a wide range of youth community partners and support the work they are doing.

Central to our YDS orientation to community collaboration are the principles of Asset-Based Community Development as conceived by Jim Diers*. In short, “have fun”, start where people are and focus on their passions, strive for concrete results from the collective action, utilize people’s strengths and assets, lead by stepping back and sharing leadership, celebrate success, and share stories that will inspire.¹

GO TO WHERE THE YOUTH ARE ...

Historically, schools provided a broad range of recreational and sports options during and after school. These options, however, have steadily diminished for the majority of middle and secondary students. During the past ten years, educational budget cuts have led to a dramatic reduction in funding for sports, recreation and arts programs. There has also been a shift from non-competitive options toward revenue-generating sports academies and specialty programs. At the same time, fewer teachers and volunteers are available to support mainstream teams and intramural sports, partially due to declining enrolment and an aging teaching force. These trends all point to the importance of exploring future recreation opportunities in partnership with schools.

¹ * Diers, Jim. 2004 Neighbor Power; Building Community the Seattle Way. University of Washington Press

HAS THIS TREND ALREADY BEGUN?

In recent years a modest representation of programs and events created through Saanich Recreation and local school partnerships have offered a successful response to student needs at specific schools. Typically these activities occurred as a result of localized, trusting relationships between Saanich staff and school teachers or administrators who share a commitment to involving youth more actively in recreational pursuits.

Youth in our engagement sessions strongly supported the idea of increasing recreational activity, fine arts and health education at their schools during or after school hours. They contended this would reduce barriers related to access, time and transportation. Of interest, some families who are new to Canada may not be familiar with recreation centres, but consider schools as safe environments. Thus youth felt their parents would be more confident with children participating in after-school activity at schools they consider familiar and safe. Moreover many parents report searching for healthy after-school experiences for their children that require minimum driving or busing.

Discussions with School Districts 61 and 63 this past year have pointed to the merits of deepening and expanding school-located recreation activity. During our YDS Project Team meetings, we determined that the next phase of the relationship between Saanich and the school districts should be based on a comprehensive review and revision of agreements that will serve to clarify shared understandings and partnership values, with the goal of building greater sustainability and acceptance of Saanich Recreation involvement at the school level.

Our community consultations discovered that Saanich and other youth-serving agencies were sometimes guilty of working in isolation, and/or duplication and redundancy of youth services in selected areas. Tighter inter-agency collaboration with youth-serving organizations will strive to increase youth participation and entry-level opportunities for youth in sports, recreation, arts and community service clubs (e.g., fall baseball, squash club, night league basketball, Girl Guides, Scouts, cadets, North Saanich shooting club, The Boulders Climbing Gym - youth membership, etc.)

Beyond the school community and other agencies are the ethnic communities of Saanich, some of which, by anecdotal reports, are under-represented in the various Saanich recreational venues. With respect to Saanich Parks and Recreation's relationship with local First Nations, during our consultation phase we became aware of some of the assumptions we had been making about how best to connect with the local Aboriginal community. Understanding that there is no formal First Nation band existing inside the Saanich municipal boundaries, we were limited in access to those offices outside Saanich. We approached the Victoria Native Friendship Centre (VNFC) to inquire about engaging with their youth and youth staff. We were made aware of the very intense demand on this particular community and how our lack of relationship hinders meaningful access to the youth with whom we hoped to have an authentic dialogue. We learned



Speaking to local community leaders at the Union of British Columbia Municipalities convention in September 2014, Tsilhqot'in Chief Percy Guichon said, "We do live side-by-side and we need to work on a relationship to create or promote a common understanding among all our constituents ... we need to find the best way forward to consult with each other, regardless of what legal obligations might exist. I mean, that's just neighbourly, right? ... We need to find ways to work together, to support one another on these difficult topics).

(Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015, p. 301.)

that those youth who attend VNFC programs are routinely subjected to requests for input from various government and research agencies. Without any previous context to engage these youth, we did not want to create just another token discussion. We concluded that to engage with the Aboriginal youth community in a meaningful way, we need to take time to build these relationships. Once these relationships are established, we will be able to have a constructive dialogue that will help us build ways we can work together to benefit Aboriginal youth.

The recent Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's recommendations for Municipal Government includes a call to action for municipal government: "We call upon federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal governments to provide education to public servants on the history of Aboriginal peoples, including the history and legacy of residential schools, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Treaties and Aboriginal rights, Indigenous law, and Aboriginal-Crown relations. This will require skills-based training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and anti-racism (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015, p. 271).

Similar observations have been made regarding other ethnically diverse groups within Saanich. Saanich Commonwealth Place, for example, was responsive to a request from the Indo-Canadian community to host a special event commemorating the Komagata Maru incident, resulting in new connections with that community. From these experiences we realize that Saanich Parks and Recreation can be more accessible if we recognize and respond to the needs of our multi-ethnic communities and do as much as possible to reflect their unique identities in Saanich programs and services.

Through Saanich's participation at the Community Partner Network table, much positive work has already been done to support the Inter-Cultural Association of Greater Victoria and Victoria Immigrant and Refugee Centre Society to support their populations. We realize that more can be done to support youth from varied cultural backgrounds and newcomers to Canada.

Our Community Partners include:

- | | |
|---|--|
| School Districts 61 and 63 | Independent schools |
| Recreation Integration Victoria | Parent Advisory Council / District PAC / Victoria |
| Community Living Victoria | Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils |
| Community sports organizations | School-based clubs (e.g., Queer Straight Alliance) |
| Community arts organizations | Victoria Native Friendship Centre |
| Island Health Authority | YWCA and Boys and Girls Clubs |
| Ministry of Children and Family Development | Municipal Parks and Recreation Departments |
| Faith-based organizations | Non-profit agencies |
| Multicultural services agencies | For-profit businesses |
| Community/residents' associations | |

RISK AND OUTDOOR PLAY

#3

**STRATEGIC
PRIORITY**



In reviewing the stories we heard, through surveys and youth engagement sessions, many youth perceive that the activities available to them have become “too safe”. One student explained he felt that he was being “bubble-wrapped”. Participants expressed a need for experiences in which they can make their own decisions and be responsible for the outcomes and consequences, successes and failures alike. As a generation that has experienced more “helicopter parenting” than any previous, we heard them articulate a need for space and time that is not overly structured, supervised or tightly controlled, a time where they can experience risk while building self-confidence, resiliency and self-regulation. Their comments extended beyond programs to the physical spaces they use in their communities.

A conservative view would suggest that recreational, cultural and parks experiences should be minimizing risk wherever possible with recreation and parks professionals being trained to identify and reduce risk. While many people in our public consultations acknowledged the importance of respecting safety considerations, they were clear in their assertion that recreational experiences and park use should offer a healthy balance of safety and risk.

The latter perspective is one that seems to be gaining momentum across segments of our population. For the first time in decades, a generation of parents is exhibiting a newly realized comfort with weaving appropriate levels of risk back into their children’s lives. We heard from these parents of the need to include more opportunities for challenging active outdoor play within our recreation and parks system.

At the same time, schools are designing new outdoor classrooms and increased experiential education venues, with the goal of improving cognitive and physical functions, as well as building appreciation for the natural environment.

It’s also important to give youth opportunities to experience healthy risk in the realm of arts and culture. The risk of expression means putting oneself on the line in public speaking, performance or offering one’s creations in public display, all of which represent real risk and chance of failure, a natural aspect of learning in the arts.

Over 90% of respondents agreed that there needs to be more opportunity for challenging, risky outdoor play choices.

(YDS Youth Survey, 2015)



“Our recreation centres and parks are for little kids and old people.”

(YDS Youth Survey, 2015)

ATTRIBUTES OF SUCCESSFUL RISK AND OUTDOOR PLAY

What are the attributes of skate parks, climbing walls, BMX parks, bike-skills parks and challenging arts performance venues that make them so compelling for youth? Key attributes include:

- Offers a physical structure with wide range of levels or entry points from which to choose
- Entails self-determination and choice; challenge and accomplishment
- Indirect (or free from) monitoring or adult supervision
- Very real possibility of immediate success and failure
- Understanding that there is a possibility of personal risk in the form of injury (or humiliation), but under most conditions, not life-threatening

Skate parks offer the clearest example of success, as seen in Saanich’s Lambrick Skate Park (located beside Gordon Head Recreation Centre and Lambrick Park High School). Skate parks have attracted generation after generation of youth to their challenges. They are highly utilized, meet youth’s needs for activity and risk, and have proven consistently to be an excellent investment in youth. New skate parks are being built across Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta, with some BC municipalities answering youth demand for adventure with expanded youth parks and long board tracks (e.g., Kamloops in 2013).

It is important that those making decisions understand clearly the distinction between real risk and perceived risk. Healthy outdoor adventure activities invite perception of risk, but the real risk is minimized. According to researcher Dr. Ellen Sandseter (Associate Professor at Queen Maud University College of Early Childhood Education, Norway), risky play exposes children to stimuli they may have feared, such as heights, speed, or the unknown. “As the child’s coping skills improve, these situations and stimuli may be mastered and no longer feared”. Dr. Sandseter suggests that hindering children from participating in risky play may result in an increase in neuroticism and phobias later in life.

With much recent research pointing to the overwhelmingly negative health implications of raising children to be risk-averse, this is the time to begin to shift our perceptions of risk to include the benefits of seemingly ‘risky’ activities in the outdoors, aligning with Dr. Sandseter’s suggestion of making play “as safe as necessary, not as safe as possible”¹. There is a groundswell of evidence which has culminated in the recent Position Statement on Active Outdoor Play as part of the ParticipACTION Report Card 2015².



¹ Journal of Evolutionary Psychology 2011

² <http://www.participaction.com/report-card-2015/about-the-participaction-report-card/>

One of the key messages adopted in the Report Card reads: “The biggest risk is keeping kids indoors”. The Position Statement was developed by the Healthy Active Living The ParticipACTION Statement and Obesity Research Group at the Children’s Hospital of Eastern Ontario Research Institute, along with a group of 12 other organizations, and was supported by over 1,600 stakeholders from across Canada and around the world.

The research points out that in our attempts to safeguard our children from the potential risks associated with growing up, we are in fact causing more harm than good. The ParticipACTION Report recommends, “It’s time to let kids be kids again, and for parents, it’s time to get out of the way, and let them play.”

As part of its recommendations, the report suggests all Canadian municipalities examine existing policies and by-laws and reconsider those posing a barrier to active outdoor play. Acknowledging the vital importance of providing opportunities for youth to engage in these valuable, and developmentally beneficial activities, this strategy is recommending an endorsement of this ParticipACTION Position Statement and Saanich Parks and Recreation will strive to reflect its broader message of change through programs, services and strategic partnerships.

As we move ahead to identify specific goals, actions and outcomes in this strategic priority, our decisions are also guided and supported by Saanich’s 2012 Parks, Recreation and Culture Master Plan that outlines the goal of expanding outdoor youth recreation opportunities: “Create diverse and accessible youth outdoor recreation opportunities – explore opportunities for BMX trails, skateboard parks or nodes, rock climbing, geocaching, and other initiatives that have high appeal to young people.”

ParticipACTION Position Statement:

“Access to active play in nature and outdoors—with its risks—is essential for healthy child development. We recommend increasing children’s opportunities for self-directed play outdoors in all settings—at home, at school, in child care, the community and nature.”

<http://www.participaction.com/report-card-2015/>

“We need more and better use and access to green spaces/parks - with a youth focus.”

(YDS Youth Survey, 2015)



#4

STRATEGIC PRIORITY



SOCIAL WELLBEING

Youth told us about the need for Saanich to address a spectrum of youth needs missing in traditional school and family experience. Youth presented a clear case for increasing programs and experiences in which they can build self-confidence, self-understanding and the belief one can have a positive impact on something. They also spoke of the importance of having experiences that help them gain self-awareness, resiliency and leadership capacities. This reinforces the notion that Saanich should sustain its original focus on building developmental assets for youth, a central goal of the 2003 Youth Development Strategy. Specific suggestions from youth include designing recreational activities for various entry levels as well as leadership development opportunities and workshops related to a range of topics from sexual health to life skills.

Many youth explained how they have gained powerful work experience and life-skills through involvement with a variety of Saanich’s recreation and cultural programs. They mentioned excellent youth leadership development and volunteering opportunities through the existing Teens In Action program, Internship program, Community Youth Team and the Saanich Youth Council. Youth have put forward clear hopes that the opportunities might be expanded. Specifically, youth have highlighted the need to find programs offering meaningful experience, life skills and practical employment preparation. Youth asked about expanding internships to non-recreational Saanich departments such as Information Technology, Parks Planning, Police or Public Works.

Over the past three years, 271 youth have applied to volunteer with Saanich Recreation Volunteer Services, and 163 youth ages 12-18 are currently active volunteers in the program. To support the expansion of youth development and youth contribution to the next phase of the YDS, Saanich staff need to coordinate the system for building the youth volunteer base. This might begin with streamlining the volunteer training and recruitment process to ensure the number of pre-requisites and entry criteria youth applicants need are comparable with the level and type of volunteer activity for which they are applying. This change will benefit both the applicant and Saanich Recreation Volunteer Services.

