



SQUAMISH

YOUTH STRATEGY



INTRO

The District of Squamish humbly acknowledges that our community works, plays, and lives on the traditional territory of the Squamish Nation, Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw.

Squamish today is the one of youngest and fastest growing communities in BC, with a large cohort of youth connected to each other like never before. Our youth are a tremendous asset who should be invested in; they are already challenging the status quo, proposing innovative solutions to combat the climate crisis and inspiring social and political change. They provide a unique perspective and by involving youth in our civic discussions we build trust, encourage active citizenship, leadership, and we add resilience to our community. Our youth are also facing incredible challenges - including the onset of climate change, proliferation of mental health challenges, increasing threats of substance use, and physical health impacts from the epidemic of physical inactivity.

Many youth in Squamish are thriving with proactive support and programs to meet their full potential. However any youth, on any given day - due to social, family, work, school, financial, substance use challenges, or other stressors - could find themselves struggling and isolated, and require immediate support, intervention, and resources to be safe and healthy.

Through the comprehensive engagement undertaken with youth in the development of this strategy, it is abundantly clear that in order for our community to meet its full potential, the District and its partners must enable the conditions for youth to take an active role in the future of Squamish.

DISTRICT OF SQUAMISH'S ROLE

This Youth Strategy provides the District of Squamish and partner agencies the framework to guide the community of Squamish to focus its work with and for Squamish's youth (age 12-24) based on the Vision, Mission, Values and Priority Areas – Speak Up & Leadership, Spaces & Places, Services & Programs, and Emerging Adults that was developed with youth of Squamish.

BACKGROUND

Understanding the vast contribution youth will have on Squamish's future and the unique challenges today's youth are facing, the District of Squamish, along with our community partners, recognized the need for a collaborative Youth Strategy that was built by Youth for Youth. Squamish's Youth Strategy is based on what we heard from hundreds of Squamish youth who participated in multiple engagement opportunities from the initial Youth Speak Up! and Youth Strategy Report Card to the multiple World Cafes, Surveys, Youth Dialogues, and Collaboration Meetings. The result is a Youth Strategy based on youth's values with actionable goals that will improve working partnerships between youth, caregivers, service providers, and civic leaders and create pathway to ensure that youth are partners in their own future. The community engagement is summarized in the What We Heard Report.



VISION

Squamish youth
thrive to their highest
potential and are
healthy, happy and
engaged community
members.



MISSION

The District of Squamish will engage youth and enter partnerships to improve and expand facilities, programs, transportation, housing and services for youth at every stage of their lives in an inclusive and affordable means.

“Involve youth more directly when making decisions that affect us.”

-Grade 9 Student



VALUES



- 1. BRING THE PROGRAMS TO THE YOUTH:** Youth programs and spaces should be affordable, diverse, inclusive, and accessible. They should occur in places such as the Youth Hub, neighbourhood centres, library, recreation facilities and schools.
- 2. PARTNERSHIPS:** The District of Squamish encourages and facilitates growing positive relationships with Squamish Nation and our community partners to take an active role in youth success.
- 3. YOUTH VOICE:** Squamish youth should have the opportunity to participate in the decisions that affect their future.
- 4. WELLNESS:** The District of Squamish and partners understand the importance of optimizing the mental and physical well-being of youth to ensure they can thrive to meet their potential.
- 5. ARTS & CULTURE:** Participation and access to both arts and culture provides a creative outlet for youth and has mental, emotional, social, spiritual and educational holistic benefits.
- 6. CLIMATE ACTION:** The healthy development of our youth and the health of our natural environment are directly related. All youth should have opportunities to connect with the outdoors and contribute to our sustainable future.

SPEAK UP & LEADERSHIP

Squamish youth are informed and advocate for positive change in their neighbourhoods, their communities and the world.

STRATEGY

Community's Goal

Authentically engage youth in decisions that affect their future and the future of their neighbourhoods and communities.

Success is When

Youth are being heard and they have impact on decisions that affect their future.

The community understands the youth perspective.

All youth feel included in civic participation.



THE DISTRICT SHOULD

Expand youth engagement and leadership opportunities through the establishment of the Mayor's Youth Council (MYC) and create a Youth Charter with partner agencies (see footnote).

