

**MEDIA RELEASE | March 24th 2020**

## ***Fraser North youth miss out on needed mental health services***

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McCreary Centre Society today released the Fraser North regional results of the 2018 BC Adolescent Health Survey. The survey was completed by over 38,000 of the province's Grade 7–12 students, including all school districts in Fraser North Health Service Delivery Area.

Results showed that compared to five years earlier local youth were more likely to report missing out on mental health services when they felt they needed them.

McCreary's Executive Director Annie Smith explained: *"In the year before they took the survey, 18% of Fraser North students felt they had needed mental health services but had not accessed them. This was a local increase from 12% five years earlier. This is obviously concerning as are the reasons youth gave for not accessing these services, which included not wanting their parents to know."*

*"We also saw a rise in local youth missing out on services because they did not know where to go, and Fraser North youth were more likely than youth across the province to have missed out for this reason."*

Smith went on to say *"The number one health topic youth wrote they wanted to learn about on the survey was mental health. It was encouraging locally that most youth felt they had an adult who cared about them at school, in their family and in their community so if we could find ways to support these adults to feel comfortable talking to young people about mental health and supporting them to seek help if they need it, this would go a long way to reducing the stigma that seems to still be attached to it for them. Hopefully we would then see more youth getting the services they need."*

A copy of the report, *Balance and connection in Fraser North: The health and well-being of our youth*, and an accompanying Power Point of the results are available at [www.mcs.bc.ca](http://www.mcs.bc.ca).

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

*Founded in 1977, our vision is that all youth are supported to be healthy and connected.*

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## **BACKGROUND**

The 2018 BC Adolescent Health Survey was conducted in 58 of BC's 60 school districts. It was the sixth time students have been asked to complete the comprehensive health survey since 1992.

Participation was the highest since the survey began, and the results are considered representative of over 95% of mainstream school students in Grades 7–12 in the province.

Fraser North HSDA is comprised of four school districts: New Westminster (SD 40), Burnaby (SD 41), Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows (SD 42), and Coquitlam (SD 43). All school districts in this region have participated in the survey since 2008, and three of the four have participated in all six waves of the survey. The Conseil scolaire francophone school district (SD 93) also participated in the survey for the first time in 2018.

The survey provides essential information about health trends, and about risk and protective factors that can influence young people's healthy transitions to adulthood. The 2018 survey included 140 questions asking youth about their perceptions of their current physical and mental health, their engagement in health promoting and health risk behaviours, and about factors that can contribute to a healthy transition to adulthood.

### **Some key findings from the report:**

A third (33%) of Fraser North students were born outside of Canada (compared to 21% across BC). Thirteen percent of local students were in Canada as international students (vs. 7% in 2013).

The majority of students (62%) spoke a language other than English at home, with 32% doing so most of the time. These rates were above those seen across BC where 53% spoke a language other than English at home and 23% did so most of the time.

Less than half (44%) of Fraser North students slept for at least eight hours on the night before completing the survey. This was a decrease from 50% in 2013 and lower than the 2018 provincial rate (48%).

Local youth were more likely than their peers across the province to always eat breakfast on school days (53% vs. 50%) and to eat three meals a day (41% vs. 37%). Males were the most likely to eat three meals a day.

There was a decrease in the percentage of Fraser North students who rated their overall health as good or excellent (81% vs. 87% in 2013), and their mental health as good or excellent (75% vs. 81%).

In the past year, 16% of students cut or injured themselves on purpose without the intention of killing themselves, 16% seriously considered suicide, and 5% attempted suicide. The percentage who attempted suicide decreased for females (7% vs. 9% in 2013), and for males was comparable to five years earlier (3%).

Local youth were more likely than youth five years earlier to have missed out on mental health services because they did not know where to go (52% vs. 42% in 2013; among those who needed services), and were more likely than youth across the province to have missed out for this reason (vs. 44% across BC).

Fraser North youth were less likely than their peers across BC to have tried tobacco (14% vs. 18%), alcohol (38% vs. 44%), and marijuana (20% vs. 25%).

There was a local decrease in youth who participated in weekly informal sports (49% vs. 55% in 2013) and organized sports (51% vs. 55%). The most common reason youth gave for not participating in extracurricular activities was because they were too busy (48%).

One in ten (10%) youth in Fraser North went to bed hungry at least sometimes because there was not enough money for food at home (vs. 7% in 2013).

Fourteen percent of students had been physically abused and 9% had been sexually abused (4% of males vs. 14% of females vs. 24% of non-binary youth).

Youth in Fraser North were more likely than those across BC to have been discriminated against because of their race, ethnicity, or skin colour (17% vs. 14% provincially). They were also more likely than local youth five years earlier to have experienced racism (13% in 2013).

Youth in Fraser North generally felt connected to their family. Also, the majority of students (73%) turned to a family member for help in the past year, and most of these students (94%) found the support helpful.

Most students in Fraser North felt that school staff expected them to do well (76%), they were treated fairly by school staff (69%), their teachers cared about them (66%), they were happy to be at school (62%), and they were a part of their school (61%).

Similar to youth across the province, 42% of students in Fraser North felt quite a bit or very much connected to their community, which was an increase from 38% in 2013.

There was an increase in local youth who had an adult in their neighbourhood or community who they felt really cared about them (61% vs. 58% in 2013).

Around two thirds (66%) of local youth felt they had the right amount of time to do what they wanted on their own, whereas 22% felt they did not have enough time, and the remainder felt they had too much time. Students who felt they had the right amount of time to spend on their own were more likely to report positive mental health and well-being compared to their peers who did not have enough time.

Fraser North youth generally felt positively about their quality of life. For example, most indicated that they had a good life (79%) and their life was going well (72%). Also, 77% could name something they were really good at (vs. 75% in 2013).