

HOW DO WE PARTICIPATE IN OUR COMMUNITY?

The Cowichan Valley is a place where artists and artisans love to create, people of all ages engage in a large variety of sport and outdoor activities, and people still play tennis and bowl at outdoor lawn courts. People here gather for rallies, for causes, and to support families and cultural events. They love our community's various music festivals and enjoy one of the island's best year-round farmers market in the heart of Downtown Duncan. The Cowichan Valley has active and engaged citizens who often take on multiple roles in our community. And, whether they are tackling complex social issues, or planning the next community event, they are working together to build a better community for everyone who lives here.

BELONGING & PARTICIPATION

BELONGING & PARTICIPATION

VOLUNTEERS & THEIR ECONOMIC IMPACT

350
Voluntary
Organizations



Economic Impact of
Charitable
Organizations
\$119 M¹

VOTER TURNOUT

Cowichan		62% ²	63% ⁴
Provincial elections	BC	55% ³	58%
	Comparison	2013	2017
2019 Federal elections	Cowichan- Langford- Malahat ⁵	70%	67%
	National ⁶		

WOMEN IN LOCAL LEADERSHIP

% of seats won by women per election

	Comparison	2014	2018
CVRD		45	56
Municipality of North Cowichan		50	43
City of Duncan		33	50
Town of Lake Cowichan		50	60
Town of Ladysmith		17	29
		2014	2017
Cowichan Tribes	Comparison 	39	31
Stz'uminus		27	50
Lyackson		50	50
Halalt		33	33
Penelakut		33	30

YOUTH INVOLVEMENT IN COMMUNITY (ages 13-22)

71% participate in volunteerism

72% play organized sports

77% participate in creative arts

61% are employed

50% participate in some kind of physical activity at least 4 days of the week

Youth involvement in sports & hobbies boosts their resilience, and helps them develop a sense of community.⁷



SENIORS' INVOLVEMENT IN COMMUNITY

In the 2013 Better at Home Report, seniors identified connection with people in their community, visitors to their homes and involvement with community organizations as 3 of the top 5 supports they needed in order to live independently.



Duncan Farmer's Market



Chemainus Theatre



City of Duncan

BELONGING & PARTICIPATION

Arts & Culture

"A picture of a strong and engaged arts, culture and heritage community in the Valley is emerging." Cowichan Culture

LAKETOWN RANCH (Lake Cowichan)

home to Canada's largest outdoor permanent stage⁸

with a 20,000 person capacity, drawing performers like Snoop Dogg & Keith Urban

WE HAVE

434
artists

registered in the
Cowichan Region

CULTURAL ECONOMY

- 44 Art galleries & studios
- 18 Museums
- 7 Cultural Centers
- 7 Theatres 
- 5 Arts Councils
- 5 Wineries & Cideries

HIGHLIGHTS

Chemainus Theatre is famous for "big shows for a little town" creating and designing its own widely acclaimed productions.

Local groups producing community theatre that grow local talent include Ladysmith, Kaatza, Shawnigan Lake Players and Arbutus Ridge

The CVRD's Arts & Culture Division has a regional arts mandate that includes the recent addition of a new Arts tax to support local art and artists plus the development of two new arts councils.

"Cowichan Culture" is a great online resource that maps out the cultural resources in the Valley, and keeps an up-to-date inventory of local artists & events.

GATHERING SPACES

(at least!)

42

Churches & spiritual gathering places

5

public libraries

visitors to libraries in the Cowichan Valley in 2015

518,989



HOW ARE WE INVESTING IN A HEALTHY ECONOMY?

The Sustainable Economic Development Strategy was completed by the CVRD in 2011 with an overall goal of building a sustainable future for Cowichan. Additional objectives include becoming a community of choice for Green Business, achieving local economic stability, and building a diverse economic and employment base that will provide a strong and prosperous community as we move into the future. Furthermore, it includes an economic strategy focused on efforts that will support climate change adaptation and mitigation.

Working in partnership, the CVRD developed a 5-year plan with Tourism Cowichan to achieve a number of goals including positioning regional tourism as a key component for economic growth and developing Cowichan as a top tourist destination .

ECONOMIC HEALTH

ECONOMIC HEALTH

UNEMPLOYMENT

Total rate of unemployment **7.4%**
(2016)

Female
6.5%

Male
8.3%¹

First Nations
16.9%²

Youth
12.6%³

Comparison

Did you Know? Median earning gaps between men and women in Cowichan are one of the biggest in BC. Locally, women earn only 66% of what men earn.⁵

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE BENEFITS

Cowichan Region: **1.9%** BC: **1.5%**⁶

PART-TIME

27%

FULL-TIME

73%

Employment

SELF-EMPLOYED
16%



TOP 5 OCCUPATIONS

by % of workforce employed

% of total

Total (%)

Male (%) Female

Sales & service

23

36

64

Trades, transport & equipment operators

18

95

5

Business, finance & administration

13

22

78

Management

11

59

41

Education, law & social, community & government services

11

31

69⁴

Comparison

SECTOR GROWTH & DECLINE

Service Sector (health care, social services, transportation, warehousing, finance & insurance)

Construction

Tourism

Agriculture

Manufacturing⁷

Retail Sales

10%⁸

higher in Cowichan than the national average

SOCIAL PLANNING COWICHAN



Cowichan Bay



South Cowichan



Duncan



VIU Duncan

"Pressures from the big cities are driving more people to move to Cowichan, which requires more jobs and more affordable housing."

Lynn Weaver, Executive Director, Global Vocational Services

ECONOMIC HEALTH

YOUTH
EMPLOYMENT
RETENTION RATE

-34.1%⁹

62% of the business community are optimistic about their growth

OPPORTUNITY
THROUGH
EDUCATION



VIU Enrollment
Cowichan Campus

SD 79 Dual
credit
program¹⁰

↑ 17%
since 2011

↑ 70%
since 2010

LOCAL BUSINESS

based on data collected from 2016 Business Leaders Survey

SUCCESSES ✓

- Local agriculture, food & culinary sector
- Wine industry & tours
- Cowichan Regional Visitor Centre
- Local parks & trail development
- Roads/infrastructure
- Sunfest Music Festival
- VIU campus

CHALLENGES ✗

- Skills shortage
- Transportation/shipping costs
- Managing business growth & expansion
- Local government red-tape

LOCAL NON-PROFIT SECTOR

350 non-profit organizations

\$119m economic impact of non-profits¹¹

TOP ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES

- 1 Market the region as a tourism destination
- 2 Improve local infrastructure and/or business services
- 3 Build/expand tourism infrastructure
- 4 Improve community services & livability

HOW IS OUR CLIMATE CHANGING?

We have always had an abundance of water in our region, and it has only been in recent years we have had to seriously consider water conservation and management.^{1,2} As we continue to learn more about the impacts of increasing temperatures on the Cowichan Valley,³ we are also learning about habitats and species unique to Cowichan that are threatened by environmental changes.^{4,5,6} Evidence directs us to consider the reciprocal link between the health of the environment and the health of community.^{7,8} The Cowichan Valley is known for working together to face challenges and to build community and resiliency. There are many dedicated organizations committed to addressing the needs of local climate change through a number of collaborative initiatives including the Airshed Protection Roundtable, Cowichan Stewardship Roundtable and the Cowichan Watershed Board.

ENVIRONMENT

ENVIRONMENT & CLIMATE CHANGE

"Climate change is here and it appears that the risks to health are changing. For example, we are seeing a lengthening allergy season, insects that carry disease moving to new areas and intensifying extreme weather events . . . Air pollution including smoke from severe and frequent wildfires, can cause adverse respiratory health effects"

- BC State of the Air Report 2016⁹

When it comes to Climate Change, the most vulnerable are the most impacted



- People with special needs
- People living off the land
- People with chronic illness
- People with disabilities
- Children and Seniors

SPECIES LOSS = CULTURE LOSS

The consequences of observed and projected climate change have and will undermine Indigenous ways of life that have persisted for thousands of years. Key vulnerabilities include the loss of traditional knowledge in the face of rapidly changing ecological conditions, increased food insecurity due to reduced availability of traditional foods, changing water availability, Arctic sea ice loss, permafrost thaw, and relocation from historic homelands.

TREES & PEOPLE

For Vancouver Island to become carbon neutral based on our number of trees per acre our population would have stay at

600,000

That means we need to plant 950,000 trees to catch up.¹¹



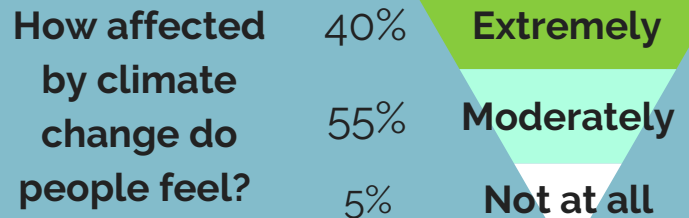
HOW DO WE FEEL ABOUT OUR ENVIRONMENT?

(Based on 118 respondents to surveys conducted in 2016)¹⁰



The majority of respondents indicated that the way to effectively address the impacts of climate change is to build community.