Some of these expressed needs relate to social and mental wellness. As introduced in Strategic Priority #1, more youth are being negatively affected by stress and anxiety. Adults in the project, particularly school counselors, emphasized today’s youth are affected by stress and anxiety in unprecedented ways. Harmful levels of stress are causing them to reduce engagement in all activities leading to a vicious downward spiral. It is well known that recreational and physical activity serves to mitigate stress. Youth explained that stress and anxiety are caused by pressure to accomplish too many things; academic achievement, social involvement



and striving for peer approval, fatigue, homework, part-time jobs, and general family-related stress.

While some research suggests that youth’s social and relationship needs are being enhanced by digital media, these appear to be counter-balanced by a series of negative effects. Youth spend an average of 9.5 hours per day with technology (ParticipACTION Report Card 2015). With increased time spent in the virtual world, less time is spent in recreation and physical activities. Mental health, self-confidence and physical health tend to be compromised. It was also reported that self-esteem and self-confidence are being negatively affected by the immediacy of peer feedback in social media. For example, many youth explained how the power of Facebook “likes” and “dislikes” deeply affect their self-esteem.

In our consultations we also found many youth find themselves left on the margins of recreational and cultural opportunities due to several sources of diversity;

- sexual or social orientation, gender identification, cultural identification; poverty;
- youth with physical disabilities; those with cognitive disabilities;
- families that do not value conventional recreation in a Canadian context due to ethnic background, and families for whom recreation holds little value;
- and those affected by health issues (e.g., mental health, immune disorders, diabetes, allergies, high anxiety, obesity, etc.) and some families that have non-traditional family situations (e.g., foster care).

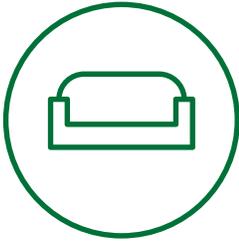
While our project also found that some, perhaps many, challenged youth have built resiliency and adapted their capacity to work creatively with the opportunities available, and that real progress has been made in reaching out to diverse populations, all participants suggested specific ways that Saanich could adapt programs and facilities to better accommodate diversity.

Youth supported expanding opportunities that were focused on diversity, suggesting programs that could be offered by Saanich Recreation that would better serve those who are currently finding recreational programming either inaccessible or unwelcoming. Feedback from school counsellors and community representatives suggested that there is plentiful training for those working with youth mental health, but we need to work together to bring that professional knowledge more directly into the resources and programs available to youth.



#5

STRATEGIC PRIORITY



YOUTH SPACES

Teen Centres in three of Saanich’s Recreation Centre provide direct programs, drop-in activities and space for youth to meet, serving a modest population of youth in the community. A youth programmer is responsible for each of the three Teen Centres, and they are supported by frontline leaders.

The Teen Centres have evolved since their creation. The initial momentum leading to their creation was generated by specific needs of youth in the 1990s to have a safe and understanding environment beyond home and school. In recent years the numbers of youth participating in the drop-in times have diminished, as the original focus or intention of refuge seems not to be perceived as critical as it once was. In the latest Saanich Recreation and Parks Customer Survey of 2012, the use of Teen Centres reflected a slight decline in youth participation. While a very small number of youth in our public engagements spoke about being attracted to the drop-ins at today’s centres, a core group of regular attendees clearly benefits from the support and social connection they enjoy at the centres.

The reasons for the decline in participation may be traced to several factors:

- The advent of technology and social media has made ‘physical meeting points’, such as Teen Centres, a lesser priority for some, as they have replaced much of their face-to-face time with digital networking;
- Some youth, parents and community members during the public engagement sessions talked about how they held a negative image of Teen Centres, explaining they had a sense that rough kids hang about outside peddling drugs - consequently not considering them as viable options. While they are designed to be safe and social places for youth, “Most youth do not know what Teen Centres are for – they have a perception that they are for youth who need help... and I don’t think that is an accurate perception”¹;
- Commuting as a way of life has ‘driven’ youth to access a variety of programs and services (including schools) beyond their neighbourhoods;
- There are many more social, recreational opportunities for youth than existed in the late 1990s, all competing for a shrinking youth population.



¹ Participant in Community Consultation

In their early phase Teen Centres focused on afternoon and evening drop-in times. In recent years, the drop-in times have been reduced, and a variety of program options were introduced: breakfast drop-in; skateboarding skills; guys' group; girls' group; evening youth swim, Friday night skate and tickets to Saanich Braves hockey games. Teen centres have also recently broadened their mandate to enable seniors and intergenerational groups to make use of the physical spaces in the centres.

Since their inception, Teen Centres have responded to the changing interests and needs of youth in their neighbourhoods. In the early days program options were initiated by both staff and youth. In recent years, while some drop-in times were reduced where it made sense, others were created as needed. Strategy games, partnerships with Victoria Immigrant and Refugee Centre Society and Didi Society are examples of Teen Centres building from society's needs and youth interests. In response to the specific needs recently expressed by youth during our YDS project, Fall 2015 has seen the creation of the Youth Arts Experiment, digital film making lab, drop-in sessions for Queer, Trans and Allied Youth and multigenerational play opportunities at Saanich Teen Centres.

During the project, specific meetings were held with Saanich Youth Services and Recreation staff to consider the future of Teen Centres. One of the key issues discussed was staffing formulae. It was a common understanding that the front-line work in many of the programs was best done by youth leaders who exhibited youthful and playful approaches to building relationships with youth. Their ability to be authentically engaged, relating to youth experiences and struggles, is key to motivating youth to participate and remain connected.

The Youth Programmers in charge of the Teen Centres offer expertise in many of the areas of recreation work – including creation of programs, recruitment, marketing, hiring, assessing and evaluating programs and liaison with other youth-serving agencies. With these capacities, and the substantive funding that supports the programmer positions, the question is: How can the roles and responsibilities of programmers be shaped in a way that their skills and professional capacities can be best applied to the priorities identified in the YDS? With the shift toward partnerships with schools, we will need to review and adjust the Youth Programmers' role address this strategic priority.

In summary, we envision Teen Centres being even more accessible and utilized by different groups of youth and recognized as a hub for youth services – whether as drop-ins for middle school students; lifeskills or certification opportunities; learning to plan; shop and cook nutritionally healthy meals; experiment in the multimedia studio; hosting diverse youth groups; or partners using the space for youth programs.



#6

STRATEGIC PRIORITY



COMMUNICATION

How does the Saanich public typically find information about recreation, cultural and parks opportunities? The Recreation Customer Survey 2012 revealed a dramatic shift between 2009 and 2012. The use of Facebook to access information about Saanich programs shifted from 5% usage in 2009 to close to 40% in 2012. In 2012, 80% of respondents had social media accounts. At the same time, usage of direct mail and newspaper for accessing information decreased by almost 50% of 2009 levels, but still represented a significant proportion of the population reliant on traditional media. Interesting too was the change in Saanich Recreation website use as a means to access recreation information, decreasing from about 50% to 35% during the same three years. When asked about whether e-mail was a preferred means of communicating with Saanich Recreation, 40% said they were on the Saanich list, 20% requested that they be added to the list, and 40% requested not to be on email list.

One might safely conclude, based on the above statistics, that to access the youth audience, social media should be our main focus. However, it was a surprise to then learn from our sessions with youth that this conclusion did not match with what we heard. Repeatedly, youth said they did not pay attention to marketing and advertisements coming across Facebook and similar social media channels.

Additionally, most youth acknowledged they were largely oblivious to most Saanich youth opportunities and other forms of community information, including that provided in the Active Living Guide. They also reported that they don't generally pay close attention to school announcements, newsletters, and e-mails, all of which have been purposeful communication channels for marketing recreation and parks opportunities.

However, they do learn about programs and events through word of mouth. Youth share information via evolving social media platforms (e.g. Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, etc). They also respond to a presence or voice at the ground level – offered through presentations to classes, leadership groups and colourful youth-designed posters on the school walls. These suggested methods of communication are a departure from Saanich Parks and Recreation's current communication strategies. Youth are more socially connected than ever before, and share among peers with ease when discovering new and interesting content. Most importantly, face-to-face interactions are as valuable as their digital connectedness.¹



1 Reference: www.rocketfund.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/Youth-Media-Tech-ShawRocketFund-Sept19-2014.pdf

In our youth engagement sessions, we also learned about the elements that youth want to see in programming: a welcoming environment, accessibility, cost, inclusivity, peer involvement, novelty and risk, again reinforcing the importance that the reassurance of a welcoming environment, accessibility, cost, inclusivity, peer involvement, novelty, and risk all are important in the eyes of the youth who are appraising their options.

It also became apparent in the public engagement sessions that Saanich is not the only community agency whose programs are broadly advertised yet fail to reach the youth audience. The challenge was shared amongst many agencies that offer programming.

From this starting point, combined with a fresh incentive to deepen school partnerships and continue our commitment to “go to youth”, the new implementation plan is intended to respond to the shifting communication channels preferred by youth.

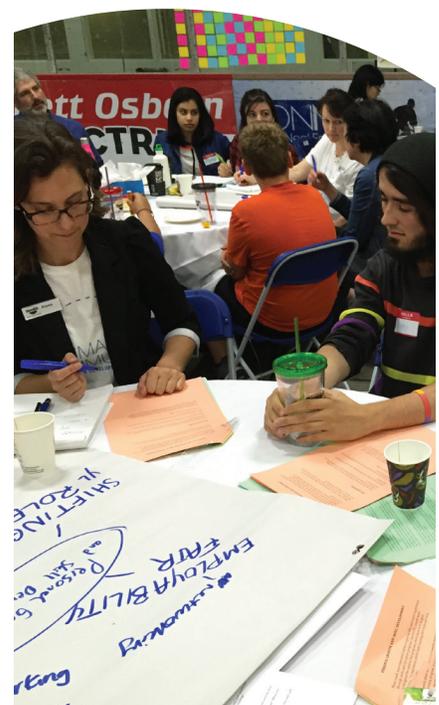
Of prime importance is our intention to work with youth as co-creators in the design of better systems to communicate to and with youth. The best way to reach youth is to support them in reaching their peers through the creation of dynamic, responsive and relevant methods.

How should we best communicate with youth?

“Teens listen to teens.”

“There seem to be a lot of opportunities but I don’t know about them.”

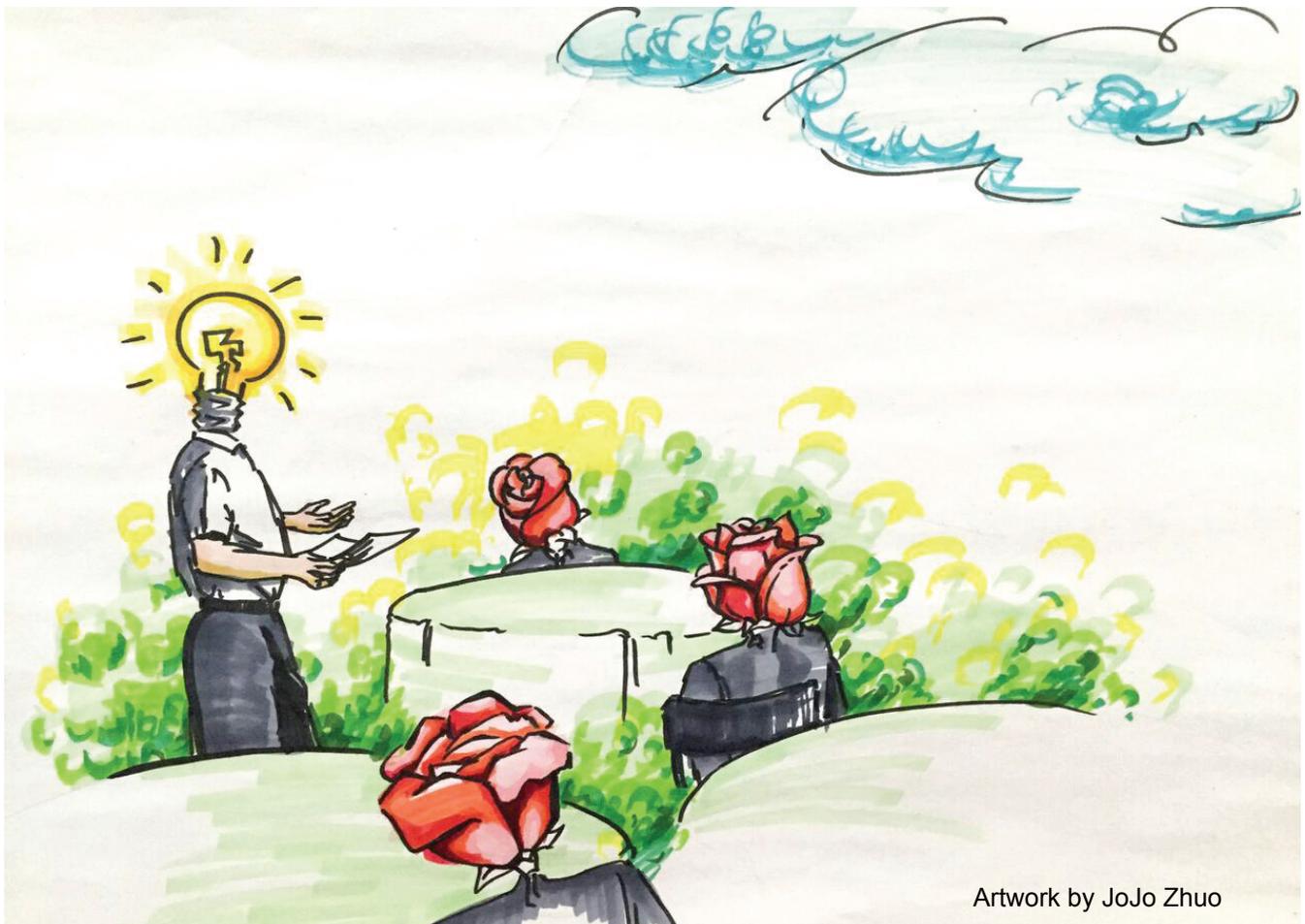
(YDS Youth Survey, 2015)



FROM IDEAS TO ACTION...