- MYC should prioritize creating a Youth Charter with partner agencies and focus on implementing the Youth Strategy Goals & Actions
- Provide youth civic leadership on Mayor & Councils initiatives (e.g. budget & climate action)
- The District should partner with SD48 and Quest to provide "credits" for participation
- Create a Youth Town Hall (MYC and DOS Council go to youth facilities)

Enhance how the District reaches out, communicates with, listens and responds to youth through the use of social media.

- Facilitate "Youth-Engage-Youth" (e.g. - 5 youth can reach 500 youth)
- Use Instagram Polls to engage youth in direct democracy
- Expand Coffee With a Councillor to include youth

Amplify current and traditional information sharing through school announcements, posters, newsletters and most importantly engaging youth where they are and where they are comfortable.

- Market where youth work and play (e.g. - Posters at schools, Youth Hub)
- Tie in important announcements or engagements to school assemblies
- Market to different age groups
- Incorporate multiple engagement/information sharing techniques
- Involve student leadership groups

Mainstream genuine youth engagement in Squamish culture through formal and informal means to maximize youth participation in decision making.

- Share the results of the Youth Strategy with District staff and Councillors, partners, and the community
- Emphasise in District and partner culture the value of youth engagement

Create youth leadership opportunities through micro grants, scholarships, and by supporting volunteerism.

- Grant and scholarship process should be quick, easy and not intimidating
- Support youth to create spontaneous youth events by providing funding, space, and guidance
- Provide job shadowing and mentorship opportunities within the District and partners
- Create a "Recreation Academy" and provide volunteer opportunities and scholarships for youth to attain skills, certification, and experience to become Lifeguards, Recreation Leaders and Instructors

"It would be great to have a job shadow with District employees and Council members."

-Quest Student

FOOTNOTE

Partner agencies: Youth Services, Sea to Sky Community Services, Library, Squamish Arts Council, Vancouver Coastal Health, Ministry of Children & Family Development, Squamish Nation, Chamber of Commerce, School Districts, Quest, Squamish Arts Council, and Recreation Services.

SPACES & PLACES

Squamish youth have safe space in their neighbourhoods where they can hang-out, play, create and learn without judgement. Places where they can express themselves honestly and authentically. A place where there is a true sense of connectivity to other youth, their neighbourhood, their communities and nature.

STRATEGY

Community's Goal

Create youth-friendly spaces that meet the expectation of youth and their needs, while improving the social, mental and physical well-being of youth.

Success is When

Youth are actively using safe, inclusive community spaces that promote their well-being.



THE DISTRICT SHOULD

Build a Youth Hub in partnership with Partner Agencies that includes clinical support and resources for youth physical and mental wellness, as well as, program space for arts & culture, learning, recreation, and for just hanging out.

- Partner and develop Youth Hub as a “Foundry Centre”
- Programs to be delivered by partner agencies (see footnote)
- Consider youth privacy when entering clinical space
- All inclusive programs and age group specific programs should be delivered
- Art, music and creative space should be developed
- Kitchen space should be included

Create a “Neighbourhood Centre” in each area of Squamish with programs for youth delivered by partners agencies.

- Youth nights in each neighbourhood
- Ensure public transportation is easy and accessible. Bus stops and are close, well lit and safe
- Make it easy to put on events by youth
- Intentionally facilitate neighbourhood-based venues for events, arts, music
- Revitalize and activate existing space to add character and save costs

Enhance Brennan Park Recreation Centre to create more space for youth and youth programming.

Develop:

- Gymnasium for drop-in sport
- Fitness room
- Hang-out space
- Music and art space
- Quiet space with book exchange, computers and study area

Activate parks for youth by adding youth sport facilities, skate/bike parks, and places for youth to hang-out.

- Develop more hang out areas in parks, such as shelters, gazebos, tables and chairs

Encourage private businesses and community groups to provide youth programming such as movie nights, dances, and youth programs.

- Encourage private business to provide programs to the youth at affordable rates

“A place where we can meet our friends and just hang out!”

-Grade 7 Student

EMERGING ADULTS

Squamish's emerging adults are prepared, engaged and contributing members of the community.

STRATEGY

Community's Goal

Create programs and opportunities that will assist youth in their transition from high school into adulthood.