"Our river is almost gone...Without the river there is no life. If you don't have water, you don't have anything"

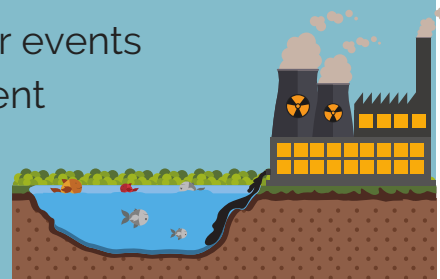


How well is Cowichan doing in preparing itself for climate change?

- Careful use of water consumption
- Waste management and recycling
- Growing gardens
- Making positive consumer choices

Top climate change impacts that people are most concerned about:

- Drought
- Water pollution
- Extreme weather events
- Land development
- Food security
- Air pollution
- Loss of wildlife



ENVIRONMENT

TEMPERATURE PROJECTIONS

Annual average is 1°C warmer, with 10 more frost free days annually, in the 2020s. ¹²

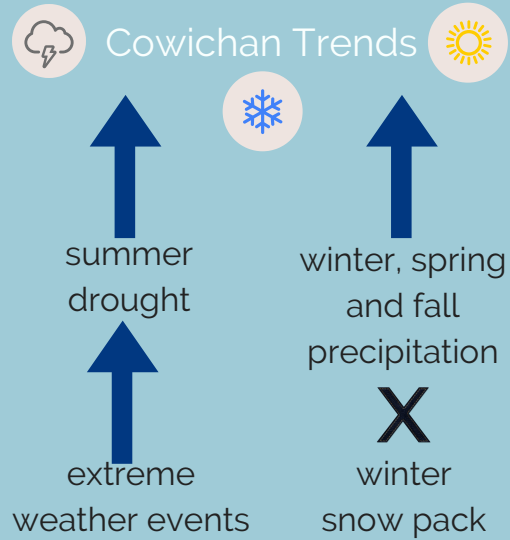
of glaciers on Vancouver Island

170 1970s  5 Today

BC IS ONE OF THE TOP 5 GREENHOUSE GAS EMITTERS IN CANADA AND 36% OF EMISSIONS COME FROM TRANSPORTATION ¹³

The largest industry emitters in Cowichan come from pulp and petroleum storage industries ¹⁴

CLIMATE EXTREMES



Water Levels in the Cowichan River

The Cowichan river has faced drought levels for the last 6 years as the summers continue to prove challenging for low lake levels and lower river flows. As a temporary response while many continue to work towards raising the weir, infrastructure was installed to pump water over the weir and into the river to ensure base flow levels are met. ¹⁵

Flooding

Sea levels are predicted to rise, combined with storm events, which will make flooding a reality in our flood plains and coastal communities. ¹⁶

IMPACTS AND BIODIVERSITY LOSS

"Biodiversity is important for practical and intrinsic reasons, providing clean air and water, mitigating impacts of climate change and disease, providing raw materials for new products and technologies, supporting cultural diversity, and offering recreational and educational opportunities."

Chemainus Biodiversity Education Project 2008 ¹⁷

MITIGATION

Waste Management

The CVRD's diversion rate - more recycling & less landfill - is 59%, one of the best in the BC. However, it is also noted that the CVRD has one of BC's highest rates of recycling contamination, at 15% ²³

2016	2017
24,595 t	30,608 t
total amount of garbage ¹⁸	

ECONOMIC BENEFIT TO CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION



As we face increased summer droughts and decreased winter snow, we have the opportunity through increased regional water planning, water storage, and irrigation efficiency, to save \$14m in our agricultural sector. ¹⁹

"The Cowichan Region is one of the most biologically diverse and productive areas in Canada. This region consists of a complex mosaic of biogeoclimatic zones and species - some found nowhere else on the planet" ²⁰

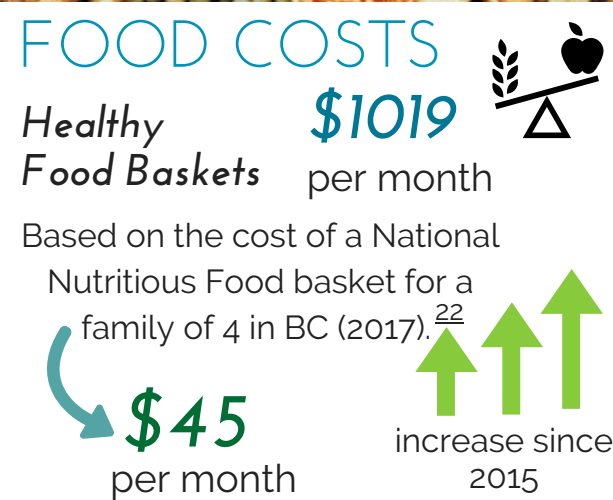
-12 Things, CVRD



ENVIRONMENT & Food Security

"Food security means that ALL members of our community have access to enough nutritious, safe, ecologically sustainable, and culturally appropriate food at all times."

-Cowichan Food Security Plan



Providence Farm, Duncan BC

FARMING

685 = **3.3%**
regional farms of Cowichan region

Arable land in CVRD
32,830 ha

Farming gross revenue (2005)
\$47,554,455²¹

FOOD PRODUCTION

Challenges:

- Water Shortages
- Rising Land Costs
- More Government Regulations
- Aging Farmers
- Land Development
- Use of farm land for animals & non-food crops

Response:

Cowichan Food Security Plan



58% of respondents have ability & knowledge to grow own food

34% of respondents have basic knowledge of local plants

Based on surveys conducted in summer, 2016²⁴



ADDRESSING POVERTY THROUGH HEALTHY FOOD CHOICES

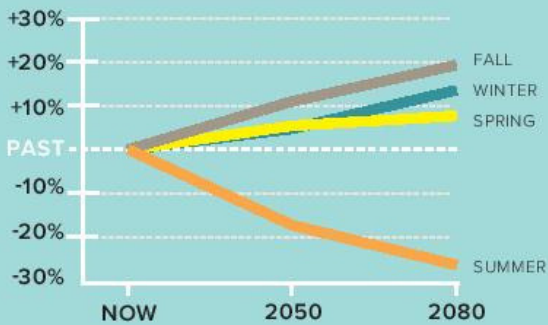
	5 food banks		2019	2020
40985	soups	Meals served by Meals on the Ground	(tbd)	(tbd)
47444	sandwiches	Farmers Market Nutrition		
4216	hampers provided by C.V. Basket Society (2018)	Coupon Program participants	92	81
		Cowichan Community Kitchens meals served	1500	1350

Cowichan, Our Warming Lands:

What we can expect as our climate changes

Summer will be drier, fall and winter wetter.

SEASONAL CHANGES IN PRECIPITATION



Design with nature to consider raingardens and native plants, reducing water use and creating absorbent landscapes to help manage heavy rains.

Green features retain up to 70 to 90% rain

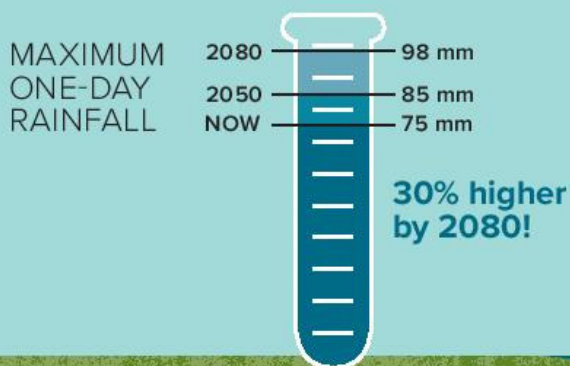
Summers will get hotter.



Use your landscaping and building design to cool your home and reduce fire risk.

Cool roofs absorb 70% less sunlight and reduce summer air temperatures by 2-3°C

Rainstorms will grow more intense.



Protecting and restoring wetlands and river banks will help protect us from flooding effects.

An acre of wetland can store 1-1.5 million gallons of floodwater



WHO IS MOST IMPACTED BY THE GROWING GAP?

There is growing disparity between those who have a little and those who have a lot.¹ Evidence has shown that societal structures, systemic barriers, disabilities, income gaps, and mental health greatly impact the level of poverty.² Furthermore, effective solutions are hampered by stigma and stereotypes associated with poverty and homelessness.^{3,4,5} In a survey and resulting report by the Salvation Army⁶, over 1,000 Canadians shared their perceptions on homelessness. Results revealed that while “many are sympathetic,” a significant number believe “that homeless people are always to blame for their situation”.⁷ Almost half of the respondents also believed that most homeless people choose to be homeless when, in fact, evidence shows that most “would prefer to live in permanent housing”.^{8,9,10} The Cowichan community is currently working to address housing issues through a variety of initiatives that are explored in this snapshot.

THE GAP BETWEEN RICH & POOR

THE GAP BETWEEN RICH & POOR

"If you are poor, you are more likely to suffer more illness, have a chronic health condition and die earlier...It is estimated that \$1.2 billion in health care costs could be saved if disadvantaged British Columbians were as healthy as those with higher education and incomes."