Building the elements of our Six Strategies
into our new YDS IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Unless specifically indicated as Youth Programmers' responsibilities,
a variety of Saanich Parks and Recreation staff will be responsible
and involved in accomplishing these goals and actions.



Artwork by JoJo Zhuo



#1

INCREASE PARTICIPATION

GOAL	ACTION	OUTCOME
Engage youth in making decisions about program and service design	Directly involve youth in the co-creation of programs and services. (see more in Collaboration)	Youth decision making opportunities are evaluated by youth 🕒 2016-2020
	Youth Programmers work with youth and supporting organizations to determine needs, goals and outcomes relevant to them	Programs are co-created with youth and partners 🕒 2016-2020
Increase entry points for youth to try new activities at different points during their teen years	Complete a scan of current Saanich youth programs and identify opportunities to offer new or repurpose existing offerings to be introductory-level programs	Completed inventory of recreation programs and related recommendations for new programs 🕒 2016
	Initiate discussions with district and school staff about specific school population needs and interests regarding introductory level programs at the schools	Offer introductory-level programming at interested schools (see Collaboration) 🕒 2016-2020
	Create new introductory-level programs at recreation centres and parks to encourage youth to try something new in friendly environments	Offer and promote additional affordable introductory-level youth programs per season 🕒 2017-2020
	Initiate discussions with Aquatics and Fitness Programmers and Centre Managers recommending late-night access to swims, skates and weightroom specifically for youth 15-18 years. Resource requests to be determined	New late-night recreation options for youth aged 15-18 available 🕒 2017 💰 Resource TBD
	Enhance youth collaboration with recreation centres by enhancing and hosting youth activities	Funding approved 🕒 2017-2020 💰 \$4,500/year
	Submit budget request for 2017	
	Work with local sports and arts organizations to provide entry-level opportunities for youth of all ages (e.g., Cedar Hill Squash Club provides free equipment and entry-level instruction in a youth-friendly environment)	New connections are made and entry points for youth are offered in a variety of settings 🕒 2016-2020

INCREASE PARTICIPATION

GOAL	ACTION	OUTCOME
Ensure youth feel welcomed and supported in our facilities by all Parks and Recreation staff and volunteers	Provide internal training and education for all staff and volunteers working in Parks and Recreation facilities regarding serving diverse needs of youth and connecting with youth through positive interactions	All staff and volunteers are trained to greet, welcome and interact with youth; youth know they are welcome in our parks and recreation facilities  2017
	With youth, identify or create a tool to assess youth-friendly practices in facilities. Provide recommendations for improvements	Tool created or identified  2017
		With youth, host one assessment per year per facility. Recommendations are implemented  2018-2020
Continue to reduce cost barriers for youth	Conduct review of Saanich Recreation's Fees and Charges policy to explore opportunity for Child Rate to be broadened to include youth ages 11-18 years, and determine Student Rate for post-secondary students	Recommend changes to Parks, Trails and Recreation Committee for Fall 2016 for approval in budget 2017  2017
	Initiate discussion between Saanich L.I.F.E. Programmer and Youth Services Team to review current L.I.F.E. offerings for youth and recommend ways that Saanich can enhance existing levels of service and awareness to youth	Expanded Saanich-based L.I.F.E. youth benefits and ease of access for youth  2016
	Engage with regional L.I.F.E. partners to determine feasibility of increased benefits for youth; develop and present set of recommendations to regional managers for an increase of L.I.F.E. benefits for youth	Expanded regional L.I.F.E. youth benefits and ease of access for youth, if approved regionally  2017
	Engage with Inter-Municipal Youth Recreation Programmers regarding the creation of a Regional Youth Recreation Access Pass. Present recommendations to Greater Victoria Active Communities (Inter-Municipal) Committee	A Regional Youth Recreation Access Pass is created  2018
	Identify where sport equipment exchange programs exist and promote with local sports organizations and clubs	Provide free rental space when possible for organizers to host equipment exchange days. L.I.F.E. Programmer to include equipment swap programs in L.I.F.E. information  2017

INCREASE PARTICIPATION

GOAL	ACTION	OUTCOME
Ensure that recreation facilities and parks are progressing toward optimal access for youth with various physical and cognitive abilities	Work with Recreation Integration Victoria, Community Living Victoria and partners to continue and improve recreation services and programs	Meet with partner organizations annually to assess level of service  2017
Create "Safer Spaces" for disadvantaged youth, which may include indigenous, immigrant, LGBTQ2+ and socially isolated youth	Youth Programmers will continue to build relationships with groups of youth who are not accessing recreation due to social marginalization and/or isolation as a direct result of their identity	Increased connections between Youth Programmers and socially isolated groups of youth  2016-2020
	Identify unique needs and co-create programs and services as needed for youth participation (eg. transgender, cultural)	New programs or services offered that support diverse groups  2016
	Support anti-transphobia and anti-homophobia training to assist Parks and Recreation staff to feel more comfortable and aware	Staff training and awareness sessions have happened across the department  2016
	Offer training to staff and volunteers related to building cross-cultural understanding and communication across cultural boundaries	Safe Harbour training conducted for department. Offer additional training and awareness as available and needed  2016
	Provide input to and seek suggestions from the Healthy Saanich Advisory Committee LGBTQ sub-committee	Enhanced staff awareness of connecting with this specific community  2016



#2

COLLABORATION

GOAL	ACTION	OUTCOME
Renew relationships and agreements with School Districts 61 and 63 regarding youth Recreation and Parks opportunities located in middle and high schools in Saanich	Initiate discussions between School Districts and Parks and Recreation to form agreements that support recreation and cultural opportunities for students in Middle and High Schools	Meetings held with each district 2016 Potential new agreements and/or revised existing agreements are in place and signed 2017
	Youth Programmers create a framework for working with specific schools in the communities surrounding the Teen Centres	Youth Programmers are working with an identified group of schools and have a familiarity with the culture, staff and youth at each school 2016
	Invite discussions and deepen relationships with schools, administration, counsellors, teachers, district and school PACs who are committed to youth development and extracurricular opportunities	Youth Programmers meet regularly with school partners. Open communication is evident through invitations to school programs and events 2017-2020
	Develop an individualized school package that: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identifies the merits of recreation and outdoor experiences – the positive impact on youth health and benefits of easier access to activities in the school locations 2. Explores new recreation possibilities that may be suited to specific school population (E.g., support for arts, student certifications, outdoor play, intramurals, bike skills programs, learn-to-skate, learn-to-swim programs, etc.) 3. Outlines ways Saanich might support Professional Development days for school staff related to recreation and health issues important to youth 4. Specifies and lists entry points and ways to access financial assistance 	Comprehensive package developed and shared with schools to assist in the co-creation of new programs Programs and services that fit the needs of particular schools are offered during school and after school hours Professional Development opportunities for staff and students are offered 2017

COLLABORATION

GOAL	ACTION	OUTCOME
Create a Youth Development Start-Up Fund to engage youth in the co-creation of events, programs and services including arts, culture, recreation, sports, clubs, meet-ups and/or outdoor play	Youth Programmers create criteria and a youth-friendly, accessible and timely process for administering Youth Development Start-up Fund, including a report-back mechanism, available to youth, school groups, clubs and youth partners	Criteria and application process in place and promoted to schools and youth on annual basis  2016
	Community Youth Team (CoYoTe) to review and approve applications using criteria with assistance from Youth Programmer	Annual funding distributed for youth-initiated events, programs and services
	Youth Development Start-Up Fund is promoted to youth, middle and high schools, including Youth and Family Counsellors, and other youth-serving organizations Submit budget request for 2017	Youth organizations and school staff regularly refer youth to this fund, as evidenced in their application (i.e. how did you hear about this funding?) Funding approved  2017-2020  \$3,000/year
Host Youth Summit to sustain the positive relationships and connections that have been generated through public engagement process of YDS	Facilitate intentional discussions and relationship building between Saanich Youth Services and youth population as well as youth serving organizations Submit budget request for 2017	Participate in or host one youth summit annually that focuses on continuing the dialogue about youth needs and interests Funding approved  2017-2020  \$500/year
Increase internal department collaboration related to increasing youth recreation	Host youth think tank with all school-age and youth programmers, Parks and Saanich Police and other interested parties	Meetings held to increase collaboration between Saanich departments  2016-2020
Collaborate with Regional Youth Service agencies and networks	Advocate the YDS Strategic Priorities with Youth Services Providers Network, Child and Youth Health Network, Island Health Authority, District Queer Straight Alliances, Ministry for Child and Family Development and other partners	Youth Services are represented at regional meetings  2016
Promote community understanding and create community partnerships to support youth programs, services and events	Identify key community organizations that support youth health and recreation. Present the Youth Development Strategy to community organizations with invitation to explore stronger partnerships in areas of mutual interest. Create effective presentation and resources for easy delivery. Identify agencies and contact them to share plans	YDS presentations by Youth Programmers to key stakeholders in 2016  2016

COLLABORATION

GOAL	ACTION	OUTCOME
Build relationships with local Aboriginal organizations, communities and councils as well as immigrant and settlement service providers	Youth Programmers initiate a meeting structure that is mutually beneficial with Songhees Nation, Victoria Native Friendship Centre, Inter-Cultural Association of Greater Victoria and Victoria Immigrant Refugee Centre Society, and Community Partnership Network to support youth development in their communities	Increased understanding, clear identification and response to the needs of immigrant and Aboriginal youth  2016-2020
	Promote awareness regarding local Aboriginal territories and partners programs/services in the Teen Centres	Materials and visuals are available  2016-2020
Work with Inter-Municipal Youth Recreation Programmer Committee to increase youth participation in recreation	Initiate a review of purpose and recommend any changes to Greater Victoria Active Communities (GVAC)	Changes are implemented  2016-2017
Work with local youth-oriented sports, service, arts, recreation groups to cross-promote, support and partner programs that provide entry-level opportunities for youth	All Recreation Programmers and Technicians seek out opportunities for new partnerships with sports, arts, recreation and service groups/clubs/organizations to include: free/low-cost access to equipment/supplies, entry points for multiple youth ages, instruction and support for beginners in a non-competitive, youth-friendly and fun environment	Increased opportunities through partnerships and collaboration, and awareness in community of new opportunities Online list is created by December 2016. Ongoing support from Recreation Administration office
	Explore a sustainable model to list entry-level opportunities (e.g. communication hub) for youth in sports, arts, recreation and service groups/clubs/organizations (e.g. webpage on new Saanich website). Youth Programmers and Recreation Programmers identify, collect information and cross-promote when possible	Saanich and community organizations are aware of listing to promote their information, and support other organizations. Saanich promotes through Facebook campaign, ALG and other avenues



#3

RISK AND OUTDOOR PLAY

GOAL	ACTION	OUTCOME
Promote the benefits of outdoor play and risk with the goal of increasing the number and variety of outdoor opportunities	Endorse and adopt the ParticipACTION position statement on Active Outdoor Risk and Play (ParticipACTION 2015 Report) for both children and youth citizens	Department adoption of the Position Statement on Active Outdoor Risk and Play 🕒 2016
	Where appropriate, incorporate benefits of outdoor play in municipal documents (e.g. marketing materials, strategy documents, guiding plans)	Municipal plans reflect and incorporate the benefits of active outdoor play 🕒 2016-2020
	Champion outdoor play for youth in our programs, parks and services, provide outdoor program options, and promote outdoor options over indoor options	More opportunities are available for youth to participate in program-related activities and unstructured play in parks and open spaces 🕒 2016
	Propose new and inventive ideas into playground design, youth specific spaces and park features	Latest Parks designs reflect youth interest in outdoor play and risk 🕒 2016-2020 💰 Resources TBA
Create and utilize a Risk Benefit Assessment process when determining and reviewing activities, sites and programs for outdoor play	Work with Saanich Risk Management Section to develop an RBA process and tool for Programmers to use for future programming	RBA process includes a tool to be used for assessing risk for new and ongoing programs and services and as a result, new programs and partnerships that support outdoor play, adventure and risk are available to youth 🕒 2016-2017

