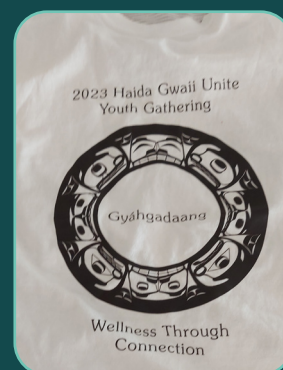




2022-2023 ANNUAL REPORT



We gratefully acknowledge that the McCreary Centre Society is located on the ancestral, traditional, and unceded territory of the Coast Salish Peoples, including the territories of the xwməθkwəy̓ əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and Səl̓ílwətaʔ/Selilwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations. We also acknowledge the ancestral and continuing connection to this land of the Métis Nation.

2022-2023 Annual Report

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Executive Director's report



Annie Smith receiving the Council of Canadian Child & Youth Care Association's 2023 Visionary Award from Erica Mark.

Welcome to our annual report for 2022–23. As always, it has been an exciting year with the usual mix of highs and lows, and the added interest of this year marking the 30th year of the BC Adolescent Health Survey (BC AHS).

The pandemic threw off so many things for young people, and continues to have lasting effects on those youth, and the people who work to support and educate them. We were therefore overwhelmed by the positive response we got to the 2023 BC AHS. I am sure two years ago no one would have predicted that the 2023 survey would have the highest ever number of students and school districts participating, or that we would be conducting a survey of the health and well-being of homeless youth across the province at the same time as the BC AHS. But somehow, thanks to the support of so many incredible folks across BC, we made it happen. A particular thank you goes out to this year's Youth Health Award recipient, Heather Lynch, who was such a strong advocate for the survey of youth experiencing homelessness, and who does so much to improve life for young people in BC.

The results of the survey conducted with young people experiencing homelessness are sobering. Although many of the results will not be a surprise to those who work in the field, they do really highlight the urgent need to address the statistics we are seeing, and to ensure young people have access to the stable, safe, and affordable housing that they need in order to be able to thrive.

There seems to be a current trend to have young people share their own personal story of hardship at public events and in the media, which although usually well-intentioned can often leave youth feeling triggered, re-traumatized, and used. Hopefully, the results of the Homeless Youth Health and Wellness Survey, and those of the BC AHS (when it is released), can paint a compelling enough picture of the very real experiences of young people in our province, without exploiting those young people to share every detail of their own personal journey. As one of our youth researchers noted with reference to the Homeless Youth Health and Wellness Survey: ***"Youth in care need a voice and sometimes it's hard for us to speak up. I really think getting us involved [in research] gives us a voice and helps us to tell a story without making us have to expose our own story."***

In a time of labour shortages and high turnover we have been grateful to have kept a stable core staff team over the past year. The team have all gone above and beyond to ensure the completion of these two surveys, and have made many other projects possible this year. I am indebted to them all and particularly to Maya, Colleen, Evelyn, Katie, Karen, Erin, Danielle, Lucie, Jim, Sara, and Zainab. I am also thankful for the support and expertise of Research Director Elizabeth Saewyc, the McCreary Board, and all our community partners.

I hope you will enjoy learning more about what we have been up to in the 2023 annual report.

Dr. Annie Smith

Chair's report



It has been my absolute pleasure to move into the Chair role this year, although I definitely had big shoes to fill. It's the icing on the cake for my own personal journey with McCreary Centre Society (McCreary). I started with McCreary 17 years ago as a Research Associate, and when I moved back to Vancouver in 2018, I was eager to join the board to continue supporting the excellent, ground-breaking work of the Society. I am delighted that I was able to move into the Chair role this year.

This year has been a year of settling into my role and supporting the board as we navigate a post-COVID world. Many organizations have been struggling with recruitment and retention, so McCreary is not alone in that. The board has worked to support staff in developing various options to ensure we retain and recruit staff with a passion for youth health research and a commitment to centring youth in their work, so the Society can continue achieving its mission with its values firmly at the centre of its work. I feel confident that McCreary will continue to contribute high-quality, ground-breaking youth health research, with a solid, highly-skilled staff team.

While the administration of the 2023 BC AHS was a huge success this year, our staff dealt with a number of parental complaints about the content of the survey. The board is sensitive to the fact that a few of the topics discussed in the BC AHS have become more politicized and polarized than ever. However, the board remains committed to ensuring that this essential data collection tool continues to gather vital information on youth health across the province, while ensuring our staff are safe and well-supported.

In addition to supporting our staff through these troubled waters, we have discussed board capacity and governance training which we plan to continue next year.

We also welcomed Nina Sunday as a new board member this year, representing the Youth Research Academy (YRA). I look forward to the YRA reports every board meeting as I am always so impressed with their work, and how they bring in their own lived and living experiences into their research projects. Nina brings a commitment to youth-centred research and community development and is a wonderful addition to our board team. Welcome Nina!

