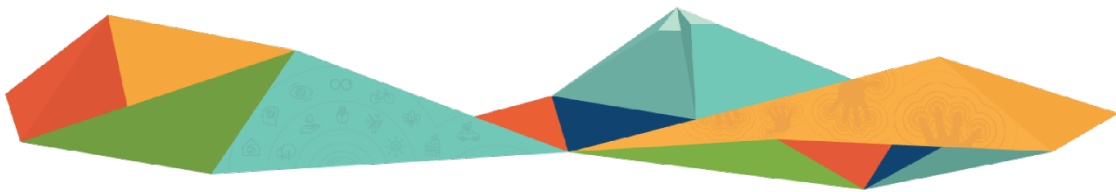


CO-CREATING

A SUSTAINABLE BC

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Fraser
Basin
Council **YOUTH**
PROGRAM

**CO-CREATING A SUSTAINABLE BC INITIATIVE REPORT
2019 – 2023**

Executive Summary

Co-Creating a Sustainable BC (CCSBC) is a curriculum-style initiative delivered by the Youth Program of the Fraser Basin Council. The initiative supports and empowers youth aged 16-30 to develop sustainability leadership skills, establish local and province-wide connections, gain knowledge and perspectives on sustainability, and take on-the-ground climate action in their communities.

CCSBC engages participants over eight months in regional cohorts, connecting youth with leaders from all sectors and enabling them to learn about the gaps and opportunities for action. Youth use the knowledge and connections gained to collaboratively address the unique sustainability challenges facing their communities and lead their own projects. From May 2019 to March 2023, CCSBC has directly engaged 132 diverse youth participants from communities of various sizes across eight regions of BC. We have empowered youth from Prince George to Kimberley to the Cowichan Valley to be meaningfully involved in their communities and lead projects that address issues such as waste, climate preparedness, and food security.

Youth participants leave the initiative with an expanded network of contacts in their community and across BC and gain greater confidence in their leadership abilities as a result of their participation. Alumni have reported back that they continue to be actively engaged in local sustainability projects after their participation in CCSBC. Community partners who worked with us and with the youth participants have also said that their involvement in CCSBC was a valuable experience. They appreciated the important role of the initiative in developing and inspiring sustainability leadership and collaboration in the community.

The planning and implementation of CCSBC was shaped by the invaluable input and feedback from our Youth Advisory Committee members from across the province. We are so grateful for their contributions, as well as those from the many project partners, community leaders, and consultants that we have engaged with over the past four years. We would also like to acknowledge the funding support between 2019 and 2023 from the Government of Canada under the Canada Service Corps program, which made all of this possible.

We see Co-Creating a Sustainable BC as a starting point for future opportunities for meaningful youth engagement in BC communities. We hope that the seeds that have been planted through CCSBC will continue to flourish and grow into sustainability and climate initiatives and networks with even greater impact across BC.



Quick facts

- Brought together 142 youth participants aged 16-30 from all walks of life, including Indigenous youth, LGBTQ+ youth, and newcomers to Canada
- Engaged close to 45 youth over four years in an advisory committee to inform and direct the development of activities for engaging youth in the CCSBC initiative
- Supported youth from eight different geographic regions in implementing 16 youth-led projects
- Connected youth with over 100 leaders from different sectors to share diverse perspectives
- Facilitated over 115 collaborative partnerships with businesses, non-profits, community groups, local governments, and First Nations to support youth projects
- Further engaged thousands of other British Columbians on sustainability and climate action through the implementation and legacy of youth-led events and projects

Project Objectives

- Increase awareness of youth about community-specific sustainability issues and provide guidance with assessing gaps and identifying areas for action
- Empower participating youth to become active citizens in their communities and contribute their perspectives in decision-making processes
- Provide participating youth with a strong understanding of sustainability principles and a foundation to enter future careers through leadership training, skill-building, and expanded networks
- Create opportunities for youth from underrepresented groups to add their voices and help create a more inclusive culture that better represents their views

CCSBC Youth

Over four years, we created 142 service placement opportunities to engage youth from 6 regions in BC. We engaged youth 16-30 years old from all walks of life, bringing diverse perspectives and lived experiences to the initiative.



