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It is hard to believe it is fall already. This year has been flying by, as we have had our busiest year ever with no signs of things slowing down. As you will read in this newsletter, this year we have already collected data for two large scale provincial surveys, as well as hosted our first ever in-person meeting of the BC Health and Wellness Youth Advisory Council. We have continued to conduct evaluations for other organizations, run a variety of youth groups, supported another Youth Research Academy cohort to graduate, and welcomed in a new cohort.

None of our achievements would have been possible without the dedication and support of our staff, board, and partners, and we are particularly indebted to our partners in education, health, and community services who made it possible for us to complete data collection for the BC Adolescent Health Survey and Homeless Youth Health and Wellness Survey.

2023 BC AHS data collection is complete

Data collection for the 2023 BC Adolescent Health Survey (BC AHS) has officially wrapped up. We have spent the summer entering and cleaning the data and are now starting to analyze the data in preparation for releasing the results this winter.

This year marks the 30-year anniversary of the BC AHS, and it was an exciting year for the survey. Over 38,000 students participated from 59 of the 60 school districts, marking the highest school district participation since the survey began in 1992. It was also the first time the survey was available both online and in French.



This was also an especially busy year for schools in BC, and we want to acknowledge the work and collaboration that goes into the data collection process for a survey of this size. We are incredibly grateful to the district staff, school administrators, principals, and teachers from over 600 schools that provided the opportunity for their students to participate.

We also want to acknowledge and thank the over 700 Public Health Nurses, Public Health Resource Nurses, and other allied health professionals who coordinated administration and supported students in over 2,000 classes to participate. This survey could not have been possible without your dedication and hard work.

Finally, we want to express a huge thank you to all the youth who took the time to fill in the survey and share what they know, think, and do about their own health. We cannot wait to bring the results back to young people and their communities, and to support youth-led projects that help to put the results into action.



BC AHS
Coordinator,
Karen Forsyth,
with boxes of
2023 BC AHS
materials.

For more information and updates
on the 2023 BC AHS results, please
visit mcs.bc.ca/ahs or email Karen at
karen@mcs.bc.ca.



Preparing to share results of the Homeless Youth Health and Wellness Survey

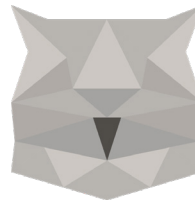


The Homeless Youth Health and Wellness Survey was rolled out across the province throughout the spring and early summer. Supported by funding from SPARC BC and the Office of the Representative for Children and Youth, the survey aims to capture the health picture of young people who are experiencing homelessness and unstable housing in diverse communities across the province. The survey shares many of the same questions as the BC AHS, as well as additional questions that reflect the unique experiences of youth who are experiencing housing challenges.

The survey was administered roughly every five years between 1990 and 2014. However, funding challenges and the global pandemic mean that this year was the first time we have been able to conduct the survey since 2014. In 2023, the survey was expanded to include 19-27-year-olds, as well as those aged 12-18, and grew from 13 to over 30 communities, including Hope, Nelson, Penticton, Salt Spring Island, Kitimat, and Port Alberni.

We were humbled by the dedication and enthusiasm of community agencies and youth researchers to partner with us and ensure youth in their community were included in the survey. Thanks to their hard work and persistence we managed to collect over 800 surveys. Analysis took place over the summer, and a draft of the report is currently being prepared for review by the community agencies and youth. Together, they will help to select key messages for the final report, which is anticipated to be released later this fall. We hope that the results of this survey can be used by stakeholders and organizations around the province to improve supports for youth facing homelessness and housing challenges.

New cohort of the Youth Research Academy is underway



The Youth Research Academy (YRA) is a group of youth aged 16-24 with government care experience. Members of the YRA are trained to carry out research projects of interest to youth in and from government care and the agencies that serve them.

The eighth cohort of the YRA started up in June and have already developed their own research questions which they will answer using 2023 BC AHS data when it becomes available. They recently met with Dr. Gill Main (the recipient of McCreary's 2022 Youth Health Award) to chat about her experience in engaging youth in research, and to learn about participatory statistics.