Finally, on behalf of the board, I would like to express our sincere thanks and deep gratitude to McCreary's staff, YRA, Youth Advisory and Action Council, Young Indigenous Research Team, and other youth groups for all the excellent work you do on behalf of BC youth. Personally, I want to thank my board colleagues for supporting me as I learn the ropes in my new role, and for their ongoing commitment to making the world a better place for youth. Also, a huge thank you to the members who continue to support McCreary and to the funders who allow McCreary to continue to produce ground-breaking youth health research.

Marika Albert

Research Director's report



30 years after the first survey, the BC Adolescent Health Survey's rigour is stronger than ever, and its uses are expanding.

This year has seen the implementation of the 7th BC Adolescent Health Survey, covering 30 years of health among students in Grades 7 to 12 throughout BC. The survey's complex sampling frame allows us to create rigorous, population-based evidence of young people's health and well-being, and allows us to monitor the trends in youth health over the years. This time around we saw challenges with surveying post-pandemic, but also continuing participation from the overwhelming majority of school districts—and the largest sample of students surveyed to date!

With the combination of around half the surveys in the traditional pencil and paper format, and the other half online via Qualtrics, we have a lot to work on in looking at the benefits and challenges of different methods of surveying. Over the summer we have worked on cleaning the data, recoding hundreds of open-ended responses, and on weighting the data from the different school districts to be able to provide solid provincial and regional analyses. Over the coming year we will be doing in-depth work on evaluating the measures we've used (as we do each time, to make sure they remain relevant and valid) and beginning additional analyses beyond the regional reports and the provincial highlights report.

This past year we have had a growing number of academics engaging with McCreary data, and some of our ongoing partnerships extended with added project funding. Dr. Jennifer Baumbusch and Dr. Jennifer Lloyd from UBC have conducted analyses of youth with a disability, and have completed a couple papers which are under review. Dr. Carla Hilario from UBC Okanagan has been working on papers looking at trends in racism and mental health experienced by East Asian, Southeast Asian, and South Asian youth, and has submitted an abstract for a conference, in addition to having a paper nearly ready to submit for publication.

The ongoing collaboration with the Stigma and Resilience Among Vulnerable Youth Centre (SARAVYC) at UBC has included a new report looking at gender diverse youth in care for the Office of the Representative for Children and Youth that included BC AHS data in the RCY report, *The Right to Thrive*, as well as additional papers using the complex SLEPHI method that are nearly ready to submit, focused on the impact of 2SLGBTQ+ inclusive policies and GSAs on youth sports involvement, mental health, and sexual health. SARAVYC has also secured 7 years of funding for analyses focused on migrant youth health trends, which will also include BC AHS data among the projects.

With so many years of detailed data—and large samples that allow us to look at regional variations—the BC Adolescent Health Survey continues to provide important data for supporting young people, and influencing policy, programs, and public awareness.

Dr. Elizabeth Saewyc

Director of Evaluation's report



The theme of this year's Annual General Meeting is focused on youth housing and the results of our recent survey of homeless youth across BC. This has led me to reflect on the various housing initiatives we have evaluated over the years. These initiatives have supported youth not only with finding and maintaining housing, but also with improving their overall health and well-being, and with reaching their goals. Evaluation findings across these initiatives have pointed to practices that appear particularly beneficial to young people. These practices are in line with promising practices identified in other housing related research:

- Youth benefit from housing programs that are low-barrier and take a strengths-based, trauma-informed, and individualized approach.
- When youth have a say in the type of housing they access, and the housing-related supports and services they receive, they can feel a greater sense of control over their life and it can contribute to enhanced stability.
- Youth benefit from having supportive adults in their life who can help them with finding housing; gaining independent living skills (e.g., cleaning, budgeting, cooking, conflict resolution); making their place feel more like a home (help with furnishing, etc.); and with learning about their rights and responsibilities as a tenant.

- Housing subsidies are beneficial to vulnerable youth. Longer-term subsidies (e.g., a year or longer) are more helpful than shorter-term or one-off subsidies in supporting youth with housing stability.
- Youth should have access to a range of services and supports they may need beyond housing, such as mental health and substance use services; cultural supports; and education and employment supports.
- Housing programs that collaborate with other programs and agencies can help youth participants to receive the wrap-around supports that best meet their needs.
- Having more pet-friendly rentals would support youth with pets and can reduce their likelihood of becoming homeless.
- Housing programs that offer youth opportunities to socialize with other young people and to engage in community activities help youth to feel a greater sense of belonging and a reduced sense of isolation.
- Housing programs that allow youth to stay in their accommodation even after reaching a certain age (i.e., no age cut-offs) contribute to a sense of stability and hopefulness, and reduced anxiety.

Our evaluations have also identified housing barriers that young people experience, including a lack of safe and affordable housing in Vancouver and other cities across BC, which only systems-level change can address.

It has been our privilege to carry out evaluations for agencies that work tirelessly to support vulnerable young people in our province, including those at risk of homelessness. I look forward to our future work together.

Dr. Maya Peled

BC Adolescent Health Survey



The past year of the BC Adolescent Health Survey (BC AHS) cycle has been mainly focused on data collection. The early part of the year was spent developing the survey instrument with input from students, parents, school personnel, and other stakeholders and

specialists in youth health. The survey was then pilot-tested with over 500 diverse youth across BC before being finalized. This process was more complicated than usual due to this year being the first to offer the survey online, as well as in French.