Youth Advisory Committee (YAC)

CCSBC (and all FBC youth initiatives) was guided by the input and advice from our Youth Advisory Committee (YAC). Between 2018 and 2023, we engaged close to 45 youth to inform and direct the development of activities for engaging youth, including 6 CCSBC alumni who joined the YAC after their participation. YAC members supported the initiative by offering invaluable advice on how to reach out to and recruit youth participants, by suggesting potential partner organizations for the program, and by providing feedback for the improvement of engagement activities for youth. Without the YAC's contributions, CCSBC would not be as successful as it is, and we are so thankful for their time and input!

CCSBC+

In addition to our work with the regional cohorts, we identified a need to do more focused work with youth that are experiencing barriers to participation in sustainability and community-building initiatives. Through these efforts, the idea of CCSBC+ was sprouted and launched in 2022 as a result of the learnings and the capacity we gained over the previous years of the initiative. We started a new cohort focused on the role of art in building sustainable communities and another one in Vancouver in collaboration with an Indigenous women's organization working with women fleeing domestic violence, to engage youth with experience living in shelters.



Legacy of Projects

2019-20 Sea-to-Sky composting project:

- Youth created a waste reduction behaviour change campaign called Sea to Sky Composts, and administered a community survey to better understand the composting practices of Squamish residents
- Provided the District of Squamish and Squamish Climate Action Network with compost bins for further community outreach

2020-2021 North Central Eco Living Kitchen project:

- Youth coordinated and delivered a series of 7 online workshops to teach Prince George residents about a variety of different practices they can employ to reduce waste generation in their homes and kitchen.
- They partnered with local organizations to deliver the workshops and held a giveaway of zero-waste kitchen supplies to engage the community and advertise the workshops.

2021-2022 North Central accessible greenspaces project:

- This group wanted to increase awareness of and accessibility to green spaces in the Prince George area, as well as to promote the use of alternative transportation. Youth worked with the City of Prince George to design and install a total of 5 map boards around the city. Using custom maps created by the youth, the signs let residents in each of the 5 major Prince George neighbourhoods know what nearby greenspaces were accessible within a 15-minute walk from the sign's location.
- The signs also include stats about how many emissions are saved when you choose to walk opposed to driving a car.

2022-2023 North Central active transportation project:

- Youth wanted to promote the benefits of cycling as a form of transit in the city of Prince George. They gathered data on the opinions and needs of Prince George citizens related to the concept of a bike-share program through the development, dissemination, and promotion of an incentivized survey. They used the survey data to inform a feasibility study on the implementation of a bike share program in PG, which they plan to present to City Council. They also developed an infographic on bike safety and accessibility which was distributed through social media. Going forward, they plan to continue building their partnerships with the local college and university in the hopes of establishing a bike share program for students that would serve as a pilot for city-wide implementation.

2019-20 Thompson composting project:

- Supplied compost bins to Butler Urban Farm, The BIG Little Science Centre, Little Shuswap Lake Indian Band, Full Circle Youth Centre, Yellowhead Community Services, Blue River Community Garden, River Street Community Garden, and Arthur Hatton Elementary School
- Provided 30 home compost pails for each community group to allow users to collect their compost at home and transport it to the Joracan bin location

2020-21 Thompson greenhouse project:

- Youth installed a greenhouse at Butler Urban Farms so they can extend their growing season. Unfortunately, the greenhouse was destroyed by a wind storm before it could be used, but it has been rebuilt at another location to support a communal kitchen.

2021-22 Thompson eco-mini library project:

- Youth built and installed three mini libraries and filled them with eco related books and seeds for the community to borrow/use and add their own contributions to. One was installed at a local community farm, another was placed near an elementary school, and one library is mobile and is taken by a partner organization to the Saturday farmers market.

2022-23 Thompson transit mapping project:

- The cohort prepared a survey and hosted an interactive culture mapping workshop with high-school youth, who were provided with art supplies and asked to prepare a visual representation and a brief verbal summary of their experiences and ideas of moving around the city. The cohort compiled the art pieces and discussion notes to share with decision makers within the community, and they hope to inspire more discussions and engagement with other youth on this important matter.

2020-21 Fraser Valley waste project:

- Waste Free Fraser Valley is a digital guide and inspirational video that empowers youth aged 16-30 in the Fraser Valley to take action on waste. The cohort wanted to create awareness of this issue, empower others to take action in reducing waste in their own

lives, and spread a hopeful message by sharing local success stories to bring long-lasting change in reducing waste in the Fraser valley.