RISK AND OUTDOOR PLAY

GOAL	ACTION	OUTCOME
Engage youth and youth champions (parents, grandparents, teachers etc.) in parks planning and decision-making processes for community parks, trails and open spaces	<p>Parks staff adopt youth-friendly practices to invite youth and youth champions to participate and engage in planning, which could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold initial planning meeting with Youth Services to help plan engagement with a wide range of youth. Consider the project from a youth perspective, and when the opportunity is available, youth participate on park planning and design committees • Develop youth-friendly promotional material including a social media presence geared to youth • ‘Go to where youth are’... in their settings to engage them and use creative methods of gathering input and engaging them in new projects • Provide incentives whenever possible to engage youth (i.e., food, bus tickets) • Ensure youth are provided the results of the engagements and that outcomes and any commitments are transparent and broadly available 	<p>Youth are integrated and involved in meaningful decision-making in Parks planning</p> <p> 2016-2020</p>
Enhance parks structures and components specifically for youth at existing Saanich Parks	Add new youth-focused elements in existing parks	<p>New features that include elements of risk, adventure and unstructured play are added to existing parks</p> <p> 2016-2020  Resource TBD</p>

RISK AND OUTDOOR PLAY

GOAL	ACTION	OUTCOME
Build a new Youth Park that offers elements designed to attract youth, promote adventure, assist in youth health and development, and increase physical activity levels such as bike skills, pump park, parkour, skate, ropes course, zipline and bouldering	Parks to initiate an examination of potential sites within the parks system for future youth parks	List of potential sites identified and prioritized 🕒 2017-2018
	Engage youth to plan the what, where and how a new youth park should be developed	Begin youth consultation process 🕒 2017-2018
	Develop clear planning processes for the design and construction of a new youth park that involves youth in meaningful way (e.g. Project Team)	Youth Project Team established 🕒 2017-2018
	Resource request developed	Resource request submitted 🕒 2016-2018 💰 Resource TBD
	Design and construct new youth park	Completion of a new youth park in Saanich which is easily accessible and caters to differing abilities 🕒 2018-2019



#4

SOCIAL WELLBEING

GOAL	ACTION	OUTCOME
Support positive mental health programs and resources for youth. Create awareness of how to mitigate the effects of high levels of stress and anxiety in youth population through parks and recreation	Promote recreation, culture and the arts as some avenues to support positive youth mental health specifically addressing alarming rates of anxiety, stress, depression and mental health issues	Youth are increasing the use of recreation activities to reduce the effects of stress and anxiety 🕒 2016-2020
	Design promotional tools to market the benefits of recreation for positive youth mental health	Tools and resources developed 🕒 2017
	Work with School Districts 61 and 63 counsellors and staff to enhance school initiatives regarding mental health. Share resources, develop supports (e.g., arts, introductory dance classes, walking club, facilitated outdoor play, learn to run, yoga, meditation, etc)	Pilot programs aimed at improving mental health started with SD 61 and 63 🕒 2017
	Collaborate with Victoria Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils (SD61) and Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils of Saanich (SD63) to host parent education/info sessions in a variety of venues and settings	One annual free parent education session is offered 🕒 2017-2020
	Support regional youth mental health initiatives	Provide liaison/actively participate with youth health partners 🕒 2016

SOCIAL WELLBEING

GOAL	ACTION	OUTCOME
Enhance spectrum of Youth Leadership and Development Opportunities	Continue to support and develop summer leadership programs including Teens In Action 1 and 2 (13-15 yrs) and Internship (16-18 yrs)	Training is relevant and sufficient that youth are developing necessary skills for leadership in summer recreation programs and well-positioned for future employment; greater numbers of youth involved with skill levels reported  2016-2020
	Continue to create opportunities for youth where they are actively contributing to recreation, parks and culture (e.g., Saanich Youth Council, Community Youth Team - CoYoTe, new Youth Communication Advisory Team)	Youth are respected as invaluable contributors and assets in the community, participating in meetings, and engaging in planning processes; Instances of youth actively involved in community initiatives recorded and summarized at year's end  2016-2020
	Explore additional municipal departments to host and support new Internship placements	New Intern opportunities within municipality; departments fund and support training and mentoring of youth interns  2018
	Develop new school year Youth Internship opportunities at Saanich Recreation Centres (e.g. Cedar Hill Arts Centre) as a pilot	Pilot internship placement (two per year)
	Submit budget request for 2017	Funding approved  2017-2020  \$2,000/year
	Initiate discussion with Saanich Police and Fire Departments to explore the possibility of offering Police and Fire Camps for youth, with support from Saanich Recreation	Meetings held with Saanich Police and Fire  2017
	Work with School Districts 61 and 63 to create volunteer opportunities for job shadowing, work experiences, and career/skill/transitions within Saanich Recreation and Parks, as well as other municipal departments	Explore with SD61 and SD63 (teachers, career coordinators and administration) the possibilities of student work experience in Recreation and other municipal departments  2017-2018
	Explore a partnership with Volunteer Victoria and other partners to streamline information and increase awareness of the opportunities of youth volunteerism	Partners in place and youth are volunteering in the community  2017

SOCIAL WELLBEING

GOAL	ACTION	OUTCOME
Continue to support and increase resources to the Saanich Youth Council (SYC) to provide meaningful opportunities for youth participation and involvement in the District of Saanich	Share the outcomes of the Youth Development Strategy with Legislative Services in order to develop a shared understanding of District's role in supporting the Saanich Youth Council	Annual meeting held with Legislative Services to support the Saanich Youth Council 2016-2020
	Increase the support and mentorship of the SYC by providing Youth Leader 1 support. (i.e. 5 hr/wk)	Funding approved 2017-2020 \$5,700/year
	Submit budget request for 2017	
	Develop a youth engagement 'toolkit' for District staff to enable and promote effective youth participation methods	Methods of facilitating youth participation are shared and used across the organization 2017
Develop a continuum for youth volunteer involvement in Saanich	Work with Saanich Recreation Volunteer Coordinator and Saanich programmers to develop a youth-friendly application process, mentoring and supports for youth volunteers	Youth volunteers find application process user friendly and placements are supportive of youth 2017
Support life skills, work-readiness, certifications, artistic practice and career development initiatives for youth to increase employability while contributing to youth well-being	Complete a scan of existing Saanich and regional offerings, and research successful models for programming and certification offered in other municipalities (e.g. Spring Break Certification week)	Courses are available to youth to support their work readiness skills in variety of locations throughout Saanich 2017
	Work with Programmers to create and offer a continuum of youth-friendly and accessible courses	Continuum available to all youth volunteers and staff 2017
	Implement courses in cost-efficient manner (e.g. sponsors, scholarship type of program), working with partners (e.g. resume writing, etc.)	Courses offered 2017
Align the Saanich Parks and Recreation Inclusion Statement with findings from YDS	Update statement to include information about the LGBTQ2+ community, intercultural complexities and Indigenous experience	Updated Inclusion statement published 2016



#5

YOUTH SPACES

GOAL	ACTION	OUTCOME
Refocus Youth Programmers' roles on the new expectations for collaborative work with schools, agencies and community	Community Services Manager with Youth Programmers to determine the Youth Programmers' new responsibilities moving to a community development approach to programming and community engagement	Clear understanding and description of respective programmer roles and responsibilities 🕒 2016
Increase the use of Youth Leader II role in the Teen Centres in order to support and redirect Youth Programmers to work more closely with schools	Youth Programmers to work with Youth Leader IIs to perform supportive tasks	Clear understanding and formal description of Youth Leader II administrative tasks 🕒 2016
	Additional 8hr/week of YLII support for each teen centre Submit budget request for 2016	Funding approved 🕒 2016-2020 💰 \$27,000/year
Enhance Youth Programming	Continue to provide high-quality programs for youth in Teen Centres utilizing a co-creating approach whenever possible	Popular programs with high value to youth in Teen Centres are maintained 🕒 2016-2020
	Facilitate on-going evaluation of Teen Centre programs to ensure that resources are well-utilized and diverse youth populations are served	Continue to use the Youth Program Quality Assessment (YPQA) tool; One assessment per year per Teen Centre 🕒 2016-2020
	Identify areas of particular interest/ specialty in each teen centre within their unique neighbourhoods/school areas	At each of the centres, programs meet the needs of their youth 🕒 2016-2020
	Discontinue programs which are not well-attended and/or are found by programmers and youth to have little impact on a consistent basis	With the introduction of new programs there is a balanced reduction of old programs to ensure staff sustainability 🕒 2016-2020

YOUTH SPACES

GOAL	ACTION	OUTCOME
Maximize use of Teen Centres for youth	Establish and implement the priorities for Teen Centre use as follows: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Youth-designated activities and services Youth partnership opportunities Youth-serving organization rentals Birthday party rentals Low and no-cost community services programs Non-youth Recreation Centre use 	Teen Centre priorities for use are understood by all those associated with the centres  2016
	Initiate discussions with potential partners to enhance existing services and programs for youth and families (e.g. Public Health Nurse, Youth Clinicians, Youth and Family Counsellors)	Meetings with potential partners and possible integrated service delivery have taken place  2016-2020
	Utilize Teen Centres as resource 'hubs' for youth in the community	Resources posted in Teen Centres and resources available for staff regarding youth health and wellbeing  2016-2020
Create youth opportunities in the Cedar Hill area.	Youth Programmers will co-lead planning with Cedar Hill Recreation Centre staff regarding drop-in and low-cost opportunities for youth (eg. arts, social and sports drop-ins)	Additional low or no-cost drop-in opportunities for youth offered. (e.g., support for Youth Art Jam and Limelight)  2016
	Additional support of YLII (i.e. wages & supplies) for Cedar Hill youth programming	Funding approved  2016-2020  \$10,000/year
	Submit budget request for 2016	
	Provide training to Cedar Hill Recreation Centre staff and volunteers as required for diverse youth user groups and new programs	Staff training has matched needs of youth programming  2016
	Youth Programmers and Cedar Hill Recreation Centre explore partnership opportunities with neighbouring community organizations (e.g., Oak Bay Recreation, Oaklands Community Centre and Victoria Parks and Recreation) to ensure complementary programming and best use of resources	New opportunities are identified and programs offered  2017-2020

YOUTH SPACES

GOAL	ACTION	OUTCOME
Improve Teen Centre Facilities	Find funding for kitchen improvements	Improvements done as resources available (e.g. grants)  2016-2020
	Improve kitchen facilities at Flipside (stove/dishwasher - Pearkes) and Upside (stove - SCP) Teen Centres	Nutrition education and cooking skills integrated into Teen Centre programs  2017
		Provide more nutritional food options during programs Additional community use and rentals of Teen Centre kitchens



#6

COMMUNICATION

GOAL	ACTION	OUTCOME
Involve youth in the co-creation of creative, innovative and progressive communication strategies to youth	Create Youth Communication Advisory Team (YCAT) to help develop, guide and evaluate ongoing communication framework which identifies criteria and elements to effectively communicate opportunities to youth	YCAT advisors review current youth communication materials, advise and co-create new multi focus strategies and tools, with support from Youth Services and Recreation Marketing staff 🕒 2016
	Additional support in the form of honourariums and supplies for YCAT Submit budget request for 2017	Funding approved 🕒 2017-2020 💰 \$5,000/year
	Review Saanich's Visual Identity Program and social media communication methods with YCAT to ensure a diverse youth population is reached. Make recommendations to ensure materials and methods are youth-friendly and relevant. Seek approval for youth-friendly VIP guidelines and social media use which support youth design and youth partners	Recommendations are presented to Sr Manager of Recreation and Communications Manager 🕒 2016-2017
	Youth Programmers, working with YCAT, Parks and Recreation marketing, create a multi-tiered communication plan for youth programs and services	Plan is developed; materials and tools are geared towards youth and their families 🕒 2017
	Utilize the Community Arts Specialist as a resource for creative artistic opportunities	Where appropriate, youth are involved in creative mediums to communicate
Ensure communication to youth is youth-friendly, age-appropriate, relevant and current to changing needs, trends and technology	Adopt best practice of 'going to youth' to promote programs as current methods have not been effective in reaching youth	Regular visits to schools, use of social media, attendance at youth conferences are being used to provide information about programs to youth 🕒 2016-2020
	Identify opportunities for youth-friendly promotions and artwork when possible	Opportunities explored (e.g. a youth-friendly design for Saanich Access key card or fob promotional campaign) 🕒 2017-2018
	Research, evaluate and develop progressive marketing tools for youth, internally and with local businesses. Explore opportunities to use and develop local applications ('apps') to promote programs and services to youth	Effective tools (Apps and new communication techniques) that present Saanich Youth programs and opportunities to youth, parent advisory councils, schools, community partners have been implemented 🕒 2018-2020