Success is When

Youth actively participate in civic and leadership.

Job and volunteer opportunities are more accessible.



THE DISTRICT SHOULD

Develop and deliver Adult Life Skills programs through partner agencies with a focus on developing life skills.

Programs to deliver:

- Communication Skills (relationships)
- Managing Stress
- Time Management
- Home renters rights and how to find a home
- Financial Independence (budgeting, savings, banking, insurance)

With partners agencies, create volunteer, job shadowing, internship, and mentoring opportunities for youth to learn life, job, civic, and leadership skills through partner agencies

- Create a "Recreation Academy" and provide scholarships and certification to youth to become Life Guards, Program/Camp Leaders, and Instructors
- Create volunteer, job shadowing, internship opportunities within the District and partner agencies
- Deliver Youth Leadership skills through the Chamber of Commerce and partner agencies
- Create Youth Civic Leadership opportunities through the Mayor's Youth Council
- The District will engage youth to increase civic participation and voter turnout
- Consider certificates and other forms of recognition for participation in programs

Advocate and assist Squamish Chamber of Commerce and partner agencies to develop a Youth Chamber and deliver job training to help youth enter the workforce.

Programs to deliver:

- Food Safe
- Serving it Right
- Leadership Skills
- Customer Service Training
- Entrepreneur & Business Skills
- Babysitters course
- First Aid
- Communication Skills (workplace)
- Finding a job (resumes, job search, interviews)
- Connect newly trained youth with employers

Partner with the School Districts, Quest and Capilano University to provide course credit to youth for successfully completing job skills courses/certification.

- Consider an online hub for youth on where to find education, job, and scholarship information

"How am I supposed to pay rent when it's so expensive here?"

-Grade 12 Student

SERVICES & PROGRAMS

Squamish youth are able to access physical and mental wellness services and participate in fun, accessible, friendly, and inclusive programs in their neighbourhood.

STRATEGY

Community's Goal

Amplify and expand accessible services and programs, including transportation that have positive impact on the wellbeing and potential of youth in Squamish.

Success is When

Youth participate in more District and partner programs and events.

Youth are accessing resources and programs that support their well being.

More youth are using transit and active transportation.



THE DISTRICT SHOULD

Assist and advocate for partner agencies in securing of resources to support youth in crisis and for accessible health clinics (mental health services, substance abuse programs, sexual health, and other health drop-in clinics).

- While considering a youth's right to privacy; partner agencies and youth should work together to support a youth in crisis

Advocate and inform of the importance in youth development to increase unstructured creative, social, and hang out time, and to decrease screen time.

- Support youth to create organic experiences for youth by providing the space and time to be creative and connect with one another

Amplify and expand public transit as an accessible and affordable transportation option and add routes to Whistler, West Vancouver, local lakes, and enhance service to Quest.

Bring programs to the spaces where youth already congregate, and deliver programs in schools, Youth Hub, Neighbourhood Centres, Library, Quest, and Recreation Facilities.

- Develop Youth Community Dinners & Bar-b-ques
- Develop intergenerational programs to enhance sense of community and opportunity to learn from mentors

Deliver a variety of programs through partner

agencies (e.g. sports, recreation, arts, heritage, leadership, adulting, and music).

- Use Mayors Youth Council and other engagement techniques to deliver relevant, engaging, fun, educational, and inclusive programming for youth
- Create a Memorandum of Understanding with partner agencies (see footnote) to deliver programs in a variety of settings and by different providers
- Review programs annually and revise as needed

Expand drop-in sport and recreational activities such as volleyball, basketball, and group and individual fitness programs.

- Deliver programs in multiple settings (e.g. Recreation Centres, Neighbourhood Centres, Schools, and outdoors)

“We need more activities for youth that don’t play sports.”

-Grade 11 Student

WHAT WE LEARNED

"Waitlists for youth in a mental health crisis are more than a year!"

~Youth Mental Health Canada



"In Canada only 1 out of 5 children who need mental health services receives them."

"Students with a long commute are more likely to have missed school and/or other activities."

~McCreary Report



"Being too busy is the most common barrier in participation in physical activity."

