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No improvements in experiences of victimization but students more likely to have an adult to turn to

McCreary Centre Society today released the Kootenay Boundary 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 four school districts in the region.

Local results showed increases in victimization, including experiences of online and in-person bullying, sexual harassment, physical and sexual abuse, and discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and disability.

McCreary's Executive Director Annie Smith commented: *"These results are obviously concerning. We have seen these rises in experiences of violence and discrimination across the province, and we know that such experiences are linked to poorer mental health – and we definitely saw concerning trends for mental health in the local survey results, too."*

"What is good to see in Kootenay Boundary is the range of supportive adults that local youth have available to them, with most youth having an adult inside and/or outside their family they can turn to for help if they have a problem. We also found that over three quarters of youth have an adult in their neighbourhood or community who really cared about them, which was quite a bit higher than we saw provincially, and was also higher than we saw locally five years ago."

Other positive local results showed that most local youth felt positive about their life, felt safe at school and in their neighbourhood, and were physically active and engaged in various sports. They were also less likely to have engaged in binge drinking or sexting than five years ago.

Concerning findings included a decrease in positive mental health and in the percentage of youth who got eight hours sleep, and a rise in eating disordered behaviour for both boys and girls.

The report, *Balance and connection in Kootenay Boundary: The health and well-being of our youth*, is now available at www.mcs.bc.ca.

A PowerPoint presentation is also available at 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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BACKGROUNDER

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

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.

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.

Kootenay Boundary HSDA is comprised of four school districts: Kootenay Lake (SD 08), Arrow Lakes (SD 10), Kootenay-Columbia (SD 20), and Boundary (SD 51). All school districts in this region have participated in all six waves of the survey.

Some key findings from the report:

In Kootenay Boundary, 34% of youth indicated having at least one health condition or disability, which was an increase from 25% in 2013. A little under half (47%) of these students reported that their condition was debilitating.

The percentage of local students who slept for at least eight hours on the night before completing the survey decreased from 60% in 2013 to 54%. Students reported doing various online activities after the time they were expected to be asleep, such as watching videos and checking social media (72%), and gaming (26%).

Reflecting the provincial trend, there was an increase in the percentage of local youth who reported they had vomited on purpose after eating in the past year. Locally, males were three times more likely to have done so than in 2013 (9% vs. 3%). There was also an increase for females (17% vs. 12%).

Kootenay Boundary youth were more likely than their peers across BC to engage in weekly organized sports (58% vs. 52%), informal sports (63% vs. 52%), and extreme sports (18% vs. 9%).

As in 2013, 18% of local youth suffered a concussion in the past year (vs. 13% across BC), including 5% who experienced two or more concussions. Among these youth, 56% received medical treatment for their concussion.

Mirroring the trend across BC, there was a decrease in the percentage of students who rated their mental health as good or excellent (from 83% in 2013 to 71%). There was an increase in those reporting Anxiety Disorder/panic attacks (9% in 2013 vs. 25%) and Depression (9% vs. 19%).

In the past year, 20% of local youth had cut or injured themselves on purpose without the intent of killing themselves, 17% had seriously considered suicide, and 5% had attempted suicide. Females remained more likely than males to have deliberately harmed themselves, considered suicide, and attempted suicide.

Locally, 21% of youth had a family member who had attempted or died by suicide, and 33% had a close friend who had attempted or died by suicide.

In the past year, 21% of Kootenay Boundary students had missed out on needed mental health services, an increase from 10% in 2013.

The percentage of Kootenay Boundary students with a phone who used it on their most recent school day to engage in sexting halved (7% vs. 14% in 2013), and 11% used their device to watch pornography. Most youth (92%) felt they could refuse an unwanted request to engage in sexting.

In the past month, local youth were more likely than youth across BC to have vaped with nicotine (33% vs. 21%) and smoked cigarettes (11% vs. 7%).

Vaping products are marketed as an aid to help people stop smoking. However, 16% of local youth who had never smoked tobacco had vaped with nicotine and 14% had vaped without nicotine in the past month.

Similar to five years ago, 61% of Kootenay Boundary students had tried alcohol and 40% had used marijuana. Among students who had tried alcohol, most who drank on the Saturday before taking the survey had engaged in binge drinking (71%). This represented a decrease for males (from 79% in 2013 to 65%) but was comparable for females (78%).

Experiences of violence and discrimination increased, particularly for females. For example, there was an increase in females who were physically abused (22% vs. 15% in 2013) and sexually abused (23% vs. 14%).

If they experienced a serious problem, three quarters (75%) of Kootenay Boundary students felt they had an adult inside their family they could talk to, and 32% had an adult outside their family they could talk to (vs. 27% provincially).

Most Kootenay Boundary youth (77%) felt there was an adult in their neighbourhood or community (outside their family or school) who really cared about them. This was higher than the provincial rate (65%) and the local rate in 2013 (67%).

Kootenay Boundary youth generally felt positively about their quality of life. For example, 81% indicated they had a good life and 73% reported their life was going well.

There was an increase from five years ago in youth who were able to name something they were really good at, such as sports, school work, art, or music (81% vs. 77%).

As was the case across BC, the most common health topic students in this area wanted to learn more about was mental health.