- www.wastefreefraservalley.com includes resources such as info on why waste reduction is important; how to reduce food, textile, electronic, plastic waste; and a directory of local businesses and organizations to support.

2021-22 Fraser Valley climate preparedness project:

- The Fraser Valley Cohort created and distributed free booklets with tips, tricks, and community resources to help vulnerable populations prepare for and navigate extreme weather events, namely low-income families who may not have as many resources.
- 300 booklets were distributed at various community events and through the local library system
- [Booklet link](#)

2022-23 Fraser Valley food systems project:

- Youth hosted a community event in Abbotsford to educate young families in the Fraser Valley about how to maximize the local food systems. Youth led their own workshops and booths about worm composting, canning and pickling, food preservation techniques, planting garden vegetables, and the importance of eating local. They also invited like-minded community partners to host additional workshops on growing sprouts, foraging, and Indigenous food practices.
- Approximately 100 community members came out to support the event. Informal feedback and comments from attendees mentioned how engaging the event was and how it was sorely needed in the community.

2021-22 Cowichan Valley food pantry project:

- This project supported the basic needs of the community through building and stocking a community pantry with free food in Duncan's downtown for community members. The pantry itself was built using sustainable and natural materials, such as reclaimed wood from pallets sourced from partners and cob (a combination of wood chips, hay, and mud). Youth also distributed door hangers and installed signage to bring awareness of this community resource.

2022-23 Cowichan Valley drinking water project:

- Youth were concerned about access to bathrooms and water for both drinking and hygiene. Their project focused on mapping out publicly available water access focusing on public washrooms and fountains. The map was made accessible through an interactive online mapping website, a printed poster, and stickers with QR codes distributed and displayed around the region. The youth hope that this resource is helpful to those trying to find freely available water, but also as a tool to showcase local gaps in available water for future planning purposes.

2022-23 Vancouver Urban Core project:

- This cohort engaged BIPOC Youth in considering the role of art in creating more sustainable and inclusive communities. The VUC cohort's project idea was to start conversations about food and its potential as a tool to connect us, to think about the role food plays in our lives and how it can create opportunities for inclusion. As part of their CCSBC project, youth built and decorated a sound box to engage community members to collect and record stories of their experiences when/how they used food to connect with others. Beyond CCSBC, youth are planning to continue working on this project to create a mural based on the data they collect and organize an event to demonstrate the power of food and art to create social inclusion and strengthen community bonds.

2022-23 East Kootenay project:

- We built a partnership with the Kimbelrey/Cranbrook branch of Wildsight to engage youth from an outdoor leadership class at Mount Baker Secondary School in learning about the importance communication and community engagement in climate action. The class was tasked with developing a communications & promotion plan for an event hosted by Wildsight, aimed at restoring a Cranbrook park. The event was focused on removing invasives, removing trash, restoring the riparian area, and educating the public. In addition to creating a communications plan for the event, the class also had a say in the elements of the event that would be included to draw in the community.

2022-23 Helping Spirit Lodge Society project:

- In partnership with the Helping Spirit Lodge Society, this cohort focused on youth with the experience of living in shelters or otherwise experiencing hardship to connect with the traditions and teachings of the Indigenous cultures. Youth built self-confidence and gained skills that are based on traditional practices and have then supported other women from their community by sharing what they learned through these workshops and gatherings.

Alumni Achievements & Stories

CCSBC enabled long-lasting community engagement through our empowered alumni who continue to work independently as individuals and groups to address local climate challenges. Our alumni continue to stay in touch and often ask for references from us for school, job, and volunteer applications as they continue on their individual sustainability journeys. They also helped contribute to the success of the initiative in subsequent years by helping to share recruitment materials, submitting testimonials and success stories, and supporting other youth projects with feedback and advice.