This is the seventh wave of the BC AHS and a total of 59 of the 60 school districts announced they would take part. Several of those districts requested an oversample or census of their students. We were delighted to be able to accommodate all those requests thanks to the support of the local nurses who coordinated and administered the survey in their region.

Overall, 700 Public Health Nurses, Public Health Resource Nurses, nursing students, and other allied health professionals administered the survey to students in over 2,000 classrooms. Due to a survey traffic jam in some schools where students were also participating in several other surveys, BC AHS administration continued late into June. While this was not ideal for students, teachers, nurses, or ourselves, the dedication of the coordinators and administrators from the school districts and public health made this wave of data collection the most successful ever with around 38,500 students participating.

Around half the students who participated in the BC AHS did so online, and the remainder completed the survey in paper format. Several months had to be dedicated to data entry and data cleaning before the database could be finalized and the weighting process started. However, as noted in Dr. Saewyc's report, this split between online and paper survey completion will allow us a unique opportunity to compare the two methods of survey administration.

The last couple of months have been dedicated to preparing the provincial results of the survey, along with the 59 confidential school district level reports and infographics. We are so looking forward to sharing these results and will begin working on regional reports as soon as the provincial report is completed.

The Youth Health Ambassadors, who played a vital role in developing the survey questions for the 2023 BC AHS, are now preparing to share the survey results with their peers. While they are waiting for the data to be available, the youth are working on a project about school food. They have been trained to host conversations with their peers about what is working well and what they might like to see change about school food programs, and will be hosting those conversations over this winter (see [page 16](#) for more about what the YHA have been working on).

We are so grateful to all the teachers, principals, and vice-principals who welcomed BC AHS administrators into their schools and supported students to participate in the survey. We are also indebted to the administrators who travelled around their communities in all weathers to ensure as many students as possible had the opportunity to participate, and finally we extend our gratitude to all the youth who took the time to fill out a survey and share about their health with us. We hope this data will help support and improve youth well-being across the province.



Boxes of completed 2023 BC AHS surveys at the McCreary office.

Youth Health Award

We are delighted to announce that this year's Youth Health Award recipient is Heather Lynch. Heather is Senior Manager of Counselling Services, the Fraser Health Crisis Line, and Youth Services at Options Community Services Society. Like the BC AHS, Heather is celebrating 30 years in the field this year, having started out as a Youth Services Program Manager with Options in 1993.

Heather has been a long-term friend of McCreary. This year, she once again used her considerable skill and influence to ensure we had excellent participation in the Homeless Youth Health and Wellness Survey in the Surrey area.

Heather describes her passion in life as assisting our most vulnerable populations to thrive by strengthening systems, so individuals can access applicable services that will encourage successful outcomes. Her passion for social justice and her positive solution-focused approach to large-scale complex issues always shine through in her work. Our province is lucky to have such a talented and tireless advocate.

In an article in the Daily Hive earlier this year (dailyhive.com/vancouver/opinion-heather-lynch), Heather called on all not-for-profits to **"intentionally explore equitable practices that will help vulnerable and under-represented individuals to thrive."** This call is one that we at McCreary intend to keep striving to achieve, and we are beyond grateful to have allies such as Heather on our side.

We have been excited to continue to develop our relationship with our 2022 Youth Health Award recipient, Dr. Gill Main. Dr. Main visited us from the UK this summer, and held a series of meetings with the staff team, Board, and members of the YRA. It was fantastic to continue to share ideas and look for future opportunities to collaborate together.



Annie Smith presenting Heather Lynch with the 2023 Youth Health Award.



2023 Youth Health Award.

Homeless Youth Health and Wellness Survey

With the support of youth-serving agencies across the province, a team of over 50 community co-researchers, including youth workers and youth with lived experience of homelessness, administered the 2023 Homeless Youth Health and Wellness Survey. Together, the researchers were able to survey over 800 youth [aged 12–27] who had experienced homelessness in 36 BC communities.

The survey has not been conducted since 2014. However, the results continued to reflect those of previous years, including the over-representation among homeless youth of those who identify as Indigenous, having government care experience, having a health condition or disability, and as a gender or sexual minority.

Despite efforts across the province to address youth homelessness and make any experience of homelessness brief and one time only, survey findings showed that most youth had been homeless on more than one occasion (77%) and had been homeless in excess of three months (60%).

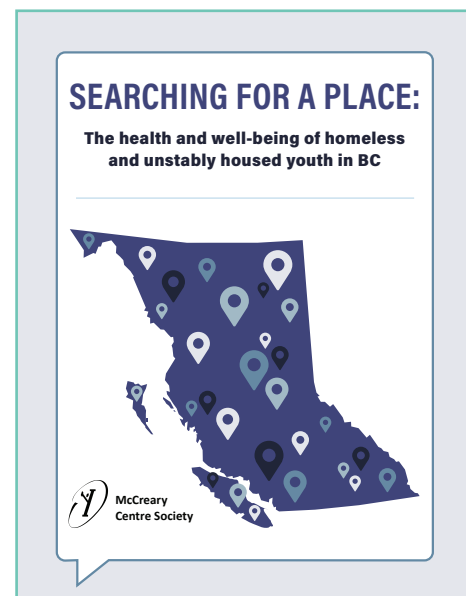
The most common reasons youth became homeless included being kicked out of their home, not getting along with their parents, experiencing mental health challenges, and violence or abuse at home. The main barriers youth experienced to exiting homelessness included not being able to afford housing and a lack of support.

