

MEDIA RELEASE | 6th January 2020

Thompson Cariboo Shuswap adolescents more likely to be playing sports but mental health a concern

McCreary Centre Society today released the Thompson Cariboo Shuswap 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 six school districts in Thompson Cariboo Shuswap.

Results showed that Thompson Cariboo Shuswap youth were more likely than their peers across BC to meet Canadian physical activity recommendations and to participate weekly in informal sports (56% vs. 52% across BC) and extreme sports (16% vs. 9%). Also, the decline in organized sports participation seen across BC over the past five years did not occur locally.

However, mental health results were less positive. For example, compared to five years earlier there was an increase in the percentage of youth who reported having Anxiety Disorder/panic attacks (23% vs. 10% in 2013), Depression (20% vs. 11%), and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD; 4% vs. 1%).

McCreary's Executive Director Annie Smith explained: "*The mental health results across BC have been a lot less positive than in previous years and this region was no exception. It was also worrying to see locally that the percentage of students who did not access mental health services they needed rose from around 1 in 10 students in 2013 to around 1 in 6 – with particularly high rates among girls and youth who identify as non-binary.*"

Smith went on to say "*We do see some positives in terms of the support available to youth in this region, though. One thing that stood out is they are more likely than local youth five years earlier and youth across BC to feel an adult in their community really cares about them. We know that this can be a real source of support for young people, especially those who might be struggling with their mental health.*"

A copy of the report, *Balance and connection in Thompson Cariboo Shuswap: The health and well-being of our youth*, can be obtained at www.mcs.bc.ca.

A Power Point 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 (BC AHS) was conducted in 58 of BC's 60 school districts and is 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.

Thompson Cariboo Shuswap HSDA is comprised of six school districts: Revelstoke (SD 19), Cariboo-Chilcotin (SD 27), Nicola-Similkameen (SD 58), Kamloops-Thompson (SD 73), Gold Trail (SD 74) and North Okanagan-Shuswap (SD 83). All school districts in this region have participated in all six waves of the survey. 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:

Consistent with youth across the province, most students in Thompson Cariboo Shuswap rated their overall health and their mental health positively. However, the percentage who rated their overall health as good or excellent decreased from 86% in 2013 to 79% in 2018, and the percentage who rated their mental health this positively decreased from 81% to 70%.

Thompson Cariboo Shuswap youth aged 12–17 were more likely than their peers across BC to meet Canadian physical activity recommendations for their age group (23% vs. 18% provincially). This represented a local increase for females (17% vs. 13% in 2013), and was unchanged for males (28%).

Around half (51%) of students slept eight or more hours on the night before completing the BC AHS. This was a decrease from 58% in 2013.

Compared to five years earlier, there was an increase in the percentage of youth who reported having Anxiety Disorder/panic attacks (23% vs. 10% in 2013), Depression (20% vs. 11%), and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD; 4% vs. 1%).

In the past year, 18% of Thompson Cariboo Shuswap youth had missed out on needed mental health services (9% of males vs. a quarter of females and around half of non-binary youth). This rate was comparable to the province as a whole, and represented a local increase from 11% in 2013.

A quarter (25%) of local students had a family member or close friend who had attempted or died by suicide within the past year (vs. 20% provincially). Students with a

family member or friend who had attempted suicide were more likely to have attempted suicide themselves.

Similar to five years earlier, 28% of local youth had engaged in sexual intercourse. There was an increase in those who used withdrawal as their only contraceptive method (9% vs. 5% in 2013), and a decrease in those who used a condom as a way to prevent pregnancy (57% vs. 66%).

The majority of Thompson Cariboo Shuswap youth felt safe in their neighbourhood in the daytime (92%) and at night (70%). Local youth were more likely to feel safe in their neighbourhood at night than their peers across BC (70% vs. 65%).

Nearly three quarters (73%) of Thompson Cariboo Shuswap youth felt there was an adult in their neighbourhood or community who really cared about them. This reflected a local increase from 68% in 2013 and was above the provincial rate of 65%.

There was a decrease in the percentage of students who felt safe at school (68% vs. 77% in 2013). Males were the most likely to feel safe, and non-binary youth were the least likely.

Most local youth (66%) felt the activities they were engaged in were meaningful to them. These youth were more likely to report positive mental health, to feel an adult in their community cared about them, and to feel connected to their community.

The majority of Thompson Cariboo Shuswap youth could identify something they were really good at, felt good about themselves, reported satisfaction with their life, and were hopeful for their future.

The most common topic Thompson Cariboo Shuswap youth identified wanting to learn more about was mental health.