Select alumni stories:

- Alumni from our 2021 Prince George cohort became their own entity and started their own non-profit organization, called Eco-Living Community, to do more great work in the community on climate action. We are still in contact with them about opportunities to work together on upcoming projects in the region. Ann from the cohort has also been appointed to be a director on the Fraser Basin Council's board of directors, and chairs our Youth Advisory Committee.
- "CCSBC changed my life because I learned there was so much out there for the field of sustainability and environmentalism [and] by opening doors and connecting me to many like-minded people." – Allison, 2021-22 participant
- "I was able to learn from and engage with several environmental leaders in the Sea to Sky region. In particular, some of the contacts I made during the program gave me a stepping stone to move forward in my own work in the non-profit environmental sector in the region, eventually landing me a Project Coordinator position with a small non-profit in Whistler." - Natasha, 2019-20 participant
- "The most valuable part was creating connections with other youth who are interested in the same things that I was, specifically climate change and sustainability." - Josee, 2019-2020 participant
- Both PG 2022-23 cohort and VUC continue to work as a group and have jointly applied for other grants to pursue next steps of their community projects



Final Celebration Event in Kamloops

We organized a final celebration event from April 15 to 16, 2023, in Kamloops that celebrated the stories and successes of our youth over the past four years. 20 youth attended and participated in three externally-facilitated workshops on the topics of storytelling, creative facilitation, and placemaking. This event was a chance for youth and staff to connect one more time in-person, and for staff to thank our youth by providing even more training and skill-building opportunities for them that would be helpful for their careers. Attendees worked on a collective artwork entitled “Connection, Collaboration, Co-Creation” and shared their unique strengths and stories for community change through this art piece.

Youth participants spoke highly of the event afterward, and appreciated the opportunity to (re-)connect with youth from across BC in an in-person setting.



Partner Organizations

Partnerships with local organizations in different regions of BC to support youth participants are key to the objectives and work of CCSBC. These collaborations allow youth to learn about community-specific sustainability issues, and provide hope and inspiration to youth about the interesting and diverse sustainability and climate action work already happening in their communities. Participants were also able to network with these organizations and open up their eyes to potential careers through these connections.

We are grateful for the support that community leaders and organizations from different sectors and communities have given us over the years. Several organizations have even worked with us over multiple years of the initiative. Leaders all across BC have generously offered their time and expertise to our staff and participants by sharing CCSBC materials and information with their networks, joining us as guest speakers, leading workshops and field trips, and much more. Many organizations also collaborated with youth directly on their projects to provide advice and support, and even took on the legacy of some of those projects and continued them on. For a full list of the organizations that we have worked with, please see the appendix.

Outcomes and Impact



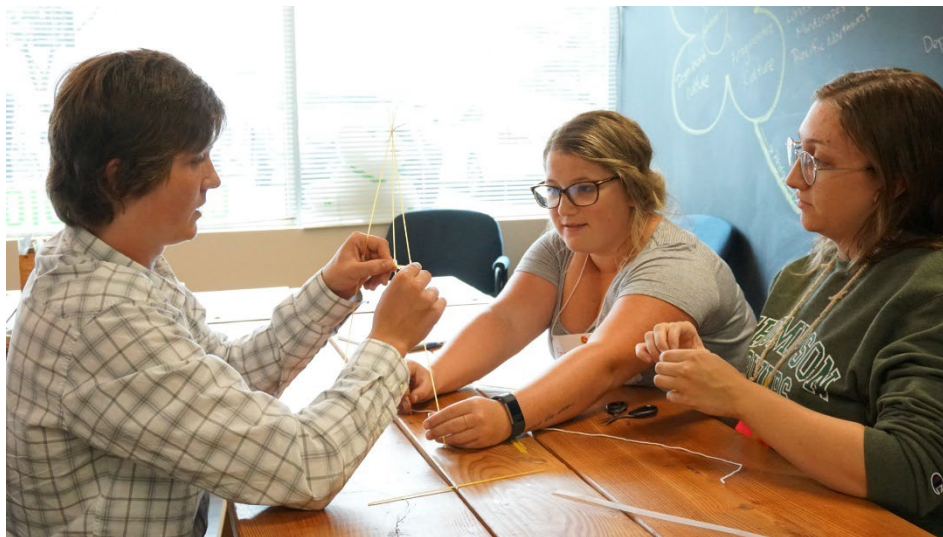
Evaluation survey results show that youth participants from every year leave the initiative with an expanded network of contacts in their community and region as a result of their participation, and become more self-motivated to be an active citizen in their community. Many of them gain greater confidence in their ability to effect change in their community as a result of the initiative. Youth alumni have reported back that they have maintained an interest in local sustainability

issues and that they continue to be actively engaged in local sustainability projects after their participation in CCSBC.