- BC Child Poverty Report¹¹

POVERTY & HEALTH

"Poverty directly harms the health of those with low incomes while income inequality affects the health of all Canadians through the weakening of social infrastructure and the destruction of social cohesion." Poverty, Income Inequality, and Health in Canada¹⁵

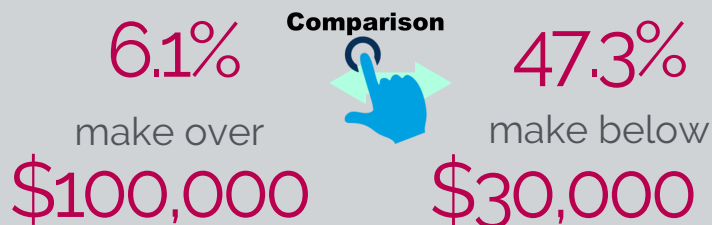
While not all health authorities have attempted to address poverty in their policies and practices, regional, provincial and federal health sectors do recognize poverty as a key determinant of health.¹⁸

Poverty and Policy

The Centre for Policy Alternatives 2015 "Better is Always Possible" report states that: "Neither poverty nor high levels of inequality are inescapable facts of life. They are problems that can be addressed by effective policy. Despite national and international evidence to back this up, too often we become resigned to the persistence of poverty, and of food and housing insecurity."

THE COWICHAN VALLEY GAP

NHS 2011, based on total income of population 15 years¹² and older in the Cowichan Valley Regional District.



15.3% of Cowichan residents fall below the low-income cut off¹³

The LIM (Low Income Measures) considers a family living in poverty when its income is less than half of the median income for their size and type of family.¹⁴

What are Cowichan families making?

\$78,957¹⁷
Median family income (after tax)

What do they need to be making?

\$79,248¹⁶
Yearly living wage

COMPARED TO THE ...

14.2%
Canadians

15.5%
British Columbians

who fall below the Low Income Measure^{19, 20, 21}

BC's POOREST families spent

14-15%
of their income on taxes

BC's RICHEST families spent

11%
of their income on taxes²²

THE GAP BETWEEN RICH & POOR

SOCIAL PLANNING COWICHAN

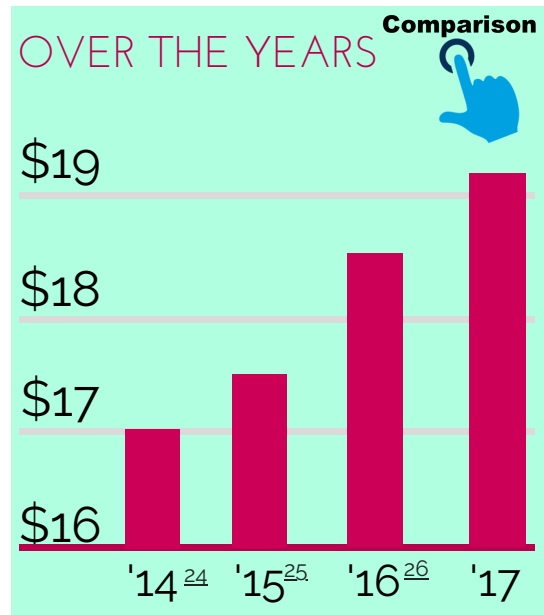
LIVING WAGE

\$19.05 2017²³
per hour Cowichan Valley

based on two working parents & two kids renting a 3-bedroom townhouse with 2 cars

\$14.60 BC Minimum Wage (2020)

[Update](#) [Report](#)



COMPARED TO ...

\$20.01 Victoria ²⁸	\$20.62 Vancouver ²⁷
\$18.42 Central Okanagan ³⁰	\$18.52 Toronto ²⁹
	\$18.15 Calgary ³¹

RIISING FOOD COSTS

Food bank usage³²

2014	2015
7538 adults fed	7763
4202 kids fed	4352

Average food basket³³

\$1,043 per month

as of 2017 for the Island Health region

"We have seen a trend in the number of clients getting larger every year. The biggest difference is the number of families that are struggling; they often have to make a choice between rent and hydro over feeding themselves." - Cowichan Valley Food Basket

CHILD CARE COSTS

per month³⁸
(Licensed group daycare)

Infant - 12 months: **\$933**

13 months - 3 yrs.: **\$886**

30 months - 5 yrs.: **\$663**

After school care: **\$374**

EMPLOYMENT

2015^{39, 40, 41}
Unemployment rate averages

7.4% Cowichan Region	6.7% British Columbia
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Receiving income assistance (ages 15+)

2.1% Cowichan Region	2.0% British Columbia
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HOUSING

Average rent in CVRD³⁴

\$940 per month

Median house price (2016)³⁵

\$510,000

A Household Is in Core Housing Need If...

its housing does not meet one or more of the adequacy, suitability or affordability standards. Acceptable housing is adequate in condition, suitable in size, and does not require any major repairs, according to residents. It has enough bedrooms for the size and makeup of the resident household, according to National Occupancy Standard requirements and, it costs less than 30% of before-tax household income.

In the core census area in Duncan, **1,970** people are not meeting Standard Core Housing Needs which equals

69% of renters ³⁶	31% of homeowners ³⁷
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THE GAP BETWEEN RICH & POOR

HOMELESSNESS

Update



Poverty is a complex phenomenon, but how we begin to address it is relatively straightforward: provide people with homes. Housing First strategies and the creative outreach programs at Warmland House work incredibly well. The approaches are creative and simple; they meet basic needs while creating safe relationships and places for connection.⁴²



VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

Census data shows that there are consistently higher rates of poverty for recent immigrants, people with Aboriginal identity, female-led single-parent families, people in families with visible minorities, and families with a disability.⁴⁶ These differences cannot be attributed to differing educational levels alone. Women and men are equally likely to have post-secondary training, yet women working full time still earn 20% less than men in the same situation. Indigenous workers with university degrees experience an even larger pay gap—a 44% difference in the private sector—than those with less education.⁴⁷

BC HYDRO AND HOUSING

Hydro and rental housing rates have increased for the past three years across the province, and it's especially relevant here in Cowichan where almost 19% of renters already spend more than 50% of their income on rent.^{43, 44}

CHILD POVERTY

Approximately 85% of the poor children in BC live in 26 urban areas. Those with the highest rates of child poverty are Prince Rupert (29.1%), Port Alberni (28.7%), and Duncan (26.9%).⁴⁵

Comparison



2020 BC Child Poverty Report Card

Disturbing Trends

Tents in the Cowichan Valley
People are living in tents in various locations throughout the Cowichan Valley. They are families and individuals who don't have access to affordable housing due to a number of factors. Reports from people on the ground and front line workers believe that many are youth who have fallen through the cracks due to limited services and supports.^{48, 49}
The 2020 Cowichan Region Homelessness Report identified 129 people as absolutely homeless, but estimates that actual numbers are higher.⁵⁰

HOW DO PEOPLE GET AROUND IN COWICHAN?

Transportation impacts our access to employment, housing, education, goods, medical services, and recreation, all of which is essential in order for us to meet the needs and demands of our daily lives. People living in poverty, seniors, and those with limited incomes are often the most affected when there is not adequate transit services available. Currently, our Regional Transit System faces route, frequency and schedule limitations due to low population density and the vast geography of our region. Alternate forms of transportation reduce vehicle use, and the CVRD has set clear targets for emission reductions which have been identified as the largest contributor to greenhouse gas emissions in the Cowichan Valley.

GETTING AROUND



Dike along Cowichan River, Duncan



Cowichan Valley Trans Canada Trail



Cowichan Valley Regional Transit, Duncan

GETTING AROUND

& Emissions Reduction

GHG EMISSIONS¹

72%

of GHG emissions in Cowichan are caused by vehicles

41%

of GHG emissions in BC are caused by vehicles and/or transportation

CYCLING

Did you Know?

Cities with higher bicycling rates have lower crash rates for all users. Cities with less driving also tend to keep more money in their local economies.

RESEARCH

From the Institute for Transportation and Development Policy estimates about 6% of miles traveled in world cities are by bike or e-bike. In Canada, however, bicycling only accounts for about 1 percent of non-recreational trips.

CHALLENGES

- approximately 50% of the population live outside of the built-up areas of the Cowichan Valley²
- the TCH is a high-use pedestrian zone, which creates significant safety issues for pedestrians

ISLAND CORRIDOR FOUNDATION



ICF was developed to preserve the corridor, to broaden community usage of the corridor, and to rebuild and improve both freight and passenger rail service

A CLEANER TRANSIT SYSTEM

In 2016, Cowichan received a \$15M boost to transit infrastructure with new and expanded transit operations and maintenance facility. This funding has enabled the introduction of cleaner burning compressed natural gas buses, and has also helped to meet the growing demand for transit while improving efficiency and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.³

GETTING AROUND

CRASH REPORT⁴

Sites in the Cowichan Valley with the highest number of crashes, 2015 to 2019

269

Beverley St. & TCH

265

Trunk Rd. & TCH



MODE OF TRANSPORTATION TO WORK⁵

90%

vehicles



6.5%

walking



1.1%

transit



0.9%

cycling



1.3%

other



PUBLIC TRANSIT AVAILABILITY

In 2012, the CVRD and BC Transit completed a Transit Future Plan. This plan envisioned the region's transit needs over a 25 year period until the year 2037. It describes the services and investments that are required to achieve them. Geography and low population density were recognized as challenges while innovative solutions, such as using supplementary taxi services and smaller buses, were identified.

DIVERSE TRANSPORTATION

The way youth and seniors travel about the community is very different and is often limited. For community planning purposes, it is important to take into account the various ways people travel.

Youth

Seniors

- Pedestrians
- Cyclists
- Transit Users
- Transit Users
- Pedestrians & Scooters

CREATING COMMUNITY THROUGH TRANSPORTATION

Every trip begins and ends with walking. Walking remains the cheapest form of transport for all people, and the construction of a walkable community provides the most affordable transportation system any community can plan, design, construct and maintain. Walkable communities put urban environments back on a scale for sustainability of resources (both natural and economic) and lead to more social interaction, physical fitness and diminished crime and other social problems. Walkable communities are more liveable and lead to whole, happy, healthy lives for the people who live in them.