Most youth who had been homeless had experienced additional challenges to their health and well-being, such as mental health and substance use challenges. However, despite the challenges they experienced, most youth were either in school or planning to return to school, and around a third were employed. The majority were at least a little hopeful for their future (87%), could name something they were good at (71%), and could identify something that made them happy (83%).

Youth reported better health and well-being when they had supportive adults, peers, and services in their lives, and when they felt connected to their community and school (if at school). Connection to the land and their culture were also important protective factors for Indigenous youth.

Most youth appreciated the services they could access and the supports that were available in their community. Their suggestions for improvements included greater access to services in smaller communities; better advertising of what is available; and the need for more housing services for youth, including rent subsidies, grants for housing costs (e.g., pet damage deposit, assistance with paying bills), and greater availability of affordable housing options.

A community friendly report of the findings was released in October. To read the report, visit mcs.bc.ca/pdf/searching_for_a_place.pdf. Members of McCreary's Young Indigenous Research Team and community co-researchers have been working on additional dissemination materials to ensure the information from the report is shared as widely as possible and can be used to inspire improvements for youth with housing challenges.



Youth Advisory and Action Council (YAC)



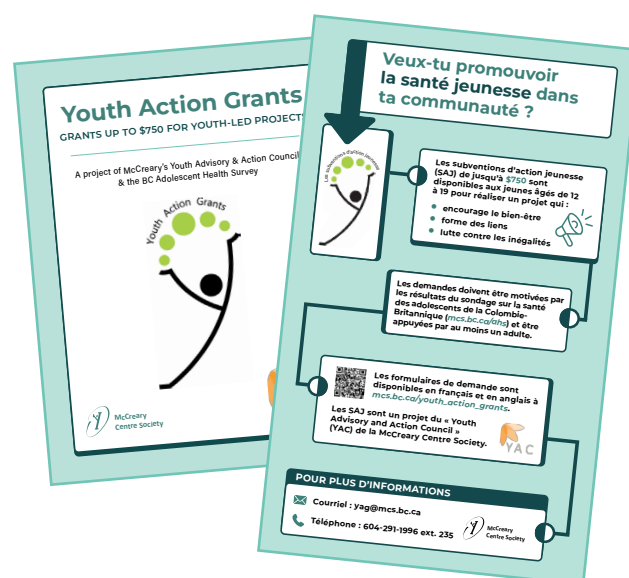
The YAC has had yet another incredible year, marked by remarkable milestones. We have remained dedicated to our ongoing projects, while also taking on new initiatives.

Additionally, we have continued our support for youth-led projects across the province and have actively collaborated with McCreary staff on other projects to promote youth health.

Building on the success of our 'Friends Helping Friends' poster from the previous year, we developed a new version of the poster aimed at raising awareness about eating disorders. This initiative aims to help youth in navigating the complexities of these disorders and encourages them to prioritize their mental and physical well-being. We are actively pursuing the development of our Board Game/Game Show concept to share the 2023 BC AHS findings effectively with our peers. Furthermore, we successfully designed and shared Instagram posts to raise awareness and promote Sexual Health and Reproductive Rights Awareness Week, as well as Disordered Eating Awareness Week. We have also conducted a comprehensive review and pilot of a substance use curriculum tailored for youth in schools.

Our **Youth Action Grants (YAGs)** have played a pivotal role in supporting various impactful projects across BC. Notable projects include a safe space craft night for 2SLGBTQ+ youth in Richmond; a mental health working group in Salt Spring Island; a BIPOC club featuring guest speakers; an Indigenous-focused book club that delves into critical topics affecting Indigenous communities; and The Bel Canto Initiative which supported young musicians with performance opportunities that raised \$1,500 during the Musical Marathon of Hope 2023 (MMH) to support the Greater Vancouver Food Bank! These YAG-backed endeavors have fostered inclusivity, community engagement, and promoted health awareness. As a result of the positive changes these projects have brought to our community we eagerly anticipate receiving and supporting similar initiatives in the future.

We are also happy to report that we have been able to increase the amount youth can apply for. Projects can now be funded for up to \$750 per project. We want to emphasize that there is no fixed deadline for application submission. Youth's contributions are always welcome as we work together to support youth initiatives and make a positive impact in our community! If you have questions or want more information about the YAGs, please email yag@mcs.bc.ca.



For more information about the YAGs, or to apply, visit mcs.bc.ca/youth_action_grants.

For more information about the Trevor Coburn Grants, or to apply, please visit mcs.bc.ca/trevor_coburn_memorial_grants.

Project work aside, the YAC has also experienced growth with the addition of new members, and we are in the early planning stages for an upcoming holiday party! We would love to see more youth join our group, so if you are interested in becoming a part of McCreary's YAC, please email Katie at katie@mcs.bc.ca.

