

For Immediate Release
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Community Action Ignited by BC Adolescent Health Survey Results in Sooke and West Shore

Langford, BC - Recent findings from the 2023 BC Adolescent Health Survey (AHS) have sparked a proactive response from local leaders and youth advocates signaling a shift towards collectively bolstering the well-being of the youth in Sooke and the West Shore.

The most recent survey data revealed some concerning trends including a decrease in their overall health and mental health. More youth are missing out on the mental health services they feel they need and are not getting enough sleep. Nutrition and eating regular meals are also an area of decline for youth.

A collaborative effort led by The Village Initiative (TVI), an inter-disciplinary network of more than 60 organizations sharing a commitment to the vision of healthy and thriving children, youth, and families across the Sooke and West Shore communities, brought together stakeholders from various sectors to address these challenges head-on.

Recognizing the importance of engaging youth voices in shaping solutions, TVI facilitated a workshop on February 27, 2024, where over 40 youth shared insights and proposed actions to enhance their health and well-being. The event, supported by the McCreary Centre Society, underscored the need for a concerted community effort to bridge existing gaps in services and support systems.

"The health and well-being of our students are paramount, and it's crucial that we work together as a community to address the challenges they face," said Paul Block, Superintendent of the Sooke School District. "Teachers, counsellors, and administrators are at the forefront of managing social issues that directly impact students and their learning. This is precisely why we took the initiative to be a founding member of TVI. Schools alone cannot tackle these issues; it necessitates a collaborative approach involving municipalities, government bodies, and organizations to provide comprehensive support for the health and well-being of youth."

Building on the momentum generated by the youth workshop, over 100 community leaders from across Sooke and the West Shore convened to review the survey data, hear first-hand stories from youth and recommendations to support the state of youth health and well-being.

Scott Bradford, Executive Director of Thrive and steward of TVI, underscored the importance of a coordinated approach by all stakeholders to address the persistent planning gaps in a region experiencing tremendous population growth. "The survey data makes it clear that children and youth need to be at the forefront when planning communities and we have a collective responsibility to ensure that supports and infrastructure grow with our population to serve their needs," said Bradford.

TVI has been actively advocating for spaces where important community programs and services can find a home. The efforts of TVI are starting to come to fruition as their collaborative effort and determination were instrumental in bringing the recently announced [Foundry \(a province-wide network of integrated health and wellness services for young people ages 12-24\)](#) to Sooke and the West Shore.

“Sooke and the West Shore are growing. Now is the time to play catch-up on the rest of what makes a complete community, which includes places for social programming and services needed by children, youth and families to thrive,” said Dalyce Dixon, Executive Director of BGC (formerly the Boys and Girls Club). “Through collaborative efforts and leadership, we can affect positive change for children, youth and families in Sooke and the West Shore.”

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Resources:

BC Adolescent Health Survey: https://www.mcs.bc.ca/about_bcahs

The Next 5 Years: A Roadmap to Improved Futures for Youth in Sooke and the West Shore: <https://thevillageinitiative.ca/>

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