HOW PREPARED ARE OUR CHILDREN FOR THE FUTURE?

Many people argue that our current education system is not able to prepare our children for the future they face. The velocity, scope and systems impacts of technology on our communities and societies is unprecedented. Skills such as collaboration, critical thinking, creativity and communication are much more desired in the 21st Century. Specialized knowledge can be automated but skills such as problem solving and innovation cannot be replaced easily by computers.

The BC Ministry of Education realizes that our society is changing at a fast rate and, to address this, has modernized the BC curriculum to better prepare our children for the future. The public schools in the Cowichan Valley are currently transitioning to this new model. The Cowichan Valley is also rich in private and specialized education alternatives and is proud to host the Vancouver Island University, Cowichan Campus.

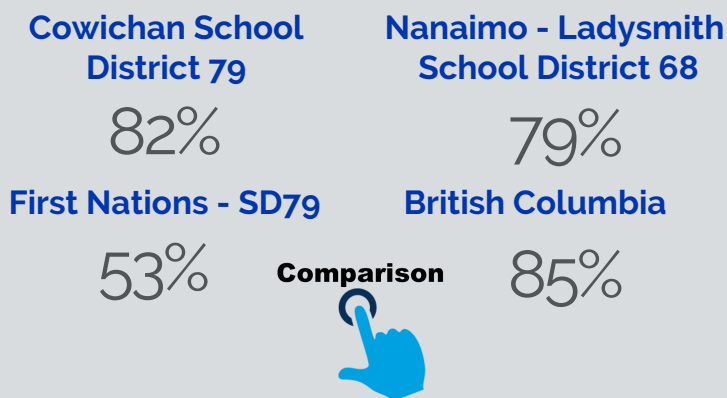
GRADING OUR EDUCATION

GRADING OUR EDUCATION



Crofton Elementary School

GRADUATION RATES (2019) ^{2, 3, 4, 5}



POST SECONDARY ENROLLMENT

Since the 2011 opening of the Vancouver Island University, Cowichan Campus, the number of students attending has increased by 40%. From 1,092 to 1,537 students in 2019/20. Warren Weir, (Academic Administrator), says "the increase is partly due to additional programs the campus is able to offer since moving to the new building, as well as the expansion of the dual credit program with School District 79."

STUDENT POPULATION ¹

Elementary K - 7

2019/20	2020/21
4834	4901

Secondary 8 - 12

2019/20	2020/21
2680	3172

Comparison

ON THE RISE ^{6, 7}

Contrary to popular belief, enrollment is on the rise and is expected to continue to grow. The number of children enrolled in SD79 increased by more than 200 in 2017, making it the third straight year of enrollment growth for the district.

Number of Schools in District 79 ¹⁵

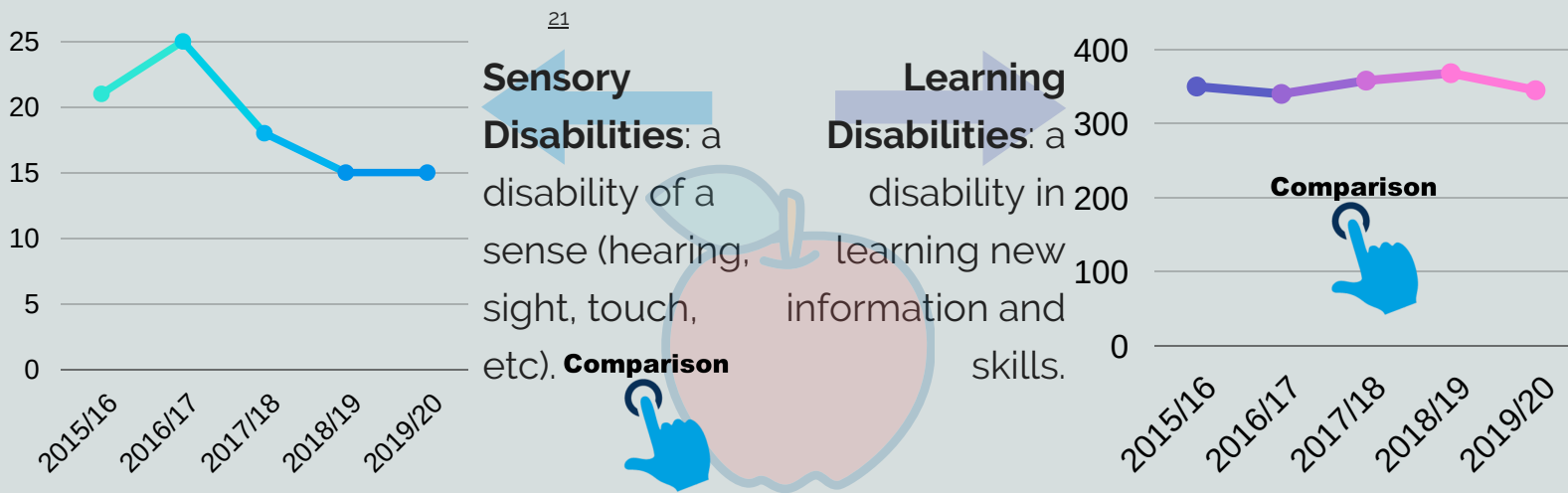


TUITION & FEES based on undergraduate year-long full time course load, 2019. ¹⁴



GRADING OUR EDUCATION

Population of Students with Special Needs



SPECIAL NEEDS SUPPORT

In the summer of 2015, a rally was held to bring awareness to the lack of special needs programming for young adults once they transition out of the education system. The Clements Centre issued a statement in response to the rally saying it "is aware of a need for additional supports for adults with developmental disabilities in the Cowichan region [...] young people and their families, who live in our community, many of whom may be your neighbours, face very difficult decisions as the level of support changes from government agencies when children with special needs turn 19 years old," ¹⁶The Mindful Mouthful, is a newly formed social innovation program developed by the Clements Centre to respond to some of the lack of services and resources including employment opportunities for adults with special needs. ¹⁷

Due to increasing enrolment in the Cowichan School District, the district is expecting an increase of \$2.6M for the 2017/2018 school year. The district expects to hire 16 new teachers and approximately 20 educational assistants. This news is welcomed by parents of special needs students however the needs of special needs are on the rise and the demand for specialized supports continues to grow.



GRADING OUR EDUCATION

EARLY YEAR SUPPORT

Success by 6 has helped to create an outreach program. It is called Books'n'Bubbles, which is a bus that delivers drop-in play-based program that encourages early learning, and provides literacy programs to children and their caregivers. The program targets families that live in outlying communities where access to programs are limited.

"Sometimes we were in darkness, and the bus brought us so much light" - Parent located in the Cowichan Valley Region.

We asked, Youth Answered:¹⁹

August 16, 2016

What would a youth friendly community look like to you?

"Everyone helping out"

"Kind, considerate, understanding of differences"

"Everyone accepting you as you are"

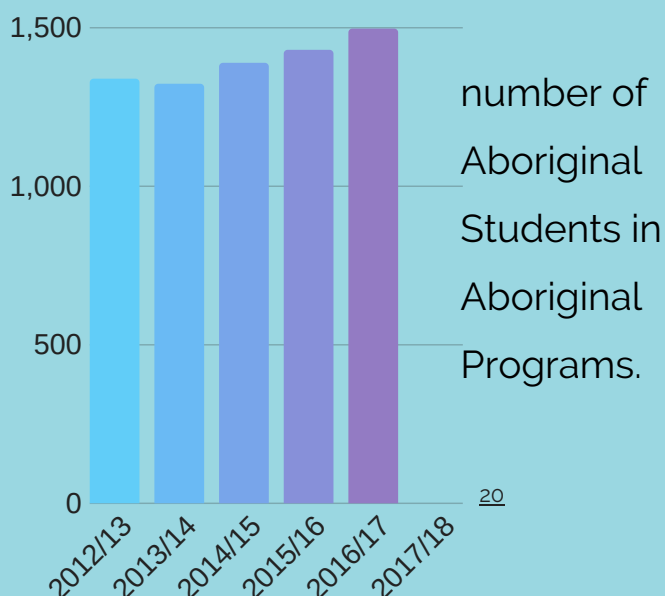
What are some things about youth that you would like the rest of the community to know about?

"We are all different"

"We want to have a voice. We do have a voice if you give us the chance"

"We are kind, have worth and are our future"

ABORIGINAL EDUCATION



The school district offers an array of programming for Aboriginal Education. Some of the programs are Métis camps, Aboriginal Dance, visits to the fish hatchery, working with an Aboriginal Artist, visits with the elders, presentations by indigenous experts on treaty histories, canoe races, and Hul'q'umi'num language lessons. Aboriginal students are also offered supports that would help them face challenges that could affect their schooling, such as counselling, homework support, or daily check-ins.

WHY IS HAPPINESS IMPORTANT?