COMMUNICATION

GOAL	ACTION	OUTCOME
Expand and redesign communication tools to use with schools, students and families that clearly explain variety of Saanich resources and opportunities for working together	Work with Saanich marketing team to reframe School Resource Guide and specifically promote Saanich services to middle and high school students	Saanich Parks and Recreation School Resource Guide is re-developed and tailored to specific grades  2016
	Update contact information specific to each school in shared document for all Recreation Programmers and update annually and on an ongoing basis	Shared communication information document on internal website is updated as needed  2016
Support existing regional communication methods	Support Youth Services Provider Network for communication between regional Youth Workers	Youth Workers are well informed; youth initiatives are communicated to youth  2016
Create a regional communication plan to promote the L.I.F.E. program to youth	Work with regional partners and the Inter-Municipal Recreation Youth Programmers Committee to identify multiple avenues that inform youth and their families of the available options	Improved clarity of the messaging regarding the benefits available and increased number of youth accessing L.I.F.E benefits in the region  2016
Respond to youth-defined needs to be informed about opportunities for outdoor recreation and adventure	Next edition of the Parks and Trail Guide to include more youth activities and facilities	New youth-friendly guide to Saanich Parks, possibly a mobile application  2016
		Explore viability of a mobile application designed for youth access to Parks opportunities  2018
Report annually on outcomes of the YDS	Create a report format and develop an annual report identifying the outcomes of YDS	YDS Report submitted by end of February annually and published online  2016-2020

SUMMARY OF KNOWN RESOURCE REQUESTS FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY – 2016-2020

2016 – Request \$37,000 for ongoing operating expenses

1	Redirect Youth Programmers: Enhance Youth Leader II support at three Saanich Teen Centres	2016 – 2020	\$27,000
2	Cedar Hill Youth Drop-In: Youth Leader II supervision and supplies	2016 – 2020	\$10,000
		Subtotal	\$37,000

2017 – Request \$20,700 for ongoing operating expenses

3	Youth Communication Advisory Team (YCAT) to assist with creation of marketing materials that will actually be seen by youth and methods to promote programs and services relevant to youth	2017 – 2020	\$5,000
4	Youth Development Start-Up Fund to support youth led programs, services or events in the community	2017 – 2020	\$3,000
5	Enhance youth programs at Saanich recreation centres - this will allow us to work with recreation centre programmers to offer more low or no-cost activities for youth in the centres	2017 – 2020	\$4,500
6	Annual Youth Summit	2017 – 2020	\$500
7	School Year Youth Intern positions at four recreation centres	2017 – 2020	\$2,000
8	Enhance Saanich Youth Council: Youth Leader support	2017 – 2020	\$5,700
		Subtotal	\$20,700
		Total	\$57,700

APPENDICES



Artwork by JoJo Zhuo

3.1

INTRODUCTION TO VISION, MISSION AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR SAANICH YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

In October 2014, the Community Services team initiated discussions with youth and staff to learn how youth perceive their experiences with Saanich Recreation and explore their personal values related to recreation and ParticipACTION in their community.

Youth shared their opinions and experiences in conversation cafés, focus groups and in open forums (e.g. ‘sounding board’ in the Teen Centres). Youth Services staff participated in focus groups, adding to the youth contributions and sharing their own experiences with youth development.

These early sessions organized by Community Services identified that youth clearly value recreation as an essential avenue for them to experience health and wellness in their lives. As well, youth articulated that they need accessible opportunities to challenge themselves in order to grow and to thrive.

Following these exercises, a draft Vision, Mission and Guiding Principles were created and distributed across the Recreation Division for feedback from Programmers and Managers.

These sessions and the resulting drafts set the tone for the collaborative community-building approach that would be adopted in the 2015 Youth Development Strategy planning process. The original draft Vision, Mission and set of Guiding Principles was shared with Saanich staff and community stakeholders including youth throughout the Youth Development Strategy engagement process, with feedback contributing to this final version.

We extend our appreciation to all those who contributed their perspectives to this foundational document.



SAANICH YOUTH DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

OUR VISION:

INSPIRED YOUTH, CREATING THEIR FUTURE

OUR MISSION:

- Create with youth, welcoming and inclusive experiences through programs, services and partnerships
- Seek out and facilitate innovative opportunities for youth
- Sustain successful programs and services for youth
- Create space for youth participation in our parks, facilities and services
- Foster youth citizenship and leadership initiatives throughout our community

OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES:

- Offering quality programs, services and facilities that support emotional, mental and physical health for youth
- Recognizing and responding to the diverse and changing needs of our youth population
- Reducing barriers and creating multiple ways for youth to participate in recreation and cultural experiences
- Engaging youth to participate in the decision-making process about the issues and services that affect them
- Nurturing respectful and positive relationships with youth
- Building community partnerships that increase youth recreational opportunities

How do we define “Recreation”?

“Recreation is a fundamental human need and includes a range of activities. It is the experience that results from freely chosen participation in physical, social, intellectual, creative and spiritual pursuits that enhance individual and community well-being”. (National Recreation Framework, 2015)

How do we define “Youth”?

Youth are individuals between the ages of 11 – 18 years of age.

3.2

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

BACKGROUND

The District of Saanich (Saanich) is committed to pro-active youth development and strives to provide a broad range of high-quality accessible recreation facilities and services. Saanich Parks and Recreation operates three Teen Centres within three Saanich Recreation Centres: Upside at Saanich Commonwealth Place, Flipside at G.R. Pearkes Recreation Centre, and Backdoor at Gordon Head Recreation Centre. It works in partnership with several community and school district partners to support decentralized youth programs. The four Saanich Recreation Centres continue to expand and enhance program services for youth through registered and drop-in opportunities, recreation and aquatic leadership training, and a variety of art, dance, sports, fitness and life skills recreation programs. In addition, Saanich works hard to meet the specialized needs of youth who are new to Canada, have a disability or are economically disadvantaged.

The Community Services Section of the Parks and Recreation Department developed the first Community Plan for Youth in 1991. The intent of this plan was to focus on creating positive active living choices for Saanich youth. The plan brought together numerous community partners to implement base levels of service to meet the needs of youth. Saanich's 1998 Municipal Strategy for Youth Services focused on maintaining and developing its core services and meeting the needs of the small percentage of youth in the community identified as disenfranchised and labeled "at-risk". The District accomplished many objectives of the 1998 Youth Strategy with programs and services expanding to better meet the needs of diverse groups of youth with a focus on youth development.

The 2003 Municipal Youth Development Strategy reflected on the work completed since 1998 and identified the need for the organization to broaden its use of the Search Institute's Asset Development Model, which places a focus on developing the internal and external assets of youth. In 1990, the Search Institute released a framework of 40 Developmental Assets* which identified a clear set of skills, experiences, relationships, and behaviors that enable young people to develop into successful and contributing adults. The asset development model was embraced by many regional youth serving organizations and provided a shared language and vision in Saanich's efforts with youth development.

* <http://www.search-institute.org/content/40-developmental-assets-adolescents-ages-12-18>



RECREATION AND PARKS JOIN

Since the last Youth Development Plan in 2003, Saanich Recreation division has joined Saanich Parks Division and now works in partnership with the community “to create a quality of life that supports healthy lifestyles while preserving and protecting the natural environment”. Parks Division is responsible for the planning, design, development and operation of 169 parks covering over 825 hectares of parkland, and is responsible for field user agreements, sport field bookings and special events. The Parks Division supports numerous youth sport organizations in the District through access and financial support of field and facility development and operations.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

In 2013, Saanich Youth Services joined a regional project with the Horner Foundation, the Community Social Planning Council, the Weikart Centre and 11 other youth-serving agencies in Victoria to create Youth Program Quality Initiative (YPQI) designed to support successful programming for youth. Research has found that participation in high-quality programs can positively influence developmental outcomes for youth. While many factors contribute to the quality of a program, the development of skilled staff creating safe, engaging, youth-centered programs was cited as a priority. YPQI supports the Asset Development model.

In 2014, Saanich Council supported the development of a new Youth Development Strategy. According to Saanich’s Strategic Plan (2014-2018) social well-being was indicated as one of three foundational pillars to community development. Saanich’s Vision of Social Well-Being states that: “Saanich offers opportunities for balanced, active and diverse lifestyles...public services and amenities are affordable, accessible and inclusive; residents take advantage of a diverse range of recreational, educational, civic, social, arts and cultural services; community activities and events generate inter-generational and inter-cultural interest, participation and social integration; citizen awareness, education and collaborative involvement promote a shared responsibility and ownership of community development.” (13)

In the past two years, Saanich has also become invested in the principles of International Association of Public Participation (IAP2), reviewing and strengthening its practices of connecting with the public on all matters of communication and consultation. The Youth Development Strategy has been consciously designed to reflect these principles of public engagement, in this case primarily focusing on creating authentic means of connecting with youth perspectives on parks and recreation in Saanich. The process of creating the Youth Development Strategy began in January 2015.

3.3

2014 UPDATE ON 2003 YOUTH DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

2003 PLAN	OUTCOME	STATUS AS OF 2014
Increase communication with Police Department (various tasks)	Complete and ongoing	Communication with Police ongoing and as needed
Meet with Parent Advisory Committees (PAC)	Complete and ongoing	Youth Programmers meet with middle school PAC's at least once per year
Healthy Schools Initiative (Eat Well Get Moving)	Complete	No longer an initiative. Item moved to Healthy Communities Programmer
Re-establish a working relationship with YMCA outreach workers	Complete	Youth Programmers participate in Youth Services Providers Network meetings
Develop a communications approach that clearly indicates our commitment to Asset Development in our Centres	Complete	Asset Development communication approach was completed
Develop a strategy that assists our building staff to understand and adopt Asset Development	Complete	Asset Development strategy was completed and training conducted
Asset Development Speakers Bureau	Complete	No longer an initiative
Cultural Bridging (various tasks)	Complete and ongoing	Relationships established with Inter-Cultural Association of Greater Victoria (ICA) and Victoria Immigrant and Refugee Centre Society (VIRCS). Host the Enable Program for new immigrant youth in partnership with VIRCS
Inter-municipal youth website maintained	Incomplete, The inter-municipal youth programmers committee opted to discontinue a shared website	No longer an initiative
Marketing brochures established for Teen Continuum	Completed Teen Activity Guide	No longer an initiative
Establish marketing reps at 4 schools	Incomplete	No longer an initiative

2003 PLAN	OUTCOME	STATUS AS OF 2014
Develop participant evaluation form for teens	Complete	Evaluations have been developed and used
Training for all staff regarding Asset Development (various tasks)	Complete	Training on Asset Development model completed
Formalize expansion plans for Pearkes and Gordon Head	Incomplete	Pearkes Teen Centre was relocated in 2007. Lack of space at Gordon Head
Establish a plan for Teen Facility in the Royal Oak/ Broadmead area	Complete	Upside Teen Centre built in 2005 in Saanich Commonwealth Place
Reach agreement to prioritize BMX project and create conceptual drawing	Extensive work to establish an agreement done but BMX project went to West Shore	No longer an initiative
Develop a replacement plan for outdoor equipment for teen outdoor programs	Complete and ongoing	Annual equipment replacement established
Develop the field area at Lambrick	Incomplete	Area has been designated green space by Parks
Skate Park (various tasks)	Complete and ongoing	Maintenance is done by Parks staff, Saanich Youth Services staff and volunteers Annual Skate Jam event held
Work with inter-municipal programmers group	Complete and ongoing	Active participation at inter-municipal meetings and events
Establish a skate park host	Complete and ongoing	Seasonal skate park host
Create stronger ties with Lambrick Park School	Complete and ongoing	Solid relationship maintained
Nights Alive Funding	Complete	Funding no longer available
University of Victoria CYC Students	Complete and ongoing	Inclusion of CYC practicum students in Saanich Youth Services
Youth Fund	Complete	No longer an initiative

3.4

SAANICH DEMOGRAPHIC SUMMARY RELATED TO YOUTH DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

POPULATION

With reference to Statistics Canada data :

2006 Census and 2011 National Household Survey:

Totals:

In 2011 the total population of District of Saanich registered 109,750. This number reflected a modest increase from 2006 Census that registered 108,265.

Youth Population:

In 2011 Saanich had 15,045 youth ages 0-14, compared to 16,015 youth of the same age range in 2006, reflecting a 6.1% decline.

Visible minorities and those of ethnic origins:

19,425 people or 18% of the total Saanich population.