Youth Research Academy (YRA)



The YRA is a group of youth between the ages of 16 and 24 with experience in the government care system. Members of the YRA are trained to conduct research projects of interest to youth in and from government care and the agencies that serve them. The seventh cohort was the first to meet in person since the COVID-19 pandemic began, and graduated from the YRA in March. In June, the smaller yet mighty Cohort Eight began.

Since starting the eighth cohort, we have developed our own research questions. We picked topics relating to youth with government care experience, looked at articles and completed literature reviews, and are excited to start analyzing data when the 2023 BC AHS data is available.

The YRA got to practice our research skills by conducting our own naturalistic observation study at the PNE. We collaboratively chose a research question, and had a group discussion on how to measure and record observations. We also learned to recognize and point out the limitations of our study.

We have also been working on the Youth Transitioning Out of Care Study and are developing an infographic to share key findings. We are working on participant recruitment and have started reaching out to professionals and organizations who work with youth in and from government care. We created a presentation to share key findings from the study with policymakers and others who work with youth in care, and are now developing an interactive workshop to share findings with youth. We hope the presentation and workshop will help to get more young people engaged in the research.

The YRA is looking forward to a trip to Galiano with the YAC, where we will meet and get to know each other over a work project and in a beautiful space. We are also looking forward to our holiday party and being able to work more with the new 2023 BC AHS data.

While the seventh cohort graduated in the spring, some of us have stayed engaged with McCreary as we were invited to present at the Light the Way Homeless Youth Conference in Richmond this September. We were able to present on the importance of youth-led research, and the impact it can have on issues such as youth homelessness. It was a great chance to interact with other people working to support youth in BC, as well as a good opportunity to keep up our presentation skills!



Lighting the way to youth-led research



A Youth Research Academy Presentation

YRA alumni presenting at the Light the Way Homeless Youth Conference and the first slide of their presentation.

The eighth cohort of the YRA is still recruiting! If you are, or know of, a youth with government care experience between the ages of 16 and 24 who might be interested in joining the YRA, please email Katie at katie@mcs.bc.ca.

Longitudinal study of youth aging 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. The survey asks questions about youth's background, health, experiences in care, living situations, education, employment, money, goals, access to services and supports, and strengths and needs. 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. To read the full report, visit: mcs.bc.ca/pdf/youth_transitioning_out_of_care_2023_update.pdf.

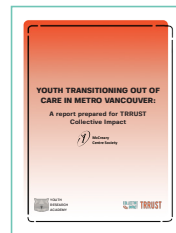
Most youth who had transitioned out of care had experienced challenges to finding housing in the past six months. This was in line with findings from the Homeless Youth Health and Wellness Survey which saw an over-representation of youth with care experience in the study. Common challenges reported by youth in the longitudinal study included being unable to afford housing, as well as a shortage of safe and affordable housing. However, the study also showed that when youth from care experienced housing stability and felt safe where they were living, they reported increased feelings of community connection and life satisfaction. In addition, having an adult who they could turn to for help with finding housing was linked to more positive outcomes.

The report also includes reflections from the YRA. For example, one reflection is that ***“safe and stable housing is a basic need that all youth should have access to. Youth who move constantly likely don't have the opportunity to fully connect to their surroundings or community, and to experience the benefits of feeling connected. Access to long-term financial support for housing is essential because of the high cost of living in BC.”***

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, First Call, and MCFD's SAJE team.

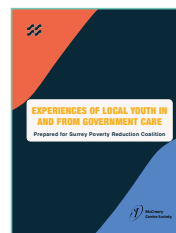
Other reports using data from the Youth Transitioning out of Care study

In 2023, two additional reports were created using data from the study, each focusing on a specific region in BC.



Youth transitioning out of care in Metro Vancouver: A report prepared for TRRUST Collective Impact.

This report was prepared for TRRUST Collective Impact to assist with a review of the collective's progress in contributing to improving outcomes for youth transitioning out of care in Metro Vancouver. The results will also be used to help set the direction and focus of the collective moving forward. View the report at: mcs.bc.ca/pdf/ytoc_metro_vancouver.pdf.



Experiences of local youth in and from Government care

This report was produced for Surrey Poverty Reduction Coalition and considers the experiences of Surrey youth with government care experience. The report uses data from the BC Adolescent Health Survey and the Youth Transitioning Out of Care study. View the report at: mcs.bc.ca/pdf/sprc_yic_2023_report.pdf.

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

Young Indigenous Research Team (YIRT)

The YIRT is a group of Indigenous YRA alumni that develops and delivers projects that support the health and well-being of Indigenous youth in BC.