Happy people are healthy people. Studies have shown that happy people live longer and enjoy a greater quality of life thanks to their ability to cultivate strong relationships and utilize personal strengths to improve well-being for self and others.¹ Because they are more likely to be compassionate, happy people are also more likely to give back to their communities. As a result, supporting greater levels of individual happiness not only benefits the individual but also leads to the healthy and happy functioning of society as a whole. Of equal importance to happiness is meaning; there is a direct link between feeling good and doing good. When we find meaning we become responsible to something greater than the self. Research has also shown that having purpose and meaning in one's life will: increase overall well-being and life satisfaction, improve mental and physical health, enhance resiliency and self-esteem, and decrease the chances of depression.^{2,3,4,5}

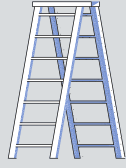
HAPPINESS

HAPPINESS



CANTRIL LADDER

A measurement technique that asks people to rate their present, past, and anticipated future satisfaction with life on a scale anchored by personally identified values.⁶



Cowichan Valley

66.2%

Globally

68.2%^z

CVRD SATISFACTION SURVEY

- 95% of residents rate the overall quality of life as either 'good' or 'very good'⁸



(2016)

"I value how friendly everyone is and their willingness to work together"

-Cowichan Valley resident



WHAT DO WE VALUE MOST IN OUR COMMUNITY?

27%

Sense of Community

23%

People & Family

18%

Natural Environment

9%

Cultural Diversity

WHAT CONCERNS US THE MOST IN OUR COMMUNITY?

30%

Natural Environment

17%

Health & Safety

10%

Affordable Housing

9%⁹

Economy & Poverty



What we love gives us meaning; we care a lot about the well-being of our community members and our natural environment.



"I value the fact that I am part of the community and therefore able to enrich and help to shape it"

-Cowichan Valley resident



HOW DO WE COMPARE GLOBALLY?

How happy are we with our:

Cowichan Valley

Globally

Environment

72.7%

66.5%

Community

65.3%

51.5%

Standard of Living

53.4%

65.4%

Government

68.2%

50.2%¹⁰



HOW DO WE PROMOTE GOOD HEALTH AND WELLBEING?

The World Health Organization defines health as, "a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity." Wellness is not just about what each of us does as an individual; it is also about how we affect each other and the extent to which we feel a sense of belonging and social inclusion. A connected person is a supported person. Community well-being is built on the relationships we form and how we work through the challenges we encounter. It is the lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs that are important to our social well being and quality.^{1,2,3}

HEALTH & WELLNESS

HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Alcohol Consumption

LIFE EXPECTANCY⁵

British
Columbia:

82.3

years

Cowichan
Valley:

81.3

years



Lake
Cowichan
has the
lowest life
expectancy
in Cowichan
at 80.4 years

MENTAL HEALTH

Prevalence of depression⁷



29.2%
Cowichan Valley

VI 27.8% BC 24.6%

Seniors, young people, and indigenous people are often at higher risk, due to other factors like financial problems or isolation, which can cause a sense of hopelessness.

Impacts of Opiates⁸

There were 153 suspected drug overdose deaths in BC in November 2020. This equates to about 5.1 deaths per day for the month. About 70% of illicit drug overdose deaths were among people between the ages of 30-59 years. South & Central Vancouver Island delivery areas saw more than a 61% increase in illicit drug overdose death rates compared to 2019. Island-wide, 85% of illicit drug overdose deaths occurred inside (60.6% private residences, 24.7% other inside locations) and 13.5% occurred outside in vehicles, sidewalks, streets, parks, etc. There were **no deaths** at supervised consumption or drug overdose prevention sites. A community response unit is now available to properly dispose of drug use debris. Call (250) 732-3330 for the Warmland Sharps pick up team.

The 2019 rates of heavy drinking (5 or more drinks in one occasion) are:⁴



18.3%

Of all Canadians

vs

18.2%

Of all British
Columbians

TOP 5 CHRONIC HEALTH CONDITIONS⁶



Incidence rates per
1000 people:

CV

BC

1

Mood & Anxiety
Disorders

360

302

2

Depression

294

246

3

Hypertension

222

225

4

Asthma

140

138

5

Osteoarthritis

102

85

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE¹⁰

Cowichan has the highest relationship violence reported in BC (per capita). 3,400 women received services from CWAV Society in 2015

YOUTH & WELLNESS¹¹

In the Cowichan Health Profile Area, teen pregnancy rates are 40.6 births per 1000 whereas BC's average is 19.9. The last reported rate of children in this same area that need protection is 32.2 per 1000 compared to BC's rate of 20.4





HEALTH AND WELLNESS

SENIORS' HEALTH

Top issues Seniors Face:¹²

- 1 Transportation & mobility
- 2 Public Transit
- 3 Safety
- 4 Affordable Housing/Support
- 5 Health
- 6 Cross Cultural Issues



The demand for housing specific for seniors is increasing as the baby boomers age. Since 2012, the number of residential care beds rose by 3.5% in BC while the population of 85+ seniors rose by 21%.¹³

VI CRISIS LINE

received 1695 crisis calls, 21 crisis chats, and 53 crisis texts from individuals living in Cowichan (Apr. 2019-Mar. 2019)



51%

of calls were because of a mental health crisis¹⁴

21.7%

of **children** (0-16) who visited the ER presented with **Mental Health** or **Substance Use** issues¹⁵

Cowichan Valley Hospice

Serves close to **1,000** people per year with the help of 9,917 volunteer hours, which amount to a community contribution of **\$198,340** for 2019.¹⁶

FILLING A GAP

Cowichan Valley Hospice Society, with Island Health and a community task force, welcomed its first patients and families to the new Cowichan Hospice House in November, 2020.¹⁷



Physical Literacy

Physical Literacy Cowichan knows physically literate individuals move with competence and confidence in a wide variety of physical activities in multiple environments that benefit the healthy development of the whole person.¹⁸

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

5,891

number of people accessing programs at the Island Savings Centre during the 4th Quarter of 2016.¹⁹



HOW DO WE ENSURE EVERYONE HAS ACCESS TO ACCESSIBLE, SAFE AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING?

The United Nations states, "The human right to adequate housing is more than just four walls and a roof. It is the right of every woman, man, youth and child to gain and sustain a safe and secure home and community in which to live in peace and dignity."¹

When we invest in affordable housing we are investing in health and well-being for all of the people who live in our community.² Reasonably priced housing creates stability and provides families of all ages, shapes and sizes with a place to call home. In turn, they help our local economy grow and prosper by filling jobs, creating new businesses, and building a vibrant, diverse, and engaged community.

HOUSING OUR PEOPLE

HOUSING OUR PEOPLE

HOUSING COSTS

Report



\$572K³

Average single detached dwelling in 2020

Average rent in the CVRD

\$940⁴

/month

*based on 2016 census data

77.3% own their house

22.1% live in rental housing

0.6% live in band housing⁵



How much would you have to earn per year to own a house?

\$91,920⁶

(Based on online mortgage calculator from CIBC using the cost for an average single detached dwelling of \$572,000)

RENTAL VACANCIES IN BRITISH COLUMBIA 2020¹⁰

Bachelor Suite 2.9%

1 bedroom 2.3%

2 bedrooms 2.5%

3+ bedrooms 2.4%

Comparison



Report



HOUSING INITIATIVES

Report



North Cowichan has entered into a memorandum of understanding with the Community Land Trust Foundation of BC and is proceeding with the creation of affordable housing on two properties located in North Cowichan.¹¹

AFFORDABILITY



Renters in Canada who spend more than 30% of income on housing:

40%⁷

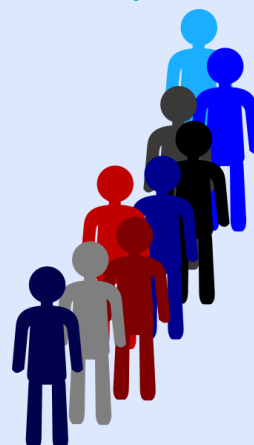
Renters in CV who spend more than 30% of income on housing:

52%⁸

"Affordability is the relationship between household median income, and the estimated income available for either purchasing a home, or renting a place to live. Using CMHC's standards, housing is considered unaffordable if a household spends 30% or more of its gross income on shelter costs."

- CVRD Regional Affordable Housing Needs Assessment 2014⁹

HOUSING WAIT LISTS 2014¹²



Families 25

Seniors 17

People with Disabilities 17

Other 6



Cowichan Bay, Times Colonist

HOUSING OUR PEOPLE & Homelessness

Click icons below for more info & updates!