Of this number:

2,935 identified as Aboriginal comprising 2.7% of Saanich population
 1,300 identified as Chinese
 1,240 identified as Punjabi
 1,180 identified as Cantonese

PATTERNS OF AN AGING POPULATION IN CRD

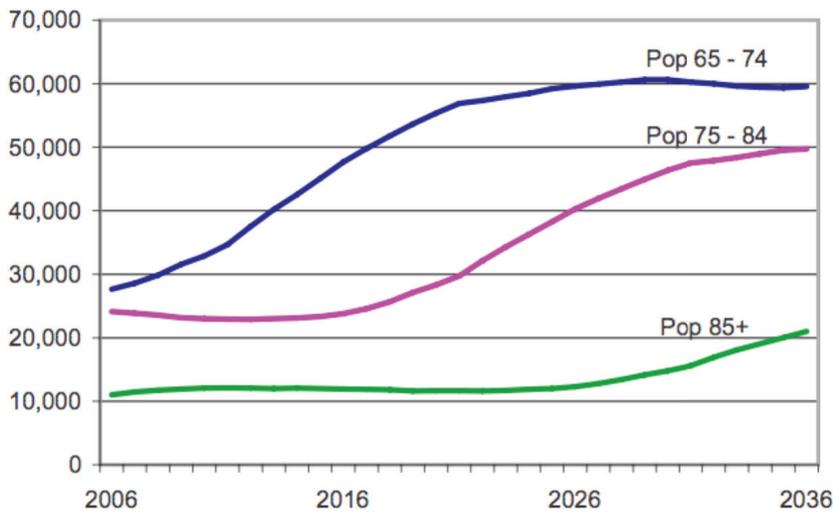
Nationally, we are just beginning to experience the effects of an unprecedented shift in population. In October 2015 Canada crossed a new threshold. Statistics Canada reported that the number of persons 65 years and older in Canada for the first time exceeds the numbers of young persons under 15. And that pattern will continue into the immediate future. Birthrate and immigration combined is not expected to mitigate this trajectory in a significant way.

Locally, the 2011 Statistics Canada indicates the percentage of the population aged 65 and over in Saanich was 18.3%, compared with a national percentage of 14.8%. The percentage of the working age population (15 to 64) was 68.0% and the percentage of children aged 0 to 14 was 13.7%. In comparison, the national percentages were 68.5% for the population aged 15 to 64 and 16.7% for the population aged 0 to 14.

Long Range Population Projections for the Capital Region indicates continuation of a high median age and growing elderly population.**

**The BC Stats P.E.O.P.L.E. 32 Population Projection; located at www.crd.bc.ca/info

CRD Population Aged 65+ 2006–2036



Source: BC Stats PE.O.P.L.E. 32 Population Projection

As the senior and elderly populations increase, so will the demand for services tailored to them, especially the provision of health care and residential care facilities. The Elderly Dependency Ratio (population 65+ relative to population aged 18–64) is higher than the provincial average and is projected to continue growing from the current 2006 ratio of 29% to 53% by 2036.

On the other end of the age spectrum are declining numbers of children and youth under 14. The Child Dependency Ratio (children relative to the working age population 18–64) is below the BC average and will continue decreasing from the current 0.26 to 0.24 by 2036. Declining numbers of children affect the provision of services geared towards them, including schools and daycare facilities. However, this phenomenon is not being experienced region-wide due to the West Shore’s larger share of this age group. The age group in the middle, 25–44—the bulk of the workforce—is experiencing the most noticeable decline in numbers.

As the workforce ages and retires without adequate numbers of replacements the regional economy may experience shortages of skilled labour in certain occupations including construction, services, health care, etc.



3.5

TRENDS IN REGIONAL YOUTH HEALTH AND RECREATION

The McCreary Centre Society revealed a comprehensive review of the state of youth health in Results of Adolescent Health Survey / South Vancouver Island in 2013. This research helped to inform our focus on the current needs of Saanich youth. http://www.mcs.bc.ca/pdf/AHSV_SouthVancouverIsland.pdf

PARTICIPATION

- Students were asked about the reasons they might not have participated in sports and other activities in the past year. The most common reason male and female students gave was being too busy (46%), although being unable to afford to participate was a reality for 1 in 10 males and almost 2 out of 10 females.
- South Vancouver Island students were less likely than students throughout the province to indicate missing out on activities because they could not get there or home (14% vs. 16%) or because the activity was not available in their community (11% vs. 14%).
- The Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines recommend that youth aged 12 to 17 do an hour of moderate to vigorous physical activity every day. Similar to the provincial picture, 18% of local students indicated they exercised for an hour a day in the past week. Exercise participation rates among local males were similar to those for males across the province (22%), but local females were more likely to exercise for an hour every day (15% vs. 12% provincially).
- Similar to provincial results, males were more likely than females to be involved in informal sports (70% vs. 50% of females) and organized sports (60% vs. 51%) on a weekly basis, while females were more likely to take weekly dance, yoga or exercise classes (33% vs. 7% of males). Also, at age 12 or younger, there was no difference between males and females in weekly participation in organized sports. Although rates of participation did not change for males at different ages, older females were less likely than younger ones to play organized sports weekly.
- Sports participation rates remained stable between 2003 and 2008, but there were local decreases in 2013.



SOCIAL EMOTIONAL SUPPORT AND WELLBEING

37% of local students felt they had an adult outside their family they could turn to if faced with a problem. (Note: this means that 63% of youth are saying that they don't have an external adult support system).

Students who could identify a supportive adult outside their family were more likely to feel like a part of their community (45% vs. 32% without this support). Students were asked how much they felt like a part of their community. Similar to youth across the province, 37% reported that they felt quite a bit or very connected to their community.

BULLYING AND DISCRIMINATION

Youth who were bullied were more likely than those who were not bullied to report not participating in extracurricular activities. For example, 15% of youth who were assaulted and 15% who were cyberbullied reported not participating in extracurricular activities, compared to 4% of youth who did not have these experiences. Similar patterns were seen for youth who were excluded (11% missed out on activities vs. 2% of youth who had not been excluded) and teased (10% vs. 2%).

PERCEIVED REASONS FOR BEING DISCRIMINATED AGAINST IN THE PAST YEAR

Physical appearance	19%
Being seen as different	11%
Age	8%
Race, ethnicity or skin colour	7%
Gender/sex	6%
Income or family income	5%
Sexual orientation (being or thought to be gay or lesbian)	5%
A disability	3%

3.6

MAPPING THE METHODOLOGY AND PROCESS

PHASE ONE: JANUARY – FEBRUARY 2015 - TRAINING & BUILDING THE FOUNDATIONS

In January Saanich advertised for youth and adults to apply for positions on the YDS Project Team and the Youth Research Team. In February, the Saanich Core YDS Team built the foundations for the community engagement process. Supported by the community-based YDS Project Team, the Core Team selected and trained the ten-member Youth Research Team. Our main goal in the five sessions of training was to prepare youth researchers with the understanding and facilitation skills necessary for the next phase of public engagement in a community-wide series of Interviews, Inquiry Cafés, Focus Groups and Dialogue Circles. All of the public engagement processes were planned to be consistent with Saanich's 2014 adoption of IAP2 (International Association for Public Engagement) strategies.

Our work with the Project Team and Youth Research team gave the Core group time to consolidate protocols and establish our style of working together. Our focus for public engagement was an exploration of youth perspectives and experience with recreation, culture and parks in Saanich. Embedded in all public engagements were two change strategies:

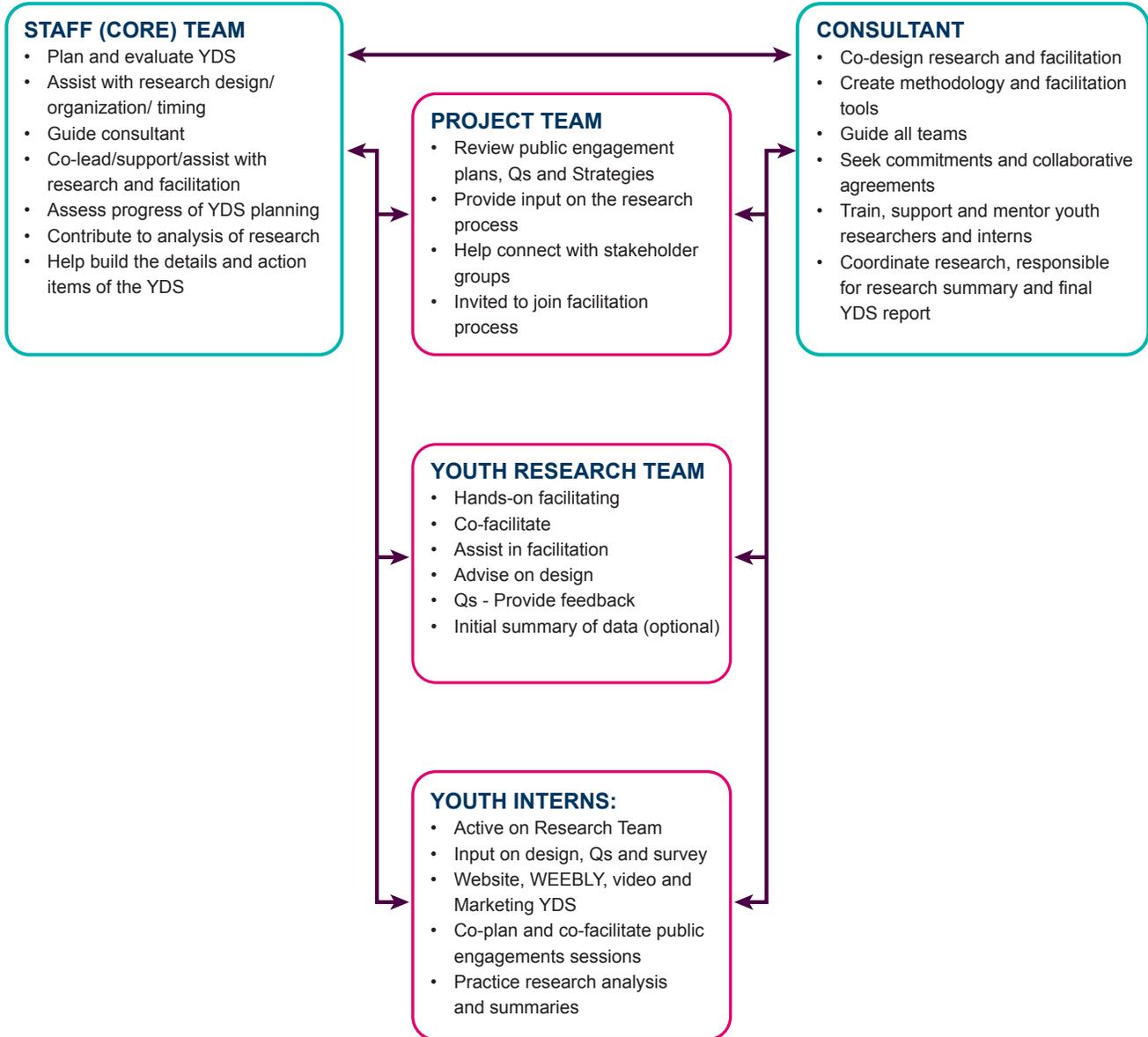
1. Appreciative Inquiry* - a process of first identifying existing strengths of youth services being offered and second inquiring into future possibilities that will enhance or change services; and Inquiry – a process of using compelling open-ended questions to evoke personal values, perspectives and hopes.
2. These two strategies provided the central starting point of all sessions.

* For a brief on Appreciative Inquiry:

<http://www.hr.ubc.ca/learning-development/odl-service-solutions/appreciative-inquiry/>



TEAM ROLES - SAANICH YOUTH DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY



PHASE TWO - MARCH THROUGH JUNE 2015

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT - SAANICH YOUTH DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

In March, the consultation process began. Inquiry questions were refined and tailor-made for different contexts. One of our Youth Interns filmed and created a captivating video “Re-Imagine the Future” that invited youth to participate in creating the YDS. With invitations, RSVPs and arrangements with schools completed, during the subsequent ten weeks, the Core Team, Youth Research Team and Youth Interns were involved in an intensive schedule of public engagements organized around two key questions: *What’s working well in recreation and parks for Saanich Youth? What is needed for successful youth recreation in the future?*

Invitations were extended to Saanich organizations associated with Youth to participate in full evening group sessions that used focus group, World Café and Interview Matrix strategies. Interviews and focus groups were held with a wide variety of youth agency representatives who work with youth: staff within Saanich Recreation, community police, school administrators, teachers and counsellors, as well as members of a wide range of community, arts and faith-based organizations supporting the recreational and health needs of Saanich youth.

We learned the most from the sessions that directly involved youth. We took advantage of every opportunity to invite youth into the process – through communication of community groups, all forms of social media including Facebook and Instagram, email and school communication. While some youth attended special-interest or general community sessions, school classrooms ultimately offered the most natural access to the most diverse range of youth. We adapted our formats to fit into the curricular needs of Grade 10 Planning Classes, integrated Grade 10 programs and mixed-level PE classes. These class sessions generated the most comprehensive and rich source of youth perspectives, in that each class represented a wide cross-section of personalities and experiences. Student participants ranged from youth deeply involved in all forms of sports and recreation, to youth whose special circumstances caused them to perceive recreation as a complex consideration. Between the extremes was the majority who explained the general challenges an average youth faces in accessing recreational opportunities. If we had relied exclusively on public engagements hosted at recreational centres or community venues, we would have likely limited ourselves to a narrow slice of the youth population.