Community partners who worked with us and with the youth participants have said that their involvement in CCSBC was a valuable experience, and confirmed that the initiative has been relevant and timely. They appreciated the important role of the initiative in developing and inspiring sustainability leadership and collaboration in the community, and felt that the program is contributing towards future environmental sustainability leaders in their community.

Successes

- Since 2019, when we started with a 2 cohort pilot, we were able to increase our capacity and offer the program to youth in 7 regions by the end of 2023 fiscal year
- Successfully adapted to COVID disruption and online delivery
- Successfully developed an initiative that is informed through perspectives and with feedback from a diverse youth committee with representatives from across the province
- Delivered over 15 community projects
- Community partnerships over 115
- Engaged an Indigenous cohort in Metro Van
- Cohort and project legacy
- Impact on youth's career and leadership developments
- Employed more people passionate about empowering youth to embrace sustainability leadership in the province



Lessons Learned

Over the past four years of CCSBC, a lot has happened and changed in the world that we have had to respond and adapt to. In particular, the COVID-19 pandemic hit as we were about to implement youth projects in the first year of the initiative. This required both staff and youth to change plans on the fly. COVID also forced us to rethink the curriculum entirely for Year 2, as we had to move all our activities online and engage youth differently. In addition, there has been increased concern in the climate crisis in youth and in greater society, as the global climate strikes showed in 2019 and because of the one-in-a-lifetime extreme weather events that have happened just in BC alone between 2019 and 2023. We learned that it is important to stay flexible and adaptable to unforeseen changes, and the CCSBC curriculum was changed and adjusted every year to reflect these changes and shifts in priority. Flexibility is also an important quality in order for our programming to stay relevant and responsive to youth needs.

We learned that hybrid engagement works best to engage youth. Having the entire curriculum take place in person is time consuming for busy youth, but all-virtual meetings make it hard for youth to build bonds and feel connected to each other. Both types of meetings are needed for optimal youth engagement. Occasional in-person meetings and field trips allowed youth to gain hands-on experience in their region and more one-on-one opportunities with local leaders, while virtual meetings opened up doors for them to connect with and gain knowledge from a greater diversity of guest speakers, who could join from anywhere in the province.

The efforts to build new cohorts through CCSBC+ in the Cariboo-Chilcotin region as well as Indigenous youth in Metro Vancouver have taught us that it is important to take plenty of time to build trust and form meaningful relationships with Indigenous youth. It is imperative to build strong relationships with youth first before even introducing the CCSBC initiative in order to build trust in our staff and facilitators and to create a comfortable space for them to share their thoughts.



Acknowledgement of Funder

Co-Creating a Sustainable BC was made possible with funding from Employment and Social Development Canada through Canada Service Corps program.

Appendix: Full List of Partner Organizations

Sea-to-Sky

1. District of Squamish (Mayor & Councillors) (Guest speaker + project partner)
2. Carbon Engineering (Guest speaker)
3. Squamish Nation (Guest speaker)
4. Squamish Food Policy Council (Guest speaker)
5. Squamish CAN (Project partner)
6. Squamish River Watershed Society (Guest speaker)
7. AWARE Whistler (Youth volunteer experience)
8. Pemberton Clothing Swap (Youth volunteer experience)
9. Quest University Student Environment Committee (Guest speaker)

Thompson

1. Butler Urban Farm (Guest speaker + field trip + project partner)
2. The BIG Little Science Centre (project partner)
3. Little Shuswap Lake Indian Band (project partner)
4. Full Circle Youth Centre (project partner)
5. Yellowhead Community Services (project partner)
6. Blue River Community Garden (project partner)
7. River Street Community Garden (project partner)
8. Arthur Hatton Elementary School (project partner)
9. City of Kamloops (guest speaker)
10. Kamloops Food Policy Council (guest speaker)
11. The STIR (field trip)
12. Harper Mountain (field trip)
13. Erin Valley Riding Stables (field trip)
14. Discover Sun Peaks Adventures (field trip)
15. Kamloops Museum (field trip)
16. Transition Kamloops (guest speaker)
17. Thistle Farms (guest speaker)
18. Thompson Rivers University - Sustainability Department (guest speaker)
19. BC Sustainable Energy Association (guest speaker)
20. Save on Foods (guest speaker)
21. Friendly Composting (project partner)
22. Ron Dennill (guest speaker)
23. District of Clearwater (guest speaker)
24. Kamloops Naturalist Club - Next Generation Naturalists