"Homelessness extends far beyond those visible on the street. Less visible forms of homelessness include people living in tents, sheds, cars, staying in emergency shelters, or couch surfing with friends and families. There are other people in our community living in an inadequate housing situation, where health and safety standards may not be met, or without safe and adequate heat and electricity. All of these situations increase mental, physical and emotional stress and risks for those individuals experiencing them - and put them at risk of homelessness." ¹³

Cowichan Region Homelessness Report Feb 2014

ABSOLUTE HOMELESSNESS

Emergency shelters, transition houses, motels with housing vouchers, couch surfing, car, tents, abandoned buildings or outside ¹⁴

129
Counted, 2020

HIDDEN HOMELESSNESS

With friends, family, temporarily sheltered at hospitals or holding cells (2017) ¹⁵

61

Counted

90+

receiving Income assistance or PWD with no fixed addresses

PRECARIOUS HOUSING

Paying rent but living in unaffordable, overcrowded or inadequate housing, including buildings not meant for residence ¹⁶

125

Counted

2000+

estimated core housing need

POINT-IN-TIME HOMELESS COUNTS



Please follow the bullets below to explore the results in more detail:

- [Aboriginal off-reserve homelessness](#)
- Seniors (55+) homelessness and housing challenges
- [Youth, young adults & homelessness](#)



North Cowichan,

YOUTH HOMELESSNESS

Nationally, youth aged 16-24 are one of the fastest growing segments of the homeless population in Canada. Locally, young people in Cowichan are reporting a lack of housing options and affordability. The Cowichan Housing Association has begun a research project looking at youth homelessness and the # of youth facing this issue. ¹⁷

HOUSING FIRST

Report



Canada's Homelessness hub defines Housing First as an approach that offers permanent, affordable housing as quickly as possible for individuals and families experiencing homelessness, and then provides the supportive services and connections to the community-based supports people need to keep their housing. Cowichan is working on the development of local version of this model ¹⁸

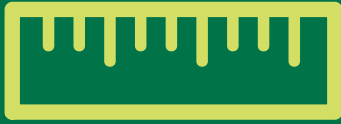
HOW DOES LAND USE IMPACT OUR EVERYDAY LIVES?

Decisions about what gets built and where buildings are constructed have a significant impact on our daily lives. In Cowichan, each local government and local area has their own official land-use plan. These plans take into consideration factors such as proximity to goods and services, community recreation, transportation, and environmental quality. The Cowichan Valley is one of the major agricultural areas on Vancouver Island. Historically, the Valley produced large volumes of vegetables, berries, and dairy products that fed a large percentage of the population.

LAND USE & BUILT ENVIRONMENT

LAND USE & BUILT ENVIRONMENT

CVRD = 3473



square kilometers¹

PRODUCTIVE FARMLAND

2006 ↓ 2011 ↓ 2016³
11559 ha ↓ 10837 ha ↓ 10837 ha

The Cowichan Economic Development Commission estimates that the Cowichan Region currently produces about 18% of its total food needs (Vancouver Island produces approximately 10% of the Island's total food needs).⁴



CULTURAL LAND USE PROTECTED AREAS



In 2001, Cowichan Tribes, Hul'qum'num Treaty Group, signed an agreement with government to protect 1,700 ha of land known as the Hw'teshutsun or the Hill 60 sacred site. According to Cowichan creation myths Hw'teshutsun is the area where people first fell from the sky. First Nations continue to work hard to protect lands that are integral to their culture and way of life. ⑤

BUILDING COMMUNITY BY DESIGN⁷

The design of a community's built environment has a major impact on the physical, mental, and social health of its residents. Citizens faced with low socioeconomic status suffer disproportionately from poor land use design.



LAND DESIGNATION²



Agricultural	4.0%
Commercial	0.1%
First Nations	1.3%
Forestry	75.7%
Industrial	0.2%
Mixed Use	0.1%
Parks and Institutional	6.7%
Residential	2.6%
Water	9.4%

PARKS & RECREATIONAL SPACE⁵

206 community parks = 1200 hectares

8 regional parks = 47km managed community trails

Ladysmith recently completed their Parks and Rec Master Plan and taking into consideration the aging population, they focused on increasing accessibility to parks and trails.



Stoney Hill, Regional Park



Glenora Trails Head Park



Cowichan River Park

LAND USE & BUILT ENVIRONMENT

URBAN FOREST STRATEGY & TREE PROTECTION

In 2015 the City of Duncan adopted a tree protection bylaw for protected and significant trees that is applicable to private and city property to preserve the overall ecological function of an urban forest.

Amount with Climate
Suitable for Agricultural
Land in the CVRD ⁸

9.5%

An estimated
33,200 hectares
out of 350,890
available hectares

SIGNIFICANT TREES

23

(as of 2018)

trees that provide
considerable social,
economic or
environmental benefit in
the City of Duncan. ⁹

COWICHAN WATERSHED

The spring of 2019 witnessed some of the lowest ever water levels in the Cowichan River due to dwindling snow packs and an extreme rise in spring temperatures; A trend predicted to continue into the future. ¹⁰

COWICHAN LAND TRUST

Holds 28 conservation covenants in the CVRD, CLT has played a role in 5 Cowichan land acquisitions including Cowichan Garry Oak Preserve, land on Shawnigan Lake, Holland Creek Trail, Chase Woods, Sansum Point Park & Rainbow Island. ¹¹

METHODOLOGY

Spirit Pole Ceremony 2009, Duncan



Research Methods

The quantitative data for the Community Snapshots is gathered from both primary and secondary sources, collected from local, provincial, and federal governments and from local non-profit organizations. In addition, we work with data derived from 50 organizations in the Cowichan Valley. Data is collected from these organizations through a variety of ways including: interviews (initial and secondary), surveys, in-house reports, and publications. Qualitative data and background information for the report are gathered through interviews with members of local governments, researchers, health care providers, public institutions, non-profit service providers, and community members.

We use outside sources to create specific comparisons to communities outside of the Cowichan Valley. Though the most recent data available from Statistics Canada is utilized the cancellation of the mandatory long-form census in 2010 has limited research finding in key areas due to significantly reduced scope and lower response rates which has unfortunately limited the ability to identify and understand important trends. The good news is that the mandatory long form census was reinstated in 2016 so we can look forward to in-depth data sources in 2017. Comparative information will be embedded in the online version of the Community Snapshots as the new data is released and can be accessed by clicking on the symbols listed in the legend.

Data Sources & Methodology

Major Sources

Statistics Canada • BC Stats • BC Vital Statistics • The Cowichan Valley Regional District • BC Ministry of Education • School District 68 • School District 79 • Vancouver Island Health Authority • BC Housing • BC Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General • BC Ministry of the Environment, RCMP. A full list of sources for each section is available [here](#).

METHODOLOGY

Spirit Pole Ceremony 2009, Duncan



Data Sources & Methodology

Secondary Sources

Some organizations were limited in their capacity to provide evaluation or in-house data. However, through interview processes, organizations were able to provide insights of a qualitative nature about trends they identified or witnessed within their organization's day-to-day services. The information contained in the Community Snapshots are a compilation of key trends and highlights with contributions from various local organizations.

First Nations Sources

The first step of the process in developing the Snapshots was to have a template to work from. Once this first step is completed, we will provide it to all of the Nations within the CVRD and request any data and/or information they would like to have included and showcase in the snapshots. As that information is received we will be adding in their pages.

How to Use this Resource

The Community Snapshots are designed to be living documents, meaning that as new information becomes available, the reports feature links providing new information. Additionally, the reports are dynamic: they have links to any new and relevant data, research reports, videos, themes, success stories and so on. This information will be linked throughout the reports and will be identified by linked icons that direct the reader to further information.



WHO ARE WE AND WHERE DO WE COME FROM?