A combination of factors contributed to the success of this initiative. Typically in sessions of 60 minutes or more, small groups of students described their experiences, identified where recreation was working well and where it wasn’t, and talked openly about future challenges and possibilities. The discussions were guided by clear questions and facilitated by our trained Youth Research Team and Saanich Core team functioning within a set of communication protocols designed to draw out all student voices.



PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT - SAANICH YOUTH DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY



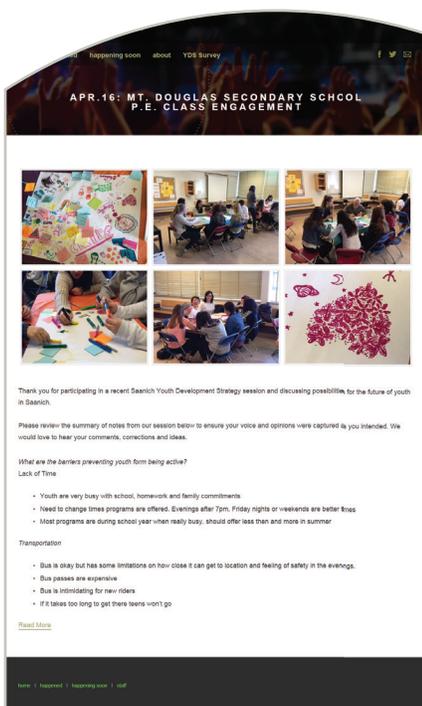
Youth Survey: With general themes and priorities for the youth development strategy taking rough form in early spring, an online survey was launched to determine the degree to which the ideas and priorities presented in community and youth consultations were consistent with a different group of respondents. Also, we hoped the survey might offer new ideas or directions not yet revealed. Some new ideas were found in the survey, but ultimately it served primarily to corroborate the key points presented in face-to-face sessions.

(Please see full Survey Questions and Results in this Appendix)

Youth Recreation Summit in June: Sixty persons, most of whom had participated in the public consultation in the spring, convened in a full-day session at G.R. Pearkes Recreation Centre to review the emerging themes from Phase Two and advise on future priorities in the YDS. Youth, staff, representatives of external youth recreation agencies, students, Project Team members and Council members provided a rich and diverse mix of ideas, critiques and perspectives in response to the themes and related strategic priorities. In preparation for the Summit, members of the Core Team, Project Team and Youth Research Team reviewed and consolidated all current data into ten distinct themes. (For details, please see “Themes & Questions – Saanich Youth Summit” in Appendix). All Summit participants contributed to a dynamic and interactive session that helped clarify priorities and increase commitment of those involved with youth development.

Two sessions with Saanich recreation staff and managers, one in July and one in September, aimed to complete a critical review and assessment of emerging patterns. We analyzed the information, then assessed the general capacity of Saanich Recreation and Parks to implement the identified goals, with a general discussion of who might be responsible for resources and implementation. During these sessions, we moved from nine “themes” to six strategic priorities, and further refined to the YDS Vision/Mission/Guiding Principles.

Weebly Website



DATA MANAGEMENT

To give public engagement participants a chance to view a rough summary of what we captured in their face-to-face sessions (e.g. focus groups, cafés or interviews) we summarized all information from these sessions and posted it on our Youth Weebly website (www.youthdev.weebly.com) and blog within 2-3 days of the event. We encouraged participants to see if their contributions had been accurately represented and invited feedback with additional ideas in the associated blog or by email. This ‘loop-back’ process was consistent with Saanich’s public participation policy.

Information from each event was reviewed and checked by the consultant and Core team prior to posting on the Weebly website. As patterns formed we created new categories to organize general themes and directions as they emerged. We tracked the general frequency of recommendations and ideas and began to recognize recurrent patterns. At regular intervals the Core team shared the results with the Youth Research Team and the Project Team.

One of the familiar problems with public engagements is that participants become disconnected from the process when their contribution is limited to a “one-shot” effort, after which they are left wondering if their ideas were respected or integrated into the next stages of the planning. To mitigate this effect, we applied a modified Delphi technique to the development of themes and key information in Phase Two. The ‘Delphi’ research methodology formally means that the participants are invited to provide feedback on the next iteration of the information that has been gathered. As our data sets expanded, we actively looped back to seek feedback from ongoing contributors – namely members of the Youth Research Team, the Project Team and Saanich staff. Their expertise in youth development and related services enabled them to provide unique and valued feedback as the themes and patterns changed through the stages of public consultation. Through the Weebly website, we invited all participants to review the results of public sessions and to provide us with feedback or ideas.

In mid-October, we posted first formal draft of the Youth Development Strategy, inviting for one last round of community feedback. The Core team once again met with Project Team to gain from their invaluable advice on the final strategy, and have one last check to ensure that consistency between the information presented by the public and the key directions presented in the YDS draft. Stakeholders within Parks and Recreation managers and staff, as well as the community at large were also invited to respond and the resulting information prompted several important adjustments and additions. Stakeholders in this final phase also included two youth focus groups. As a final check, we reconciled the final survey results with the qualitative data from public engagements, to ensure all ideas from the survey were carefully considered. Our aim in this phase of the project was to determine the degree of consistency between the dominant themes and priorities that surfaced across the spectrum of our various public engagement venues.

The Draft #2 YDS Report was completed in mid-November and presented to Parks and Recreation managers, Parks, Trails and Recreation Advisory Committee and the Healthy Saanich Advisory Committee. The final Report and Implementation Plan was presented and adopted by Council on December 14, 2015.



3.7

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT QUESTIONS

Saanich Early Input Questionnaire (on www.youthdev.weebly.com)

- What is working well in parks for youth?
- What is working well in recreation for youth?
- What are some of the barriers that youth are facing when accessing parks and recreation?
- What is the relevancy of Saanich Teen Centres?
- What are some ways to make parks more youth-friendly?
- What are some ways to make recreation centres more youth-friendly?

SD61 Middle School Conference

- What is a positive experience you have had with Parks & Recreation?
- What are the barriers to youth accessing Parks and Recreation?
- What can Parks and Recreation do to increase participation?
- If you could create an ideal park what would it look like?

United Way Student Council Conference

- What will the future look like in Parks and Recreation?
- What are the most important ways to foster youth leadership development?
- What are the barriers to developing youth leadership?
- What barriers are there to youth accessing recreation activities/programs?
- What are the most important ways to foster youth leadership development?
- How can parks and recreation provide opportunities for youth leadership development?
- When you think of Youth Services, what's working?

Saanich Youth Services Staff Meeting

- If you were to recreate our teen centres from start, what would they look like? feel like? what services or programs? what supports?
- What is the role of Teen Centres in our Recreation Centres?
- When you look across the breadth of recreation programs offered for youth aged 11-18, what do you think is working well for youth?
- What would a recreation centre look like if it was oriented towards youth?
- What would a park look like if it was oriented towards youth?
- We have heard so far that recreation centres are a hybrid of children and seniors centres - do you share this perception?
- How can we attract youth back into recreation centres?
- As you scan the developmental assets, what ones do you think are reflected in our practice? Which ones do you consider to be important, but not reflected?
- What opportunities could we initiate in Recreation that will foster the development of assets in youth?
- What are some of the challenges and barriers that youth are facing in regards to accessing community recreation opportunities?



Saanich Youth Council Consultation

Question 1 - Possibilities

What will the future look like in Parks and Recreation?

Question 2 - Barriers

What barriers are there to youth accessing recreation activities/programs?

Question 3 - Opps for Leadership Development

How can parks and recreation provide opportunities for youth leadership development?

Question 4 - What works (and doesn't) with Leadership Development

What are the most important ways to foster youth Leadership Development?

What are the barriers to developing youth leadership?

Saanich Community Youth Team Consultation

Question 1 - Possibilities

What will the future look like in Parks and Recreation?

Question 2 - Barriers

What barriers are there to youth accessing recreation activities/programs?

Question 3 - Opps for Leadership Development

How can Parks and Recreation provide opportunities for youth leadership development?

Mt Doug High School Consultation

What is a positive experience you have had with Parks and Recreation?

What are the barriers to youth accessing Parks and Recreation?

What are the best recreational opportunities we could build for the future?

If you could create an ideal park what would it look like?

Community Consultation

What is working well in youth recreation? (Organized sports, unstructured sports, drop-ins; arts, music, culture?)

What are barriers to youth recreation?

What are opportunities for the future?

Child and Youth Mental Health, Island Health, QA

What is working well in recreation and the arts for youth?

What is working well in parks for youth?

What are some of the barriers that youth are facing when accessing parks and recreation?

What opportunities could we initiate in Recreation that will foster the development of assets in youth? What could we create for the future?

3.8

RECORD OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN 2015

Youth Development Strategy involved over 1,100 persons in 44 engagements

DATE	EVENT	#S YOUTH OR PUBLIC ATTENDED
15-03-12	Healthy Saanich Advisory Committee	10
15-03-26	Parks Trails and Recreation Advisory Committee	12
15-03-26	Saanich Police Focus Group	6
15-03-27	Middle School Conference	16
15-03-28	United Way Youth Development Day	24
15-04-08	YDS Community Consult #1	6
15-04-09	Lambrick Leadership Students	55
15-04-09	Youth Services Session	12
15-04-10	Reynolds Focus Group	28
15-04-10	Reynolds PE 11,12	28
15-04-13	Reynolds Leadership Class	30
15-04-14	Reynolds FLEX Focus Group	10
15-04-15	Reynolds PE Class #2	25
15-04-14	Youth Council Consult	12
15-04-15	Claremont Plan 10 #1	30
15-04-15	Claremont Plan 10 #2	22
15-04-15	Claremont Plan 10 #3	28
15-04-15	Claremont Plan 10 #4	28
15-04-15	CoYoTe Session	15
15-04-15	Sounding Board #1 Results	50
15-04-16	Mt Douglas Girls PE #1	28
15-04-16	Sounding Board #2 Results	50
15-04-16	Mt Douglas Girls PE #2	28
15-04-16	Mt Douglas Girls PE #3	27
15-04-16	YDS Community Consult #2	4
15-04-17	Sounding Board #3 Results	50
15-04-17	HomeSchool Focus Group	5
15-04-17	Mountain Bike Group	15
15-04-19	Cycling Festival	72
15-04-20	Recreation Integration Victoria Committee Group	2
15-04-20	Sounding Board #4 results	50
15-04-21	YDS Community Consult #3	4

DATE	EVENT	#S YOUTH OR PUBLIC ATTENDED
15-04-23	Off The Grid	50
15-04-27	Love is Love Conference	75
15-04-29	Colquitz Gr 7 Socials class	24
15-05-01	SD 61 School counsellors	4
15-05-01	Limelight Youth Arts Show	100
15-05-08	ICA Youth Group	10
15-05-14	Community Consultation #4	4
15-05-20	Intermunicipal Youth Program	6
15-06-03	Victoria Immigrant and Refugee Centre Society	11
15-06-04	Youth Summit	62
17/06/15	Kaliedoscope Theatre	1
14/07/15	Island Health - Child & Youth Mental Health	1
17/07/15	Greater Victoria Performing Arts Festival	1
		1134

DATE	EVENT
15-01-21	Project Team Meeting #1
15-02-04	Project Team Meeting #2
15-02-18	Project Team Meeting #3
15-02-20	Youth Research Team
15-03-04	Project Team Meeting #4
15-04-15	Project Team Meeting #5
15-05-20	Project Team Meeting #6
15-06-17	Project Team Meeting #7
23-09-2015	Project Team Meeting #8
28-10-2015	Project Team Meeting #9



3.9

YOUTH SURVEY RESULTS

N = 188 total respondents:

34% 10 to 14 years

45% 15 to 18 years

21% 18 years +

1. What would increase youth involvement in Saanich Parks and Recreation?

Respondents were asked to identify top three choices. Of the 9 options, these were ranked as priorities:

School recognition/credit for participation in recreation, volunteering and/or recreation leadership	51 %
Late night access to recreation centres (Friday-Sunday)	47%
Financial assistance for employment certifications offered within recreation (e.g., First Aid/CPR, Lifeguarding, FoodSafe, Babysitters Training)	39%
Youth activities offered on weekends	34%
Opportunities for youth to lead activities	29%
Support for youth-initiated activities (grants, equipment, facilities, help from staff)	26%
Better transportation options to late-night activities at recreation centres	25%

2. Our research shows that individual youth participation in recreation decreases in ages 12-13 years. How can Saanich Parks and Recreation address this for youth?

