

**MEDIA RELEASE | February 2015**

## ***McCreary report on health of Kootenay Boundary youth released***

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Following last year's release of the provincial results of the McCreary Centre Society's 2013 BC Adolescent Health Survey (BC AHS), local results are now available. The BC AHS was conducted in 56 of BC's 59 school districts, with almost 30,000 students in Grades 7–12 taking part.

Results for the Kootenay Boundary area, which included students in Kootenay Lake (SD 8), Arrow Lakes (SD 10), Kootenay-Columbia (SD 20), and Boundary (SD 51) showed that the majority of Grade 7–12 students reported good physical and mental health; felt connected to their family, school and community; had positive plans for the future; and were engaging in health promoting behaviours which will assist them to transition successfully to adulthood.

The report also highlights some differences between this region and the province as a whole, as well as identifying some groups of students who may need additional support.

Local students were more likely than their peers across the province to have slept for eight or more hours on the night before taking the survey, yet 8 out of 10 were on-line, doing homework or using their cellphone after the time they were expected to be asleep. The more hours of sleep students got the more likely they were to report positive mental health.

Students were less likely than their peers across the province to have attempted suicide in the past year (4% vs. 6%). However, mental health was still an area of concern, particularly for girls who were more likely than boys to report extreme stress and despair, self harm and suicidal ideation and attempts.

Although there were no improvement in the rates of young people reporting being teased, socially excluded or physically assaulted, students felt safer in every area of their school than five years previously. Additionally, in comparison to students across the province, more Kootenay Boundary students felt safe in their home, in their neighbourhood (during the day and at night), and on public transit.

Students were less likely than their peers five years earlier to have tried alcohol or marijuana. Among those who had tried alcohol fewer tried it at age 12 or younger. Similarly among youth who tried marijuana, more waited until they were 15 or older to do so.

Annie Smith, Executive Director of McCreary commented on the report: *"There are many encouraging results which show the majority of Kootenay Boundary youth are making good choices about their health. The survey*

*McCreary Centre Society is a non-government, non-profit organization committed to improving the health of B.C. youth through research and community-based projects.*

*Founded in 1977, the Society sponsors and promotes a wide range of activities and research to address unmet health needs of young people.*

### **Contact**

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*results also show us where we need to focus our attention to make sure students are getting the support they need."*

A copy of the report *Kootenay Boundary: Results of the 2013 BC Adolescent Health Survey*, as well as the provincial report *From Hastings Street to Haida Gwaii: Provincial results of the 2013 BC Adolescent Health Survey* can be obtained at [www.mcs.bc.ca](http://www.mcs.bc.ca).

A series of webinars to share the findings have also been scheduled for **Friday, February 6<sup>th</sup> at 11:00 am**, as well as **February 10<sup>th</sup> at 8:30 am**, and **February 12<sup>th</sup> at 3:30 pm**. Login details are available at [www.mcs.bc.ca](http://www.mcs.bc.ca).

## **BACKGROUND**

Between February and June 2013, almost 30,000 students in Grades 7–12 completed the BC Adolescent Health Survey (BC AHS) in schools across British Columbia.

This is the fifth time students have been asked to complete the survey. It was conducted previously in 1992, 1998, 2003 and 2008. As in previous years, all school districts in this region participated in the BC AHS.

The survey results are used by federal and provincial policy makers and program planners, as well as by local decision makers and others with an interest in youth health.

The survey is designed to consider emerging youth health issues and to track trends over time. It included 130 questions asking youth about their perceptions of their current physical and emotional health, as well as risky behaviours and health promoting practices. Healthy development for youth includes many contributing factors, and the survey also asked about broader issues such as feelings of safety, relationships, and engagement in a variety of activities.

### ***Key Findings: Kootenay Boundary***

- Students were more likely than their peers across BC to identify as having a European heritage (78% vs. 53% provincially) and to speak only English at home (68% vs. 51%).
- Most youth rated their mental health as good or excellent, but they were less likely to rate their mental health this way than their overall health. Males generally reported better mental health than females, including higher rates of self-confidence and lower rates of extreme stress, despair, self-harm, and suicide attempts.
- Males and females were less likely than their peers across the province to have attempted suicide in the past year (4% vs. 6%).
- Six out of 10 students slept for eight or more hours on the night before taking the survey, which was higher than the rate across BC (53%). Reflecting the provincial picture, most males (76%) and females (83%) were doing something such as homework or using their cellphone after the time they were expected to be asleep.
- Youth were more likely than those across BC to have ever tried alcohol (60% vs. 45%) or marijuana (38% vs. 26%). However, the local rates reflected a decrease from 2008.

- Local youth were also waiting longer to use marijuana than their peers in previous years. For example, in 2013 35% of those who used marijuana first used it when they were 15 or older, compared to 24% in 2008 and 2003.
- The percentage of students who first had sex (excluding oral sex) before age 15 decreased (from 44% in 2008 to 36% in 2013). Mirroring the provincial picture, 30% of students who ever had sex reported using alcohol or other substances before they had sex the last time. For females, this represented a decrease from five years previous (21% in 2013 vs. 32% in 2008), while there was no change among males (38% in 2013).
- Ninety-five percent of youth reported eating fruit or vegetables at least once on the day before completing the survey, which was consistent with the provincial rate and a local increase from 93% in 2008. Local males were more likely than females to have consumed fast food (40% vs. 26%), pop or soda (40% vs. 20%), or energy drinks (13% vs. 3%) the previous day.
- In the past year, 35% of males and 28% of females were injured seriously enough to require medical attention.
- Twenty percent of students had a concussion during this same time period. Among these youth more than one in five (21%) had not accessed needed medical help.
- Students were more likely than those throughout the province to have taken part in informal sports in the past year (e.g., road hockey, hiking, skateboarding; 68% vs. 58% across BC). Rates of taking part in weekly organized sports were similar to those across BC.
- Local students who had not taken part in sports or other activities in the past year were more likely than their peers across BC to report missing out because the activity was not available in their community (21% vs. 14%).
- Protective factors which appeared to improve outcomes for even the most vulnerable youth included physical activity, meaningful engagement in activities, nutrition, and getting eight or more hours of sleep. Local results also highlighted the importance of supportive relationships with peers and adults, including family, teachers and other professionals.
- Feeling safe was also a protective factor for youth. Local students were more likely than those across BC to feel safe in their home (84% vs. 81% provincially), in their neighbourhood during the day (77% vs. 64%), at night (46% vs. 28%) and on transit.