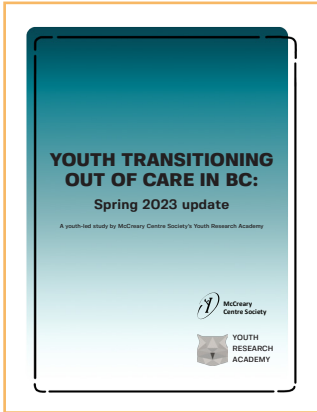
Members of the seventh cohort of the YRA who graduated in March continue to stay involved with McCreary and are currently working on a presentation about the importance of youth-led research in the area of youth homelessness, which they will share at the Light the Way Conference in September.



McCreary Centre Society's Indigenous youth peer mentors, Nina Sunday and Riel Wood, joined staff members Annie Smith, Evelyn McGowan, and Katie Horton to receive a \$20,000 grant from RBC.

To learn more about the YRA, please visit mcs.bc.ca/youth_research_academy or email Katie at yra@mcs.bc.ca.

Longitudinal study of youth transitioning out of care



Since 2019, the YRA have been surveying youth transitioning out of government care in BC to help us understand what is working well and what can be improved for these young people. This spring, the YRA released their third annual report from the study. The report builds on findings from the 2021 and 2022 reports, and

includes data from over 300 youth. The report is available at: mcs.bc.ca/pdf/youth_transitioning_out_of_care_2023_update.pdf.

The YRA have been sharing findings from the report through a series of presentations including to members of MCFD's Strategic Initiatives Branch, the Youth Futures Education Fund Committee, the Child and Youth Care Association of BC's 2023 Conference, and members of TRRUST. Results have also been shared with youth and service providers.

The YRA are continuing to recruit youth aged 18-27, in or from care, for the study. Youth who might be interested in participating can contact yicstudy@mcs.bc.ca for the survey link.

If you have any questions about the study; wish to request copies of this report; or would like to schedule a presentation of the results, please contact Erin at erin@mcs.bc.ca.

For more information about the study, please visit: mcs.bc.ca/youth_transitioning_out_of_care_study.

Evaluations

We continue to carry out evaluations for other agencies, while also ensuring we use a range of methodologies to evaluate our own programs.

With the recent start of a new YRA cohort, Academy members have been working on creating a clay animation film, as part of the evaluation of the initiative. The purpose is for youth to reflect on what they hope to gain from their involvement in the YRA. They will also create a second film at the end of their time in the Academy to illustrate what they learned and will take away from their experience.

Past YRA clay animation films can be viewed at: youtube.com/@McCrearyCentre.



Still from cohort 8 of the YRA's clay animation.

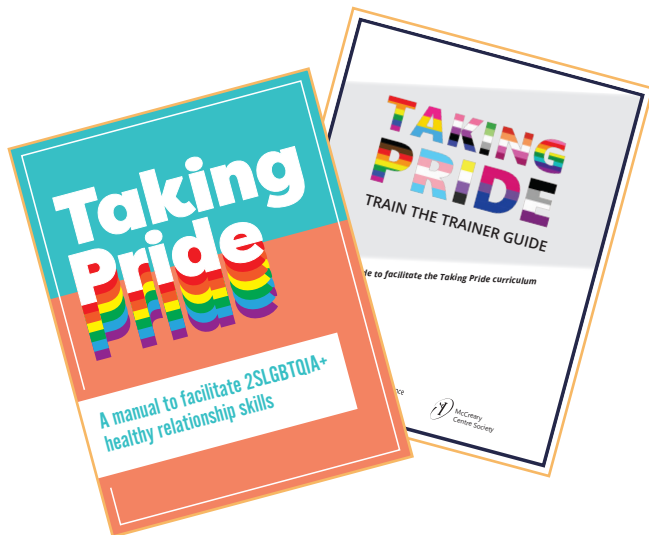
The YRA evaluation also includes an anonymous self-report survey that youth are invited to complete at the start and end of their time in the Academy. The first cohort of the YRA developed this survey, and subsequent cohorts have helped to modify it. YRA alumni have also had an opportunity to take part in interviews to share their reflections, feedback, and any suggestions they may have for the Academy. The feedback we receive from YRA members and alumni helps us to reflect on what has been working well and on aspects that can be improved for future cohorts.