Ranked from item receiving the highest percentage of AGREE:

Offer introductory/novice levels to try new activities	79%
Focus on learning life skills and gaining work experience	76%
Lower fees for youth	73%
Improve opportunities to deal with anxiety and mental health issues for youth	69%
Improve transportation to get to activities	65%
More opportunities to learn about nutrition, cooking and health for youth	63%
Make recreation opportunities available at my school	58%
Education for me and my family regarding youth issues and the importance of recreation and health	47%



3. What are ways that the Saanich Parks and Recreation can help youth feel more welcome at recreation centres, parks and activities?

This generated a full range of responses, but of the 188 responses these suggestions were mentioned most:

- Lower-cost activities
- Offer lots of introductory or novice courses and affordable activities;
- It can feel intimidating to start a new activity ... Encourage beginners/new folks and try to create a judgment-free environment
- Treat youth like adults; make sure staff are welcoming
- Treat youth as capable people, not looking down/condescending, act excited to see them.
- Offer youth-only spaces and recreation times.
- Hire young people in positions in recreation/parks to relate to youth “customers”
- Staff should be young, cool, people we can relate to
- Park infrastructure that appeals to a higher age level (i.e., a higher challenging climbing wall, small scale zip line like at Cadboro Bay, skateboard parks, BMX parks) and also the development of beachfront parks
- Create program content focused on youth/with feedback from youth
- Hire more diverse staff with disabilities, staff of all genders, races, sizes, gender identity
- LGBTQ2+ friendly, accommodating disabled youth (mental and physical)
- More activities and youth-only spaces that are there for specific ages; like a kid zone
- Have more youth-focused activities, more attractions for specific age groups in a smaller spectrum. One way is to have more activities/camps aimed at older youth. I feel like there is more of a focus on activities/camps aimed at younger youth or children
- Have “cool” programs for ages 11, 12 and 13. They are too old to participate in the general school-aged camps and yet are too young to stay home all day by themselves. How to make it cool? One suggestion - have cool, young people there for kids to hang out with. Up and coming sports stars, singers, artists ... anyone kids look up to? Even cool law enforcement officers, etc?
- Offer food or incentives (two-for-one; bring a peer, etc.)
- More activities at school
- Youth-friendly spaces with more diverse designated space offerings (i.e. climbing, skateboarding, multi-skill courses i.e. parkour, tough mudder style, etc)
- Don't try to mix all ages (11-17 for example) into activities; make them age-specific, 17 year olds avoid hanging around 12 year olds
- Better advertising and communication in places that we connect to, food, special incentives. Focus on social aspects of the activity
- Consult with us – ask youth what it is they want to see – and involve us in the planning

4. **What is most important to youth about parks and open spaces?**

A safe place to be with friends	84%
A place to be physically active and participate in sport	69%
A place for youth to be able to express themselves (e.g., arts, festivals)	62%
Providing youth friendly designed spaces	61%
A place to get youth involved in decisions that affect them	40%
A place to get in touch with our natural environment	40%

5. **Saanich youth indicate they want more opportunities for challenge, risk-taking physical activities, and choices (e.g., climbing trees, rock climbing, Parkour, bike skills parks, fort building, outdoor recreation, skateboarding, ropes course, etc.). Do you agree?**

RESPONSE: 93% of respondents agreed. Top priorities were:

Rock climbing	36
Bike skills and mountain biking	15
Parkour	15
Survival courses	12
Skateboarding	6

6. **Saanich Parks and Recreation operates three youth activity centres: The Backdoor at Gordon Head Recreation Centre, Flipside at G.R. Pearkes Recreation Centre and Upside at Saanich Commonwealth Place. How often do you use the youth centres?**

Answer Choices	Responses
Weekly	24%
Monthly	10%
Once every few months	10%
Once year	14%
Never	45

Comments regarding why respondents did not attend included: Mainly for middle school kids; perception of kids who are in trouble hanging about outside; too far away; etc.

7. What is important to you about youth centres?

The following elements were seen as most important:

A place to be around friends	89%
Easy location to get to	88%
Safe environment	85%
Free admission	74%
Friendly leaders I can talk to	70%
Free food	70%
Facility with other recreation opportunities for all ages	65%
Access to video games, ping pong, etc.	63%
Fun activities planned	63%

8. The number of youth using the teen centres has declined and changed over the last 15 years. Who should these youth centres be for?

These were cited as priorities:

Middle school students	73%
High school students	56%
Youth who need a place to gather as a group	66%
Youth groups in community (e.g. diversity, cultural, special interest, LGBTQ, other)	59%
Multi-generational (e.g. family, seniors)	29%



3.10

POSITION STATEMENT ON ACTIVE OUTDOOR PLAY

POSITION STATEMENT ON ACTIVE OUTDOOR PLAY

Position



Access to active play in nature and outdoors—with its risks—is essential for healthy child development. We recommend increasing children’s opportunities for self-directed play outdoors in all settings—at home, at school, in child care, the community and nature.

PREAMBLE

We conducted two systematic reviews to examine the best available scientific evidence on the net effect (i.e., balance of benefits vs. harms) of outdoor and risky active play. Other research and reviews were also consulted. The Position Statement applies to girls and boys (aged 3-12 years) regardless of ethnicity, race, or family socioeconomic status. Children who have a disability or a medical condition should also enjoy active outdoor play in compliance with guidance from a health professional.

Risk is often seen as a bad word—by parents, neighbours, care providers, insurance providers, schools and municipalities. But in play, risk doesn't mean courting danger—like skating on a half-frozen lake or sending a preschooler to the park alone. It means the types of play children see as thrilling and exciting, where the possibility of physical injury may exist, but they can recognize and evaluate challenges according to their own ability.¹² It means giving children the freedom to decide how high to climb, to explore the woods, get dirty, play hide 'n seek, wander in their neighbourhoods, balance, tumble and rough-house, especially outdoors, so they can be active, build confidence, autonomy and resilience, develop skills, solve problems and learn their own limits. It's letting kids be kids—healthier, more active kids.

» Outdoor play is safer than you think!

- o The odds of total stranger abduction are about 1 in 14 million based on RCMP reports.²³ Being with friends outdoors may further reduce this number.
- o Broken bones and head injuries unfortunately do happen, but major trauma is uncommon. Most injuries associated with outdoor play are minor.²⁴⁻³¹
- o Canadian children are eight times more likely to die as a passenger in a motor vehicle than from being hit by a vehicle when outside on foot or on a bike.³²⁻³⁴

CONTEXT

In an era of schoolyard ball bans and debates about safe tobogganing, have we as a society lost the appropriate balance between keeping children healthy and active and protecting them from serious harm? If we make too many rules about what they can and can't do, will we hinder their natural ability to develop and learn? If we make injury prevention the ultimate goal of outdoor play spaces, will they be any fun? Are children safer sitting on the couch instead of playing actively outside?

We need to recognize the difference between danger and risk. And we need to value long-term health and fun as much as we value safety.

EVIDENCE

» **When children are outside they move more, sit less and play longer³⁻¹² — behaviours associated with improved cholesterol levels, blood pressure, body composition, bone density, cardiorespiratory and musculoskeletal fitness and aspects of mental, social and environmental health.¹³⁻²²**

» There are consequences to keeping kids indoors—is it really safer?

- o When children spend more time in front of screens they are more likely to be exposed to cyber-predators and violence, and eat unhealthy snacks.³⁵⁻³⁹



- o Air quality indoors is often worse than outdoors, increasing exposure to common allergens (e.g., dust, mould, pet dander), infectious diseases, and potentially leading to chronic conditions.⁴⁰⁻⁴³
- o In the long-term, sedentary behaviour and inactivity elevate odds of developing chronic diseases, including heart disease, type-2 diabetes, some forms of cancer and mental health problems.⁴⁴⁻⁵³



- » **Hyper-parenting limits physical activity and can harm mental health.**⁵⁴⁻⁵⁷
- » **When children are closely supervised outside, they are less active.**^{4,58-68}
- » **Children are more curious about, and interested in, natural spaces than pre-fabricated play structures.**⁶⁹⁻⁷⁹ **Children who engage in active outdoor play in natural environments demonstrate resilience, self-regulation and develop skills for dealing with stress later in life.**⁸⁰⁻⁹⁸
- » **Outdoor play that occurs in minimally structured, free and accessible environments facilitates socialization with peers, the community and the environment, reduces feelings of isolation, builds inter-personal skills and facilitates healthy development.**^{4,59,70,76,83,99-103}

RECOMMENDATIONS

- » **Parents:** Encourage your children to engage more fully with their outdoor environments in a variety of weather conditions. When children are supported to take risks, they have more fun and learn how to assess and manage risk in all areas of their lives.^{2,82,104}
- » **Educators and Caregivers:** Regularly embrace the outdoors for learning, socialization and physical activity opportunities, in various weather conditions—including rain and snow. Risky active play is an important part

of childhood and should not be eliminated from the school yard or childcare centre.

- » **Health Professionals:** Be influential! Promote every child’s connection with nature and the outdoors—identify outdoor play resources and partner with municipalities, parks, nature-related organizations, parent groups and children to support this process.
- » **Injury Prevention Professionals:** Find a balanced approach to health promotion and protection that considers the long-term dangers of a sedentary lifestyle along with the acute potential for injury.
- » **School and Child Care Administrators:** Choose natural elements over pre-fabricated playgrounds and paved areas—and encourage children to play in, and help design, these environments.
- » **Media:** Provide balanced reporting—sensationalizing stories about predators and danger elevates fear; cover success stories related to outdoor and risky active play.
- » **Attorneys General:** Establish reasonable liability limits for municipal governments—this means Joint and Several Liability Reform.
- » **Provincial and Municipal Governments:** Work together to create an environment where Public Entities are protected from frivolous lawsuits over minor injuries related to normal and healthy outdoor risky active play. This protection would no longer

restrict Public Entities to using the Canadian Standards Association CAN/CSA Z614 “Children’s Playspaces and Equipment” as a guide for the design of outdoor play spaces and as a requirement for the funding of these spaces.

An increased investment in natural play spaces in all neighbourhoods is encouraged.

- » **Schools and Municipalities:** Examine existing policies and by-laws and reconsider those that pose a barrier to active outdoor play.
- » **Federal and Provincial/Territorial Governments:** Collaborate across sectors to find ways to improve children’s access to risky active play in nature and the outdoors.
- » **Society:** Recognize that children are competent and capable. Respect parents’ assessments of their children’s abilities and their decisions to encourage self-directed play in nature and the outdoors. Allow all children to play with and form a lasting relationship with nature on their own terms.

This Position Statement was informed by the best available evidence, interpreted by a group of Canadian experts representing 14 organizations, and reviewed and edited by more than 1,600 stakeholders. Details of the process are published in the *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* [www.mdpi.com/journal/ijerph].

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EXCERPTS FROM SAANICH CUSTOMER SURVEY 2012

3.11

COMMUNICATION OF INFORMATION/EVENTS:

How do customers access information about our programs?

1. Email / Facebook top ... and 2009-2012 trajectory clearly indicating reliance on eMedia
2. Newspaper
3. Website

What major CHANGES from 2009?

Facebook from 5% in 2009 to close to 40% in 2012.

Paper media: Direct mail and newspaper almost cut in half in three years;

Also interesting – the reliance on WEBSITE reduced from 50+ % to 35% in three years.

Generally, digital communication soared

When asked about Email connection 40% said they were on the list, and 20% requested that they be added; 40% requested not to be on email list

2012: 80% had social media accounts; (Facebook big, Twitter less significant) 30% of respondents were following Saanich social media

Families: 22% families had registered in 2012 with teens 13-18 years
18% reported children 8-12 years
Total: 40% of families reporting had children between 8-18
Another 20% reported kids ages 0-7 years

Highest Use – Rec centres, parks and trails; some golf.

Youth Centres: No remarkable change here; most remained about the same with 1-2% of families reporting participation

School Program participation; minor variation in percentages, slight increase in 2012 - from 5% to 7% reporting.

As anticipated, there is a substantial “cross boundary” use of sites, ranging from 15-25% visits to larger sites like Oak Bay Rec (Highest at 26%)

3.12

FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

During the scope of our YDS process, we became aware of other complementary actions which were outside of the scope of the project. The following represent a list of future considerations for the Parks and Recreation Department:

- Explore the viability of resourcing a Community Engagement Coordinator for Parks and Recreation whose role would be to ensure positive, successful citizen and youth participation in the development and implementation of Parks and Recreation projects
- Research and adopt an online collaboration tool to increase efficiency and organization during public engagement processes. It is important that multiple users can access the same document at the same time to maximize efficiency from multiple locations and authors (e.g. Google Docs enterprise).
- Research and adopt an engagement tool which can be used by Saanich Parks and Recreation and other departments during public engagement processes (e.g., Weebly).
- Develop a Recreation Division partnership agreement (template) which will assist in the creation and maintenance of new community partnerships.
- Recommend that the District of Saanich add a specific Youth Community Grant to its current grant offerings.





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