Fraser Valley

1. City of Abbotsford (Guest speaker)
2. City of Chilliwack (Field trip)
3. Township of Langley (Guest speaker)
4. Fraser Valley Regional District (Guest speaker + project partner)
5. Abbotsford Heritage Society (Field trip)
6. Fraser Valley Metis Association (Field trip)
7. Foraging with You (Project partner)
8. Fraser Valley Conservancy (Project partner)
9. Abbotsford School District (Project partner)
10. Fraser Valley Regional Library (Project partner)
11. Glorious Organics Farm (Field trip)
12. Archway Community Services (Project partner)
13. Net Zero Abbotsford (Field trip + project partner)
14. Abbotsford-Mission Recycling Depot (Field trip + project partner)
15. Chilliwack Slough Group (Field trip)
16. Ridge Wilderness (Field trip)
17. Sources Community Resources Society (Project partner)
18. Canadian Red Cross (Project partner)
19. John Vissers - Zero Waste BC (guest speaker + project partner)
20. Langley Sustainable Agriculture Foundation (Guest speaker)
21. University of the Fraser Valley (Project partner)
22. Sustainable UFV (Project partner)
23. PickEco Refills (Guest speaker + project partner)
24. Myca Farms (Project partner)
25. Great Blue Heron Nature Reserve (Field trip)

North-Central BC

1. Northern Lights Winery (guest speaker/virtual field trip)
2. City of Prince George (project partner)
3. UNBC (project partner)
4. CNC (project partner)
5. Eco-Living Community
6. Community Energy Association (guest speaker)
7. Prince George Cycling Club (guest speaker + project partner/consultant)
8. Prince George Electric Vehicle Association
9. Value Village (Prince George) (field trip)
10. Prince George Air Improvement Roundtable (guest speaker)
11. Elizabeth Fry Society (field trip)
12. Tourism Prince George (project partner/consultant)
13. REAPS (project partner)
14. Homespun Refillery (project partner)
15. David Douglas Botanical Society (project partner)

16. Ultra Equine (field trip)
17. Nechako Watershed Roundtable (field trip)

East Kootenays

1. Wildsight Kimberley Cranbrook
2. Mount Baker Secondary
3. Nexus Community Support Cranbrook
4. Community Connections Society
5. Cranbrook Community Garden

Cariboo

1. Communities that Care
2. T̓silhqot'in National Government
3. Potato House Project (guest speaker)
4. The Green Gazette

Cowichan Valley

1. Cowichan Green Community (Facilitator + project partner)
2. O.U.R. Ecovillage (Field trip + project partner)
3. Cowichan Estuary Nature Centre (field trip)
4. Vancouver Island University (project partner)

Vancouver Urban Core

1. Britannia Community Center (project partner)
2. Environmental Youth Alliance (youth recruitment and intern support)
3. Hollis Nelson (Local Artist + Facilitator)
4. Sole Foods Farm (guest speaker)

HSLs

1. Helping Spirit Lodge Society (project partner)
2. May Silvey (Indigenous Elder / traditional cultural practices workshop)
3. Elder Ron Horsfall (Indigenous Elder / traditional cultural practices workshop)
4. Michelle Paquette (traditional cultural practices workshop)

Others

1. Fraser Basin Council (guest speaker, youth project support)
2. Salt Legacy (guest speaker)
3. Victoria Behie - Buy Nothing Project researcher (guest speaker)

4. JUMP Canada (program partner)
5. Kanaka Bar Indian Band (guest speaker)
6. Caroline Merner, Climate Guides (guest speaker)
7. Shades of Sustainability (guest speaker)
8. June Reeves (Traditional Medicine Walk) (guest speaker)
9. Women Transforming Cities (guest speaker)
10. Prism Engineering (guest speaker)
11. Share Reuse Repair Initiative (guest speaker)
12. Wildwood Ecoforest (guest speaker)
13. Guy Dauncey (guest speaker)
14. Town of Gibsons (guest speaker)
15. Yunesit'in First Nation (guest speaker)
16. Nuxalk First Nation (guest speaker)
17. HCA Consulting (Program evaluation)
18. University of Waterloo (Program evaluation)
19. Lytton First Nation
20. Kenthen Thomas (partnership development + guest speaker)
21. Tara Mahoney (youth project guidance)