

ANNUAL REPORT 2024-25



**COWICHAN
VALLEY
YOUTH
SERVICES**



Dear friends,

**Looking back on the past year,
one word rises above the rest:**

Resilience.

This year brought challenges that could have changed the shape of our work—but instead, they strengthened our resolve and deepened our impact.

The sudden loss of federal funding for our Youth Employment Mentorship Program (YEMP) was a difficult moment. For over a decade, this program helped young people bridge the gap between potential and opportunity by offering skill-building, work experience, and mentorship that transforms confidence and open doors. Its absence was felt not only by participants, but also by the employers, families, and peers whose lives are enriched when youth are empowered to succeed.

Thanks to the generosity of two transformational donors, YEMP returned — reminding us that community investment in youth pays dividends far beyond the program itself. A young person finding their first job, a parent seeing their youth thrive, a business welcoming a motivated employee—these are wins for the whole Cowichan Valley.

We also expanded our supports this year with the Connect Attachment Parenting Group, creating a safe space for caregivers to strengthen bonds, build skills, and foster healthier family relationships. In countless counselling sessions, outreach visits, and group programs, our team met youth and families where they were—offering not just services, but hope and belonging.

Our staff's compassion and creativity ensured that no challenge became a roadblock. Our board's guidance kept us focused on long-term goals. And our community's belief in our mission kept the lights on, the doors open, and enabled us to meet youth where they're at and offer support.

The lives changed through CVYS ripple outward—making our community safer, stronger, and more connected.

Thank you for being part of this work.

Together, we are building a future where every young person can thrive.

With gratitude.



CHRIS SCHULTZ
BOARD CHAIR



ZOE LAUCKNER
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Mission

Cowichan Valley Youth Services (CVYS) is a leading organization dedicated to creating and providing opportunities that strengthen the bonds of young people to their families and the community by providing a range of counselling and support services.

Vision

Young people are an integral and valued part of the Cowichan community.

Values

At Cowichan Valley Youth Services, we believe each person is unique and has intrinsic worth; that each person's capacity can be realized; and each person is able to act with integrity.

WHO WE ARE.

OUR PURPOSE IS TO SUPPORT
THE DIVERSE NEEDS OF YOUTH
AND THOSE WHO CARE FOR
THEM, ALL ACROSS THE
COWICHAN VALLEY REGION.

HOW WE SUPPORT.

OUTREACH
YOUTH SERVICES
FAMILY SUPPORT
PARENT COACHING
SPECIALIZED GROUPS
EMPLOYMENT SKILLS
LIFE SKILLS



MORE THAN
18,500
OUTREACH KMS
TRAVELLED

10
COMMUNITIES
SERVED

OUR IMPACT.

381
GROUP HOURS
OFFERED

10,615
SERVICE HOURS
PROVIDED

*“CVYS holds up signs
along the path we didn’t
think we’d be finding
ourselves on. It is a safe
space to feel like we can
find our way to what
works for our family.”*

770
UNIQUE
INDIVIDUALS
SERVED

149
INDIVIDUALS
ATTENDING
GROUP

84
GROUP
SESSIONS

No Judgement Zone

Support that Strengthens & Brings Hope

“My name is Brooklyn, and I'm 17 years old. I just graduated. I'm a gymnastics coach. I'm also a model. I like taking care of kids.”

Things weren't always this steady. **Back in grade eight, Brooklyn was struggling.**

“I have an anxiety disorder, OCD, ADHD, and autism. The autism and OCD and ADHD were undiagnosed. We knew I had an anxiety disorder at this time. And it was really bad, like really bad. It was really hard for me to get up out of bed because I'd be having so much anxiety. There'd be days where I couldn't go to school, because I'd just be having panic attacks the whole morning. And I was starting to get like suicidal thoughts... because my life was just like miserable, just constantly feeling that way.”

That's when she was connected to CVYS.

“I remember talking with a teacher and stuff. And I think I got connected through her.”

Counselling started right in the middle of COVID.

“

I think I learned a lot of social skills—learning how to communicate with people better. I was able to learn a lot of strategies.

“It feels really good after—like you feel really relieved being able to get everything off your chest. And the feedback is always so good. Even if you don't necessarily want advice, and just want to talk, they can be there for that.”

She felt comfortable right away.

“I just knew that it was a no-judgment zone. I feel like I built a relationship kind of like you would with a friend—but like a friend who really understands.”

Over time, Brooklyn noticed a real change.

“I realized like, this is really helping me. Like if I had told myself in grade eight that I wouldn't be having panic attacks every morning anymore, I would have been like, what?”