Taking Pride

Working in partnership with UBC's Stigma and Resilience Among Vulnerable Youth Centre (SARAVYC), Taking Pride is a healthy relationships workshop series for 2SLGBTQIA+ youth. The program aims to reduce dating violence and help youth build skills to foster healthy relationships.

We recently adapted the workshops for 2SLGBTQIA+ post-secondary students. We completed piloting in the spring and have now launched the program with campus groups across Canada. Feedback to date shows that the program is helping to address a need for healthy relationship skills among young adults in post-secondary education.

We have also continued training high school and community youth groups across the province. Youth facilitators have been enthusiastic about the workshops, and have shown great skill in facilitating open and supportive conversations with their peers. We are excited to continue sharing the program for another year, and to continue learning from young people across BC.




We are currently recruiting school and community groups for the 2023-2024 school year. To learn more about the workshops and to bring Taking Pride to your group, please contact Katie at katie@mcs.bc.ca or visit saravyc.ubc.ca/takingpride.

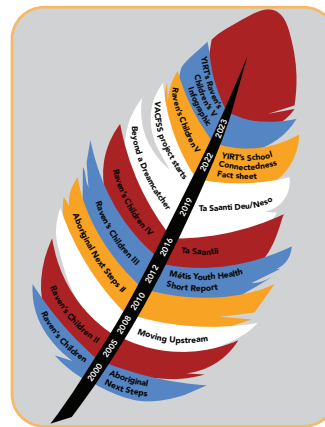
Young Indigenous Research Team



The Young Indigenous Research Team (YIRT) is a group of Indigenous YRA alumni that develop and deliver projects to support the health and well-being of Indigenous youth in BC.



We have continued our work on Indigenizing the Taking Pride curriculum, to create workshops about healthy relationship skills specifically for 2SLGBTQIA+ Indigenous youth. We also recently completed a timeline of projects McCreary has completed in partnership with Indigenous communities and are currently doing some preparatory work with 2023 BC AHS data for Indigenous youth.



Graphic showing McCreary's projects conducted in partnership with Indigenous communities (2000–2023).

On June 21st, the YIRT attended the National Indigenous Peoples Day Celebration at Grandview Park. We met for a lunch together and then walked to the park where we listened to cultural music, spoke to Elders, and enjoyed delicious bannock. We got to see all the different tents full of resources for Indigenous people and Indigenous 2SLGBTQIA+ youth, and were inspired to have our own booth next year!

We felt like this was a good opportunity to connect with our culture and want to continue to connect with culture in our work. We are hoping to build a medicine garden at McCreary, and to have someone come in and teach us how to make beaded lanyards.

If you would like to learn more about the YIRT, please visit mcs.bc.ca/young_indigenous_research_team.

BC Health and Wellness YAC



The BC Health and Wellness Youth Advisory Council (BC YAC) is a group of diverse Grade 8–12 students from across the province. The group is a partnership between McCreary and the BC Ministries of Health and Education.

Our primary focus has been exploring the issue of vaping and e-cigarette use among teens, and coming up with creative ways to address the topic with our peers.

After meeting virtually since 2021, we had our first in-person meeting at the beginning of June! Youth joined from all over the province for a weekend at SFU's Burnaby Mountain campus. One of the main goals of our weekend was to learn about creating and facilitating workshops. We developed a workshop about vaping, and practiced our facilitation skills by asking icebreaker questions, leading short sections of the workshop, and using open-ended and follow-up questions to further discussions. On Saturday night, we enjoyed a picnic dinner and made t-shirts to commemorate our weekend together, which we signed and took photos together with on Sunday morning (pictured here).



We had members joining us from various areas of the province, and it was interesting to hear how different life in small-town BC is compared to life for those in Metro Vancouver. Our first in-person meeting was a great success, and everyone is eager to meet in person again in the future. Until then, we will continue to work on an interactive workshop to share some of the vaping-specific findings from the 2023 BC AHS!