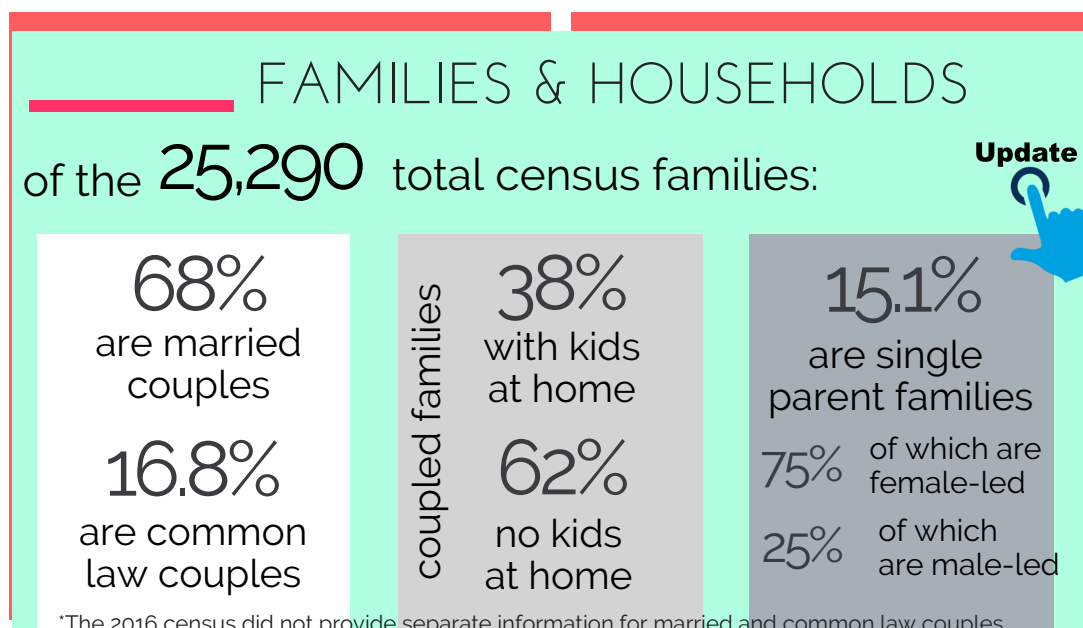
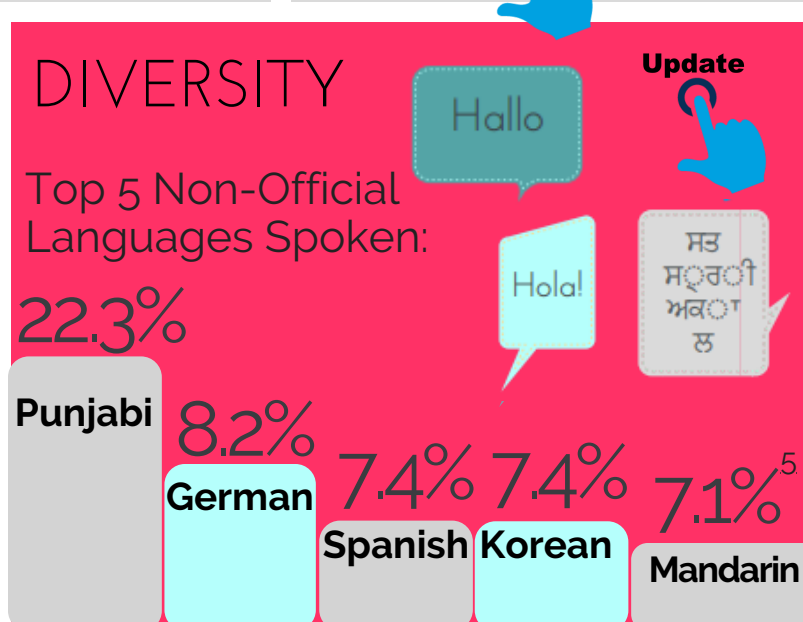
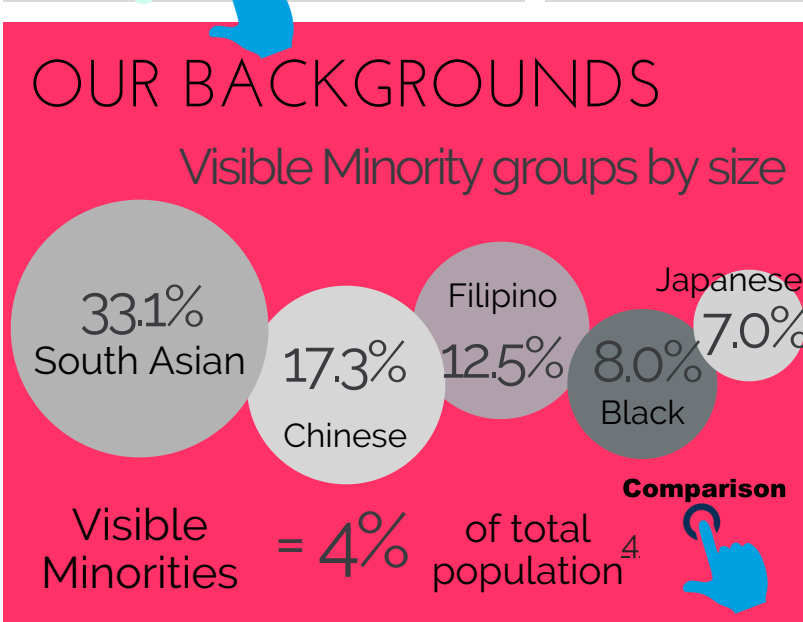
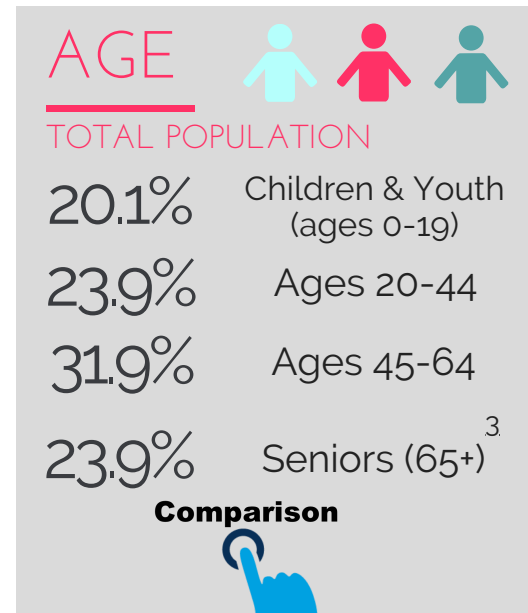
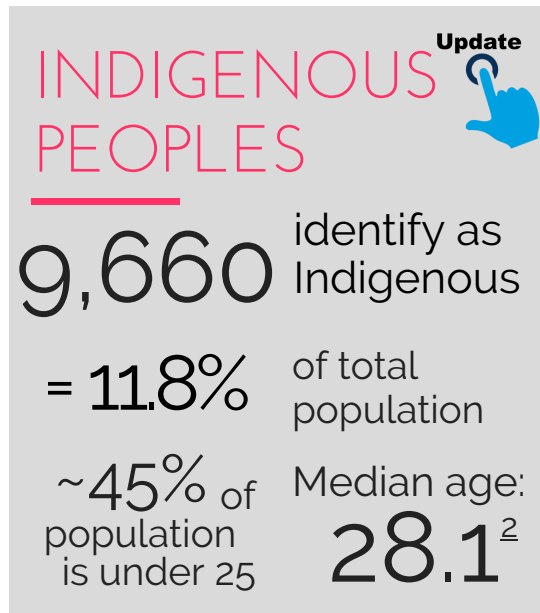
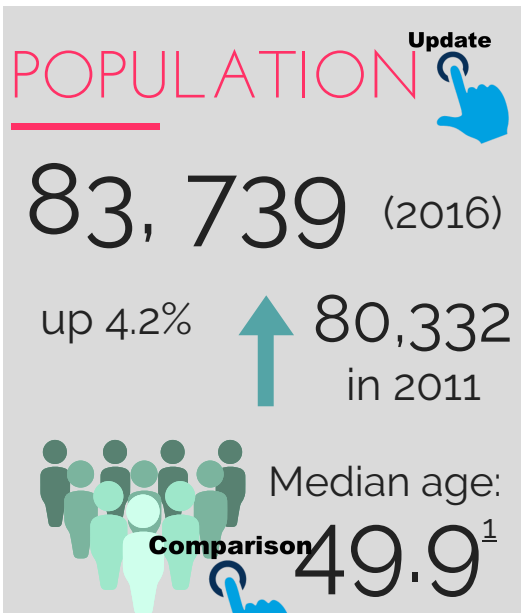
Demographics provide vital information that helps us understand who makes up our community. Age, gender, race and ethnicity, marital status, education, number of people in household, languages are examples of what is studied to discover who we are.

When we follow our demographic changes over time, they play a crucial role in understanding past trends and in preparing for the future. We are able to identify future economic and social trends, and can better prepare for the potential issues and demands changes such as population growth, aging and migration will bring us.

OUR PEOPLE

OUR PEOPLE

SOCIAL PLANNING COWICHAN



GENDER

Female 51

Male 49



AGE

Age 0-4 5

Age 5-19 17

Age 20-44 25

Age 45-64 33

Age 65+ 20

MARITAL STATUS



Married or
Common-Law 51

Single 18

Previously
married 14

PLACE OF RESIDENCE



Municipality 56

CVRD 39

On Reserve 5

LIFE EXPECTANCY



COMMUTING TO WORK



Drove 51

Took transit 1

Walked 3

Biked 1

2017

IF THE
COWICHAN
VALLEY WAS
A VILLAGE OF
100

Based on the 100 People: A World Portrait

Note: Some numbers do not add up to 100. This is the case when all variables for the category were not included.

For more information, visit <http://www.100people.org/>

CULTURAL BACKGROUND

Aboriginal 13

Immigrants 12

Visible
Minorities 4

EDUCATION

University /
College degree 43

No high school
diploma 14

In school 11



FOOD & WATER

Don't have
enough to eat 3



Don't have
clean drinking
water 4

HOUSING



Own a home 80

Have a
mortgage 44

Spend more
than 30% of
income on
housing 26

INCOME



Has an income
greater than
\$125,000 1

Have an
income less
than \$30,000 30

EMPLOYMENT

Employed 54

Unemployed 5

Self-employed 1

Not in labour
force 41



WHAT DOES COMMUNITY SAFETY LOOK AND FEEL LIKE?

Community safety is not only about crime prevention, it also considers how people feel while engaging in their community. Do community members have the freedom to make choices in their day-to-day lives or do they make decisions out of fear? Experiences of safety can be understood on a personal level, which is impacted by unique demographic realities. For example, a person living in Maple Bay may have different perceptions and feelings of the safety in their neighbourhood compared to someone living in Ladysmith or downtown Duncan. Experiences of safety are influenced by many conditions including history, living situations and socioeconomic status.

SAFETY



KEEPING OUR COMMUNITY SAFE

Report



HOW SAFE DO WE FEEL?

71% of residents felt safe in their neighbourhoods 

3% reported feeling not very safe

2014 results based on Cowichan Community Health Survey of 578 responses¹



Cowichan Neighbourhood House

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Duncan has one of the highest rates per capita in BC for relationship violence. In response, a designated domestic violence court was established in 2009 and by 2013, 425 spousal assault charges were brought to the court. Domestic violence not only impacts policing and the court system, but also 80% of local MCFD child protection cases indicate relationship violence as one of the risk factors.^{10, 11}

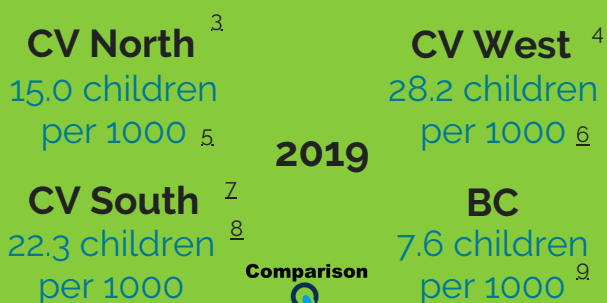


Inspector Ray Carfantan reports on current policing trends to City of Duncan Council for Cowichan:

"Despite the decrease you see in crime stats, specific crimes or criminal offences being reported, the actual calls to the police office continue to be on the rise and have been on the rise since 2012. We deal with a lot of things outside of criminal responses, things like mental health issues, abandoned alarm calls, those sorts of things."
(January 2016)¹²

FOSTER CARE

Foster Care is a risk factor that influences how well a child will do in life. There are 3 local health area profiles (LHA) falling in the Cowichan Region. The Cowichan LHA has from double to four times the rate of children in care compared to BC.² Over half the children in care in BC are Aboriginal.