She also learned how to connect better with the people around her.

“I think I learned a lot of social skills—learning how to communicate with people better. I was able to learn a lot of strategies. Just knowing that nothing is wrong with me—and being able to get support with strategies to help with my autism and my anxiety—that made a really big difference.”



When asked what might have happened if CVYS hadn't been there, Brooklyn doesn't hesitate.

"It would have been way harder than it was. I probably would have continued having bad anxiety in situations where now I don't. And my social skills would not be where they are today."

Looking ahead, Brooklyn is excited for her future.

"I'm excited to continue modelling. I want to take my ECE and do something with that. I want to get married and have kids."

To other youth who are struggling, Brooklyn says:

"I would recommend CVYS. I feel like it's so good to be able to talk to somebody. It changes lives."

And to the people who make these services possible:

"I would want them to know that they're making a good decision. I know it's helped a lot of people. And it certainly helped me."

From Crisis to Connection

In the spring of 2023, Barb experienced every parent's worst nightmare.

Her 15-year-old daughter, Rachel, had a near-fatal overdose due to toxic drugs. Tragically, Rachel's boyfriend did not survive.

The years leading up to Rachel's overdose weren't easy – Barb and her husband went through a divorce, there was substance use in the family, and Rachel's mental health had been steadily declining.

Thrust into a state of chaos, uncertainty, and deep concern for her daughter's wellbeing, Barb knew where to turn for help. Cowichan Valley Youth Services (CVYS) had supported their family a few years prior, when Rachel began self-harming.

Though initially told that Rachel was a little too young for their counselling program, Barb kept the connection open. Over time, as their challenges deepened and the family splintered further, CVYS became a crucial anchor.

After this particularly turbulent period following the overdose—that included Rachel moving back in with Barb, increased drug use, and the complete breakdown of Rachel's relationship with her father—Barb returned to CVYS in desperation. What she found was not just support, but a lifeline.

CVYS counsellors provided one-on-one counselling for Barb and facilitated an innovative and deeply impactful

family program, called Youth & Family Connections.

Through regular sessions, Barb, Rachel, and even Barb's ex-husband and his partner began rebuilding communication. With their counsellor's guidance, they learned Nonviolent Communication (NVC) strategies—tools focused on empathy, validation, and understanding rather than blame and reaction.

"She would jump out of a moving car sometimes it was so bad," Barb recalls.

"When I stopped reacting and instead validated where she was coming from, things changed. Really, I changed. And as a result she responded to my change."

The family also benefited from group sessions with other parents navigating similar crises. Barb found solace and strength in the shared experiences and was inspired by their counsellor's creative methods—like turning tense email exchanges into enlightening word clouds to build mutual understanding.

Rachel continued weekly sessions through CVYS while Barb met separately with counsellors and in group sessions. Even after moving to Central Saanich, CVYS remained consistent in their support, helping them stay on track through the upheaval. The counselling also helped Barb engage with other resources, like YSTAR, and navigate support systems at Rachel's school.

Today, Rachel is on a better path. Now 16 and entering Grade 12, she's enrolled in a hairdressing program and sees a psychologist biweekly. Though she still faces challenges, her situation has improved dramatically.

"She's doing 110% better than last year," Barb says. "Through all the counselling, she's learned so much and she now knows what she needs to do. And so have I."

Barb credits CVYS with helping her shift how she parents—from a place of fear and conflict to one of compassion and communication. "Really, I changed. And as a result, she changed."

As Barb reflects on their journey, one thing is clear: "CVYS saved our family. I hope they keep running these programs, because there are so many families who need this kind of support. It was nothing but a great experience. Every family with issues should have access to something like this."

CVYS is deeply grateful to BC Civil Forfeiture Funding which made this program possible for Barb, Rachel, and numerous other families who have also moved from crisis to connection.



Building Bricks

for the Future

My name is Prevail, and I'll be entering my second year in pursuit of a Writing BFA at UVic. I was born in Canada, lived in California for 9 years, and returned to Canada in 2023 without formal job experience. In November of 2023, I attended Cowichan Valley Youth Services' Youth Employment Mentorship Program (YEMP).

During my six weeks at YEMP, I had the privilege of establishing integral relationships in Canada while learning job-finding essentials and securing six professional certificates (from First Aid to WHMIS). The YEMP facilitators and staff conducted mock interviews, gave feedback on cover letters, and created a comfortable environment for both contributing our perspectives and receiving constructive feedback. It was also thanks to YEMP staff that I was directly introduced to a local jobsite and soon-to-be manager.