If you're interested in joining or learning more about the BC YAC, please visit mcs.bc.ca/bc_yac or email Katie at katie@mcs.bc.ca.

Youth Advisory and Action Council

The Youth Advisory and Action Council (YAC) has had an exciting past few months! Following the completion of the 2023 BC AHS, we have been hard at work brainstorming creative and interactive ways to share the data with youth across the province. We are currently developing a game show to present key findings during workshops and classroom sessions.

YAC members participated in the Vancouver Falcons Athletic Club's annual Summerfast run in July, which took us on a beautiful 10 km route around the Stanley Park seawall. It has become a tradition we eagerly look forward to each year, not only because the profits from the race are donated to McCreary, but also for the challenge and the delectable homemade baked goods waiting for us at the finish line! We appreciate the ongoing relationship with the Vancouver Falcon's Athletic Club and are looking to bring their running coach in for a chat with our YAC and YRA youth about the benefits of running and physical activity.



Members of McCreary's board, staff, and YAC at the Summerfast 10km race.

Lastly, we recently had a virtual 'bright night' themed social where we dressed in our brightest clothes and played games together. We also hosted an in-person social at the end of the summer, and greatly appreciated the chance to meet and share a meal together!

The YAC is always looking to welcome new members, so if you or someone you know (ages 15–24) is interested in being a part of the YAC, please email katie@mcs.bc.ca.

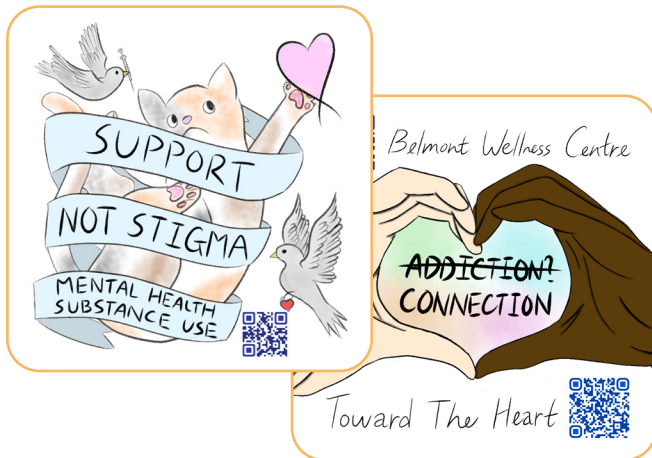


Youth Action Grants



The YAC continues to support youth-led projects aimed at improving youth health in BC through our Youth Action Grants (YAGs). In recent months, we have funded several impactful initiatives, including a vibrant Pride Party in Richmond, the creation of a comprehensive mental health resource website for youth in Colwood, and a project in Langford where students designed informative stickers promoting harm reduction and highlighting youth-friendly community resources on substance use.

We have also provided funding for an upcoming project in Saanich, where youth plan to establish a lunchtime Culture Club. Through this initiative, they will learn about each other's unique cultures and host special events, such as for Asian Heritage Month and Black History Month. We are always eager to support youth-led endeavors like these and are excited to receive more YAG applications during the upcoming school year.



Examples of substance use education materials created by students from a recent YAG-funded project in Langford.

YAGs provide up to \$750 for youth-led projects that address key findings from the BC AHS and aim to improve youth health and well-being in their community. The application form is available in English and French, and can be found at: mcs.bc.ca/youth_action_grants or by emailing yag@mcs.bc.ca.

Trevor Coburn Memorial Grants Program

The Trevor Coburn Memorial Grants program was launched in memory of Trevor Coburn, a member of the McCreary family who was determined to improve the lives of young people across BC, particularly those most vulnerable. The program provides grants of up to \$500 to youth-led projects addressing areas Trevor was passionate about, including peer mentorship, youth homelessness, youth substance use, and challenges impacting youth in and from care.



Slides from the YAC's grant writing workshop.

For more information or to access the grant application, visit: mcs.bc.ca/trevor_coburn_memorial_grants.