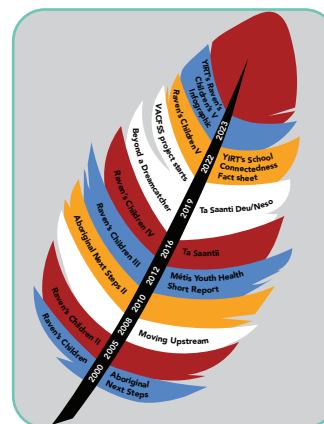
Over the past year, we have been working on a few different projects, and have co-designed how our work together will look. For example, we have agreed on a Land Acknowledgment at the beginning of every group meeting, and have

created a YIRT logo which incorporates the four sacred medicines (Cedar, Tobacco, Sage, and Sweetgrass) into the design. We have plans to incorporate cultural practices such as a smudge bowl and talking stick into our monthly meetings, as well as to have a lanyard beading class as a group cultural activity in one of our future meetings. Members will be gifted medicines and smudge kits. We also plan to create a medicine garden at McCreary next spring, once nearby construction is complete.

Projects we have worked on this year have included creating infographics for the *Raven's Children V* report, to share key findings. We have also been doing some preliminary work on an Indigenous youth-led version of the *Taking Pride: Healthy relationships workshop curriculum for 2SLGBTQ+ youth*. We have also met with representatives from MCFD to help with the naming of the new Youth Transitions program.

During the summer, we attended the 2023 National Indigenous Peoples Day event, participated in cultural connection by speaking with elders and knowledge keepers, eating Indigenous food, listening to cultural music, and engaging with Indigenous resources and vendors.

We have been meeting regularly with McCreary's Indigenous Advisory Circle to update them on our progress and ask for guidance and feedback on the work we have been doing. At the request of the Advisory Circle, we created a feather timeline infographic to show McCreary's experience working in partnership with Indigenous people and organizations over the years.



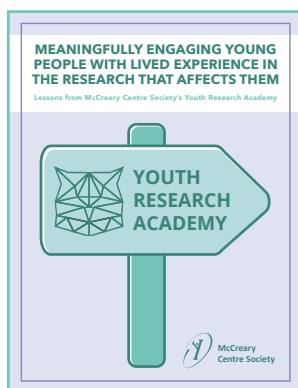
Graphic showing McCreary's projects conducted in partnership with Indigenous communities (2000-2023).

We have also been applying for grant funding. We were successful in securing two small grants to support our regular meetings and work on the survey of homeless youth. Unfortunately, we were unsuccessful in our large grant application to create a *Raven's Children VI* report, so are now working with members of the Advisory Circle on a new grant application.

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

Sharing the Youth Research Academy model

In November 2020, McCreary received a three-year grant from an anonymous donor. The funding was provided to allow us to create and disseminate resources which shared the YRA model, and the lessons learned from implementing the model. This was an exciting opportunity to step back, think about the theoretical and practice framework that guided the development of the YRA, and reflect on what we learned since the YRA's 2016 inception. The funding also allowed us to finally respond to requests to produce community and peer-reviewed materials about the YRA model that we had never had the time or capacity to do before.



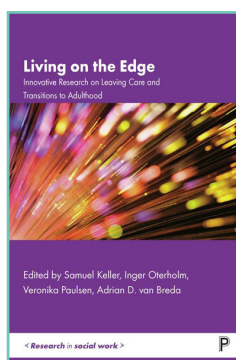
We created two main resources for the project. The first is an in-depth guide which aims to help anyone wanting to engage marginalized young people in the research process (mcs.bc.ca/pdf/meaningfully_engaging_youth_lived_experience_guide.pdf). The guide includes meaningful youth engagement approaches, lessons learned from the YRA, and concrete examples of youth engagement in action. The guide also contains a series of checklists and questions to consider. A toolkit was also created which is an abridged version of the guide (mcs.bc.ca/pdf/meaningfully_engaging_youth_lived_experience_toolkit.pdf).



Annie Smith sharing the YRA model at the EUSARF conference in Brighton, England.

The project wrapped up in October and has been a huge success, seeing the model and associated resources shared around the world. Highlights include invited in-person workshops and presentations in Darwin, Australia; Gramado, Brazil; Manchester and Brighton, England; Valencia, Spain; and San Diego, USA; as well as online presentations to local, national, and international audiences. Online presentation highlights included members of the YRA and YRA alumni presenting to international audiences through conferences hosted in Zurich, Switzerland and Queensland, Australia.

Two peer review articles and a book chapter have also come from the project, and although the funding to share the model has come to an end, we have developed a number of exciting partnerships as a result of the project which will continue. These include projects in England and Australia which will see those countries develop their own Youth Research Academies for young people with care experience.



Living on the Edge: Innovative Research on Leaving Care and Transitions to Adulthood, which includes a discussion of the YRA model, will be released in November 2023.

BC Health and Wellness Youth Advisory Council



The BC Health and Wellness Youth Advisory Council (BC YAC) is a group of diverse youth from across the province in Grades 8–12 who provide insight on current health issues. The

group is a partnership between McCreary and the BC Ministries of Health and Education, and currently meets virtually once a month. Our primary focus as a group has been exploring the issue of vaping among teens.

This year has been an exciting one for the group. In June, we were able to come together for the first time to meet in person. We met at the SFU campus on Burnaby Mountain, where we all stayed in dorm rooms and were able to work in one of the common lounges. We spent time on some workshop development skills as well as some facilitation skills, taking turns to practice leading group discussions. 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. We were also able to make t-shirts together! Our first in-person meeting was a great success, and everyone is eager to meet in person again in the future.