-McCreary Report

"More free time = higher positive mental health and well-being"

~McCreary Report



"Unhealthy weight increases the risks to an individual's overall health and mental well-being"

~Childhood Obesity Foundation

"Participation in art leads to positive academic outcomes!"

~artsedsearch.com

"Youth who create art are less likely to drop out of school."

~artsedsearch.com

"Young people who spend 7+ hours a day on screens are more likely to be diagnosed with depression or anxiety."

"Engaging in organized sports can have profound positive psychological effects on youth."

~healthfully.com

"Active youths have a better understanding of peers and closer relationships with adults."

~healthfully.com



"Strong social connections in adolescence are strong indicators of well being in adulthood."

~Olsson

"Quiet reflection time and daydream is essential to brain health."

~Immordino-Yang, 2012



"After school activities can improve youth's ability to reason and problem solve, exercise choice and discipline, and be creative and flexible."

~Diamond, 2014

"Feelings of belonging are associated with lower emotional distress, the reduction of negative behaviours."

~Van Harmelen et al., 2016

"For youth to thrive in schools and communities, they need to feel socially, emotionally, and physically safe and supported."

~cdc.gov

"Half of LGBTQ+ youth in Canada said that they did not feel like they belong; compared to only 3.5% of their non-LBQT youth counterparts. The first national climate survey on homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia in Canadian school."

WHAT WE HEARD

OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT THAT WERE REPORTED DURING THE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENTS:

SPEAK UP & LEADERSHIP

- Using social media platforms such as Instagram and Snapchat to communicate with youth about events and issues in the community.
- Going to schools directly and talking face to face with youth or promoting topics through posters and announcements.
- Form a Youth Committee so youth are encouraged to have their voices heard and be critical thinking community member.

"Instagram is our news source!"

"More emphasis on easily accessible courses on how to:
budget
manage taxes
live sustainability"

~19 Year Old

"A safe space for youth, staffed with addictions and mental health counselors."

~Grade 11 Student

"More spaces for youth to go after school!"

~Grade 9 Student

SPACES & PLACES

Lack of the following facilities:

- Space for youth programs in neighbourhood centres/schools/rec facilities/library/parks.
- Designated clinical space to support youth physical and mental health.
- Space to play drop-in sports (gymnasiums/neighbourhood centres/fitness rooms).
- Space for unstructured hangout spaces in new or existing neighbourhood facilities.
- Outdoor spaces where youth can just hang-out.
- Enhanced transit to local lakes, Quest, and corridor travel to Whistler and Vancouver.

"Spaces need to be more LGBTQ+ accepting."

~Grade 11 Student

"We need more activities for kids that don't play sports."

~Grade 7 Student

An inclusive space for all kids and including those with physical and other disabilities like autism. I don't play sports and would like to meet more kids who like the same stuff I do."

~Grade 10 Student

"Support for finding jobs!"

"How can I pay for school when my family can't help?"

~Grade 12 Student

"More late-night buses and more frequency on Sundays."

~Youth Centre

EMERGING ADULTS

- Adult Life Skills courses (housing info, how-tos, driving etc).
- More resources on financials (taxes, insurance, budgeting, saving).
- A need for more career counselling and post-secondary training and education.

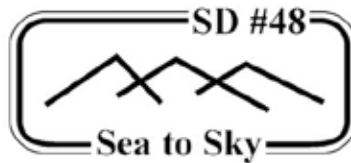
SERVICES & PROGRAMS

- Youth have an over prescribed workload and are over structured.
- There are not enough resources for youth in crisis or accessible health clinics (mental health services, substance abuse programs, drop-in clinics, etc).
- More readily available LGBTQ+ programs and services was identified.
- The need for more Art Programs was identified.
- The lack of fitness rooms/gymnasium access for youth was identified.
- Lack of programs where youth are located was identified (i.e. schools, neighbourhood centres, etc).

A SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR COMMUNITY PARTNERS



SQUAMISH PUBLIC LIBRARY



School District 48
SEA TO SKY



SKWŪWŪPMESH ŪXWUMIXW
SQUAMISH NATION



Ministry of
Children and Family
Development



Squamish



Sea to Sky
Community Services

Vancouver
CoastalHealth



SQUAMISH
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QUEST
UNIVERSITY
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SQUAMISH



SQUAMISH