Youth Health Ambassadors

McCreary's Youth Health Ambassadors (YHA) are youth from across the province who are trained to facilitate conversations with their peers on projects that support youth health and well-being.

In May, three members of the YHA participated on a youth panel at the Mental Health in Schools Conference, hosted by the Ministry of Education and Child Care and ERASE. They shared their perspectives on how schools can promote belonging, support, and connection to address substance use among young people. They spoke to an audience of about 500 educators and youth supports, and had the opportunity to talk about school connection with the Minister of Education and Child Care, the Honourable Rachna Singh.



Members of the YHA team with the Honourable Rachna Singh at the 2023 Mental Health in Schools Conference.

We are building the YHA team and recruiting youth in Grades 7–12 in BC who are interested in hosting conversations with their peers about topics related to youth health and well-being. Upcoming projects include gathering youth perspectives and ideas on healthy food programs in schools, and leading conversations about the 2023 BC AHS results with youth, schools, and communities across the province.

To learn more about the YHA and to join the team, contact Evelyn at evelyn@mcs.bc.ca.

Students and academic partnerships

Throughout the spring term, nursing students from schools across the province including Langara, North Island College, UNBC, BCIT, UBCO, UVic, VIU, and UFV supported local health nurses in administration of the BC AHS. Three students from Vancouver Community College not only helped with surveying students, but also helped with the behind-the-scenes administration during their practicum at McCreary by processing surveys and doing data entry.

We also hosted a summer student from McGill University this year. While administration wound down and came to a completion for both the BC AHS and the Homeless Youth Health and Wellness Survey, she spent her time immersed in survey processing, data entry, data cleaning, and analyses. A Langara student also spent the summer with McCreary looking at health care access among immigrant and refugee youth in Vancouver.

Partners at UBC continued their work using BC AHS data to study youth with health conditions and disabilities. They prepared two manuscripts which focused on substance use and school absences. A UBC clinical fellow also used the 2018 BC AHS data to look at health care access among youth with government care experience. We wish them success on their submissions and appreciate their efforts to spread the word about the BC AHS data.

We also welcomed our 2022 Youth Health Award recipient Dr. Gill Main over from the UK to our offices for a series of meetings with the YRA, staff, and Board at McCreary. We all learned a lot from the visit and look forward to ongoing collaborations.



Dr. Gill Main with the McCreary 2022 Youth Health Award.



TRRUST Collective Impact

McCreary continues to be the backbone organization for TRRUST, which is a collective impact initiative aiming to improve outcomes for youth transitioning out of government care in Vancouver.

TRRUST has had a busy couple of months. Our Collective Young Leaders (CYL) received funding from the Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks to host a Birthday Party for youth with care experience during BC Child and Youth in Care Week. This was an opportunity for young people to change the narrative and make birthdays something they can look forward to again. Youth socialized, had great food, played games, and ate cake in a celebratory environment.

TRRUST also hosted our annual Connect2Thrive event, where young people transitioning out of care learn about supports, opportunities, and resources available in the community. Each youth that attended received a gift, and enjoyed the opportunity to connect with peers and community supports.

In July, we invited young people to come together for our third Journey Map event, where they mapped the strengths, supports, and barriers that young people face in their transition to independence. The youth shared valuable insight that will help guide TRRUST's work going forward. The new Journey Maps were revealed at the July Collective Gathering, and will be available to view at: mcs.bc.ca/trrust.

We are beyond excited to share that we have signed an MOU with the Co-operative Housing Federation of BC that will ensure designated units in new Land Trust developments for youth with government care experience. To announce our partnership, the CYL presented at the Co-Operative Housing Federation of BC's Education Conference.



2023 TRRUST Journey Map.

To join the collective, subscribe to the free weekly news blast, or learn more, contact Erica at erica_trrust@outlook.com.

COLLECTIVE
IMPACT **TRRUST**

Founded in 1977, McCreary Centre Society is a non-government not-for-profit committed to improving the health of BC youth through research, evaluation, and community engagement projects.

CONNECT



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