We have continued to collaborate with the Ministry of Health on their campaigns, the most recent of which was titled the *A-Z of Vaping*, an animated series of ads aimed at both adults and teens to educate them on the contents of vape juice. We were able to meet directly with the creative team that the Ministry hired, which was a cool experience, getting to see how ads like that are brought to production. We were able to give direct feedback on the look of the ads as well as the content, and it was satisfying to see the finished result! The first round of those ads were so popular that the Ministry is doing another round of them, and this fall we were again able to give feedback into what letters they wanted to use and the content of the ads. We're looking forward to seeing what the second round looks like!

We've also been able to collaborate with other people doing work on vaping in BC, including a professor from UBCO and the organization Quit Now, which is run by the BC Lung Association. In both examples we were able to give our opinion as to what information would be important for youth to know, as well as what will make teens more likely to look at resources about vaping. It's been interesting to review different materials that are being put together to help give evidence-based information to youth about vaping and we've enjoyed being a part of the process.

This year we also had to say goodbye to a few members who graduated high school. We were able to celebrate (virtually) and reminisced about our time together! We're sad to see them go but wish them all the best as they take on new challenges and adventures. As a result of some people leaving, we had some space for new members and it's been great to have a few new youth join our group from different parts of the province.

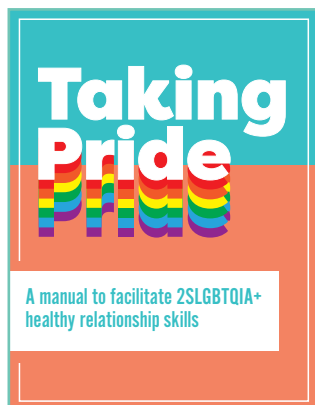
Overall, we had a great year and we are looking forward to continuing our work on a workshop to share the vaping findings from the 2023 BC AHS, developing a guide for supportive adults on how to talk to youth about vaping, and continuing our work with the Ministries of Health and Education.



T-shirt made at the BC YAC in-person meeting at SFU.

Visit mcs.bc.ca/bc_yac or email Katie at katie@mcs.bc.ca for more information on the BC YAC and a link to the short application.

Taking Pride: Healthy relationships workshops for 2SLGBTQ+ youth



Taking Pride is a six-part healthy relationships workshop series for 2SLGBTQIA+ youth aged 13 to 18 in BC. The program is a partnership between McCreary and UBC's Stigma and Resilience Among Vulnerable Youth Centre (SAR-AVYC). The program aims to reduce rela-

tionship violence by teaching youth the skills to foster healthy relationships. The curriculum was created with 2SLGBTQ+ youth in BC and covers topics such as boundaries and values, effective communication, consent, working through conflict, and being a supportive friend and ally.

We have continued training youth and adult allies across the province to lead these workshops with their peers. This year, we trained school and community groups in Victoria, North Vancouver, and Coquitlam, including facilitating the workshops as part of a sexual health education month at an independent school. We are excited about upcoming trainings with several other groups, and to supporting the youth and adult allies who were recently trained in Prince Rupert and Prince George.

Over the past year, we have also adapted the workshops to be facilitated with post-secondary groups across Canada. We completed piloting during the spring and are currently training peer facilitators at UBC and Concordia University, with additional groups scheduled for 2024. The adapted workshops cover the same topics as the original program but build on the conversations to include situations and skills that are developmentally appropriate for young adults in a post-secondary setting. As we expand the post-secondary groups, we have learned more about the unique needs of students across the country and have enjoyed exploring how the discussions can be tailored to meet those needs.

TRRUST Collective Impact

McCreary continues to have the privilege of serving as the backbone organization for TRRUST, the Vancouver-based collective impact initiative seeking to improve outcomes for youth transitioning out of care.

This has been a particularly exciting year for the collective, and specifically so in the area of housing, as we signed a historic agreement with the Co-operative Housing Federation of BC (CHF). The agreement will ensure that new housing co-op developments will allocate a minimum of two homes per development for youth who have aged out of government care, and the CHF will encourage established housing co-ops to also set aside a number of units for former youth in care. TRRUST partners will offer support to youth who are housed through this agreement to ensure they have the skills and resources they need to maintain their housing. TRRUST is also working on a similar model with the City of Vancouver with their social housing developments.

This summer and fall, the collective has been doing some re-visioning work, which included a 'journey mapping' exercise with youth who have aged out of care since the pandemic. The re-visioning process will continue through the winter, and will ensure the collective remains focused on the current and pressing issues that have been identified as a priority by young people.



2023 Journey Map (mcs.bc.ca/pdf/journey_map_2023.pdf).

Students and research partnerships

This past year we continued our valuable partnerships with post-secondary students and researchers. In years when the BC AHS has been administered across the province, McCreary's partnerships with nursing schools across the province play a key role, and this year was no exception. This past spring, nursing students from Langara, North Island College, UNBC, BCIT, UBCO, UVic, VIU, and UFV supported local health nurses across the province in administering the survey.