KEEPING OUR COMMUNITY SAFE

PUBLIC SAFETY¹³

- 21 Fire Stations
- 18 Volunteer Fire Stations
- 5 Ambulance Service Stations
- 4 RCMP Detachments
- 3 Hospitals and Health Care Centres

SAFETY BY DESIGN¹⁴



A growing evidence base, grounded in research and community practice, describes the factors that affect the likelihood of violence. Neighbourhood characteristics such as high alcohol outlet density and community deterioration, for example, make violence more likely while factors such as community connectedness and meaningful opportunities for civic and social participation reduce its likelihood. Many of these factors are shaped by how land is used, by whom and for what purposes. Therefore, land use planning, decisions and policies have the potential to promote community safety.



Report



Take a look at Policing



Cowichan SAR, Cowichan Region

DID YOU KNOW?¹⁵



The Public Safety Division of the CVRD is responsible for: regional emergency management, 6 rural volunteer fire departments, Central Island 911 Partnership, and radio communication infrastructure both commercial and amateur. This includes public education and training on emergency preparedness, emergency management, emergency communications policy, guidelines, network, training, operations, and interagency coordination.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS¹⁶



- The CVRD has an emergency alert system where residents can receive emergency alerts.
- The CV has 4 major reception areas and 16 secondary reception areas.
- Over 50,000 copies of CV Emergency Preparedness Workbook have been distributed.

SEARCH AND RESCUE^{17,18}



The Ladysmith SAR & Cowichan SAR provides 24 hour 365 days per year service for people lost or injured in the woods or waterways. SAR members are volunteers who are highly trained in ground and water rescue. Members also provide education and awareness programs that encourage community members to get outdoors and how to enjoy nature in a safe way. SAR's are non profit societies and rely on government and private funding. They do not charge for the services they provide.



Cowichan Bay Fire Rescue



THE HEARTBEAT OF COWICHAN

When we acknowledge and value our region's well being, we are able to identify and prioritize actions that support and strengthen us as individuals and as a community. We have heard from many people that what gives the Cowichan its strength is found in the hearts of the people who live here, the rivers that connect us and the land that nourishes us.

Our People are diverse and acknowledge the unceded Coast Salish territories in the Cowichan Valley we call home. Indigenous culture is the foundation of this region with over 8,500 people identifying as Indigenous, representing over 10% of our overall population - twice as high as the average in BC. Today there are nine Nations in the Cowichan area including: Cowichan Tribes (the largest First Nations Band in BC), Stz'uminus, Lyackson, Halalt, Penelakut, Malahat, Ditidaht and Pacheedaht First Nations and Lake Cowichan First Nations. The land we live on is identified by the boundaries of the Cowichan Valley Regional District which encompasses the City of Duncan, Town of Lake Cowichan, Town of Ladysmith, Municipality of North Cowichan, and nine electoral areas: Cowichan Bay, Cowichan Station/ Glenora/Sahtlam; Saltair/Gulf Islands; Cowichan Lake South /Skutz Falls; North Oyster/Diamond; Malahat/Mill Bay; Shawnigan Lake; Cobble Hill; and Youbou/Meade Creek .

The word 'community' has many meanings, but at heart, it's about **Belonging and Participation**.

The Cowichan region is fortunate to have 350 active volunteer-led organizations as well as strong arts, culture and heritage sectors committed to making positive change. In addition, over 70% of Cowichan Valley youth are engaged in volunteerism, play sports and participate in the creative arts, creating a dynamic and vibrant sense of community across the generations. In the Cowichan Valley we understand that working together strengthens all of us and have many success stories to build on including the North American Indigenous Games, the BC Seniors Games, and the National Aboriginal Hockey Tournament. It is demonstrations of such generosity and dedication that has made us successful in the bid to host the 2018 BC Summer Games.

We have been changing the way we look at what defines **Health and Wellness** in the Cowichan Valley and emphasize a wellness-based perspective led by the social determinants of health. Overall, our life expectancy in the Cowichan Valley is similar to the rest of BC, which has the highest

life expectancy in Canada, however there are several unique challenges that we face and which provide us an opportunity to do better. Evidence shows that comparatively, to the rest of Vancouver Island, we have higher rates of depression and anxiety (26.5% versus 21.3% in BC) , the highest level of relationship violence reported in BC (per capita) , as well as higher than average rates of teen pregnancy, preterm birth and low birth-weight babies. When we work to understand the issues we face in our community, we can define and take actions so that no one is left behind.

In 2016 Social Planning Cowichan signed the Cowichan Valley onto the Global **Happiness** Index, a survey that employs a measurement technique that asks people to rate their present, past and anticipated future satisfaction on a scale anchored by their own identified values. Relative to a global perspective, we are happy to report that the people in the Cowichan Valley are largely satisfied with our environment, community and government but we would like to make improvements to our overall standard of living.

Public Schools are at the heart of the Cowichan Valley; **Education** is where the future health and integrity of our community is shaped. The Cowichan Valley has 2 school districts servicing Cowichan: 19 elementary schools and 5 high schools, Vancouver Island University, as well as 9 private K-12 schools. Unfortunately, too many children in our community are facing significant barriers and inequality that impact their ability to engage with and receive quality education. We know that hunger and housing instability deeply impact the ability of children to learn. An alarming wake up call was delivered by the First Call - BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition in 2015 when the Cowichan Valley was listed as having the highest rates of child poverty in BC. Updated in 2016, the report found that although child poverty rates had slightly declined for our region by less than 1% (.7%), it still equates to almost 1 out of 3 children in our region facing poverty. The 2016 update showed the City of Duncan with the highest child poverty rates of all urban areas in BC at 31%. Once again it is the kind hearts of our people joining together to make sure that the basic needs for the children are given. Schools have been providing meals for many years to children and currently, two new local **Success Stories** have been added by caring community groups.

Economy and our economic health is a powerful contributor to the health and well being of our community. According to the 2017 Cowichan Region Business Roundtable the biggest impediments for growth we need to address are: lack of tourist accommodations, residential housing options, public transit and transportation was seen as an impediment to growth opportunities. A lack of affordable and mid-range housing was raised as a barrier to existing and potential residents. The top employment sectors are sales and service (24%), trades, transport and equipment operators (18%), business, finance and administration (13%) and education, law, social, community and government services (12%). In 2011 the Cowichan Valley Regional district has developed a sustainable economic development plan, which includes developing the tourism industry as a key component of the regional economy.

Rising income inequality and polarization has a significant impact on the health of the Cowichan Valley's economy. As incomes and income mobility stagnate there are poorer health outcomes which leads to lost productivity and higher health care costs. BC has the most unequal income distribution in the country and the Cowichan Valley has some challenges in this regard; 12% of residents make over \$125,000 and 26% of residents make below \$30,000 per year. **Housing** in the Cowichan Valley has been exacerbated by a number of barriers including: rising BC hydro rates, lack of non-market housing options and low vacancy rates. Nearly 30% of renters in the Cowichan Valley spend over 50% of their income on rent. This is why a living wage is essential to a robust economy. A living wage is the hourly amount a family needs to cover basic household expenses and the current living wage for 2016 in the Cowichan Valley is \$18.81 an hour. Promising responses include two non-market housing initiatives that North Cowichan has initiated with the Community Land Trust Foundation of BC, key to advancing the health of our community.

Our community's **Land Use and Built Environment** is directly related to the social, economic and physical health of residents. Local governments have responded with community engagement opportunities which have resulted in each area having their own official community plan. One of the most important ways we keep connected is through our **Transportation** network. The vast geographical area of the Cowichan valley, combined with low population density, means that the majority of people rely on vehicles to get around, while 6.5% of the population gets around on foot, 1% utilizes transit and 1% cycles. Recent news that Cowichan is set to receive a 15 million dollar boost to transit infrastructure is a welcome development considering that 72% of Cowichan Valley's greenhouse gas coming from vehicles.

Awareness about the impacts of climate change is bringing much more consideration to how we view and engage our **Environment** at a local level. The Cowichan Valley is one of the most biologically diverse and productive areas in Canada facing significant challenges related to biodiversity loss, water shortages, river droughts and rising food costs. Collaborative, locally designed and led efforts have been rising to meet the challenges we face including: Airshed Roundtable, Cowichan Watershed Stewardship, Water Resource Management, Cowichan Climate Change Collaborative and a Climate Change Adaption Strategy.

How does the Cowichan Valley move forward in the most effective way? By knowing ourselves better, acknowledge our challenges, valuing the opportunities they bring to us, celebrating our achievements, and strengthening our heartbeat.