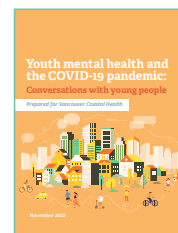
In addition, a number of cohorts of nursing students from Langara College and Vancouver Community College were on practicum placement at McCreary, during which they helped to support the roll out of the BC AHS behind the scenes, process returned surveys, enter survey data, and learned about community-based research more broadly. While on practicum, some of the students also had the opportunity to complete their own research projects using the 2023 BC AHS pilot data. One cohort of Langara students focussed on sexual health education in school and a VCC cohort focussed on the relationship between substance use and violence exposure.

Two students from Douglas College also completed practicum placements this past year. Their research projects using the 2023 BC AHS pilot data looked at the relationship between community connectedness and mental health, and the health of youth with physical disabilities. In addition, these students helped with BC AHS tasks, as well as supported preparations and data collection for the Homeless Youth Health and Wellness Survey. This fall, we also have a practicum student from the Child and Youth Care Program at Douglas College. They are working on interactive ways to share findings of the 2023 BC AHS with youth across the province.

McCreary 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, they spent their 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.

This fall, we have had an online practicum student from Merrimack College in Andover, Massachusetts supporting a project the Youth Health Ambassadors are conducting on food in schools.

More from the Youth Health Ambassadors



Youth mental health and the COVID-19 pandemic: Conversations with young people

This report shares the perspectives of over 200 youth in the VCH region about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on their mental health and well-being. It was commissioned by Vancouver Coastal Health and guided by conversations led by YHA members across the province. The report is available at: mcs.bc.ca/pdf/vch_youth_mental_health_covid.pdf.

McCreary's student group, which first began in the 1990's, consists of a number of undergraduate and graduate students working on theses and dissertations that use McCreary data. This past year, students from UBC and SFU worked on various topics including mild traumatic brain injury, and health issues among African Canadian students.

Beyond student involvement, McCreary continued its research partnerships with faculty members from various post-secondary institutions. For example, partners at UBC have been using the BC AHS data to study youth with a disability, and have written two manuscripts this past year—one which looks at school absences and the other at substance use. A UBC clinical fellow also used the 2018 BC AHS data to look at health care access among youth with government care experience and has submitted a manuscript based on this work. We wish them success on their submissions and appreciate their efforts to spread the word about the BC AHS data.

Treasurer's report

Our 2022–23 fiscal year ended in March 2023. The financial records were reviewed by MNP, including the statement of financial position as at March 31, 2023; the statements of operations; changes in net assets; and cash flows for the year April 2022–March 2023. The review engagement report prepared by MNP stated: ***"Based on our review, nothing has come to our attention that causes us to believe that the financial statements do not present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of McCreary Centre Society as at March 31, 2023, and the results of its operations and its cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with Canadian accounting standards for not-for-profit organizations."***

Despite spiraling costs, we were able to operate with a modest surplus. Our total revenue for the year was \$1,257,971 and our total expenditure was \$1,238,701. This left us with a surplus of \$19,270 to carry forward into the charity's work in 2023–24. The majority of the income we received (\$1,070,965) came from conducting projects for the federal and provincial government, as well as from projects for other not-for-profits, such as independent evaluations.

As always, the bulk of expenditure was allocated to staffing (\$804,111), and this was an expensive year for printing, postage, and supplies with two large surveys in the field. The most pleasing increase in expenditure was in funding distributed to youth across BC to carry out youth health projects through the Youth Action Grants, as this expense increased from \$5,950 in 2021–22 to \$23,500 in 2022–23.

We are indebted to our funders, and to those individuals who chose us as a charity they wished to support.

Thank you to our funders, including:

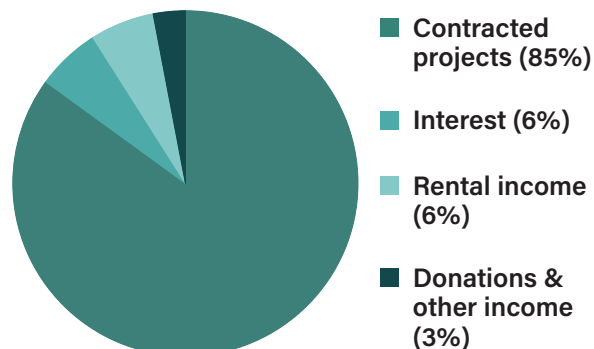


Government
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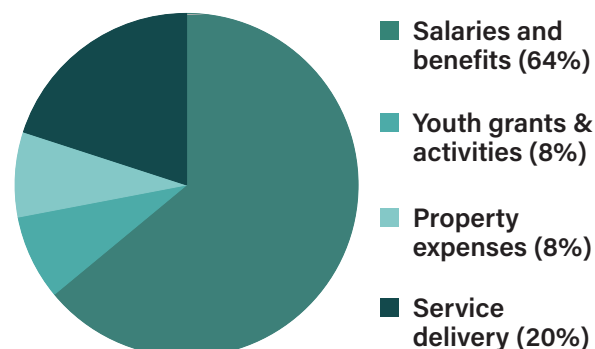
Gouvernement
du Canada



Income



Expenditure



The detailed financial statements are available upon request.

Anik Muhuri, Treasurer



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