While I benefited from prior volunteer experience, I entered Canada lacking connections or entry-level accreditation. Significantly, I had just experienced a season of great personal turmoil and had been relatively self-isolated up to that point, overwhelmed and depressed. My exchanges at YEMP helped reground my self concept and openness to formal education. This paved the way for my tenure at UVIC (an idea I had been initially resistant to). CVYS's counselling services also proved critically important in this process.

2023



Since the end of my season with YEMP, I worked about 10 months full time at a local Tim Hortons, received employee of the month twice, and was offered a supervisory position. I was then accepted into UVic as an undergrad, moved out alone to live in the city, and paid for my year's education out of pocket. The profound impression left by my Filipino supervisors inspired a first solo trip off the continent for 2-weeks in the Philippines.

Mentors and advisors at UVic introduced me to the world of ESL, leading to a life-changing stint of ESL volunteering. Thanks to the communicative, networking, and presentation skills I was lucky to hone at YEMP—I now hold a Japanese working holiday VISA, and am presently saving for my first year-long stay abroad, in pursuit of experiential treasures and complete cultural immersion.

YEMP was an important pivot point in my young adulthood because I was given the opportunity to address mangled thought patterns, entering the workforce lighter and more adaptable. I was armed with both practical occupational knowledge and instilled with a sense of optimism: that I could make positive gains through professional development in spite of my personal turbulence.

I am grateful for CVYS's continued caring. Always genuinely enthusiastic to introduce alums to new YEMP cohorts, checking up on the progress of our personal journeys, and ever a source of warmth—their diligent service to youth and gentle guidance during our early stumblings outside the nest are truly special. **I am proud to stand upon bricks laid under their care and am enthusiastic to test job-hunting skills once again while immersed in Japan.**



2025

Living with Purpose and Giving Back

For Chris Wilkinson, consistency isn't just a habit—it's a guiding philosophy. "How we do one thing is how we do all things," he says, a simple truth that shapes how he works, lives, and gives.

Chris describes life working in his seniors home care business during the pandemic as "intense and 24/7." Looking back, he was already yearning for a change. "The pandemic helped me reflect on where I really wanted to go with my life. Who I was showing up as was not aligned with what my spirit wanted. The uncertainty made me think more deeply about how I was spending my time, my energy, and my resources. I wanted to make sure I was showing up for the things and people I cared about most."

That desire led him to CVYS. He knew of their long-standing presence in the community, the quality of the individuals involved in the organization, and the difference they made in young people's lives. Becoming a monthly donor was an easy decision.

His contribution didn't end there. Drawing on his professional experience in coaching and personal development, as well as lessons from his own life, Chris began leading a workshop for youth in CVYS' Youth Employment Mentorship

Program called *Eight Things I'd Go Back and Tell My Younger Self*. The sessions cover leadership, resilience, mindset, self-awareness, and practical life skills—tools Chris wishes he'd had as a teenager.

"The workshop is about sharing ideas and experiences that can make the road ahead a little smoother," he explains. "It's not about telling anyone how to live—it's about offering possibilities and perspectives."



Chris' commitment to living with intention shows up in all areas of his life—whether he's coaching clients, spending time with his family, or volunteering in the community. It's the same principle that first drew him to CVYS: aligning daily actions with deeply held values.

Chris's story is a reminder that we all have something to offer. For some, it's financial support; for others, it's time, skills, or encouragement. When those acts are consistent, they create ripples that can reach much further than we ever imagine.

One person's consistency, as Chris has shown, can become another person's turning point—and sometimes, even their lifeline.

"I can't rewrite my own youth, but I can help today's youth write theirs."

- Chris Wilkinson

Interested in volunteering with local youth?

Do you have expertise you would like to share with young people who are eager to learn?

Contact us at office@cvyouth.ca to learn more!

Congratulations yEMP Graduates!

2024-25



Thank you

\$500,000+

Anonymous

\$50,000-\$99,999

Province of BC: Community
Prosperity Fund

\$25,000-\$49,999

BC Civil Forfeitures
Hylton McAlister
& Angela Atkins
Ladysmith Health Care Auxiliary

\$10,000-\$24,999

Anonymous
Island Ford Superstore
Island Savings Credit Union
Peninsula Co-op
Province of British Columbia
(Gaming)
SOSJ Victoria Commandery &
Times Colonist Christmas
Fund

\$5,000-\$9,999

James & Lois Cosh
The Home Depot Foundation of
Canada
Kroffat Brake & Muffler
Peninsula Co-op
Trans Care BC

\$2,500-\$4,999

Crofton Fire Fighters Social
Fund Charity
Duncan Lions Club

\$1,000-\$2,499

Alex Acton
Katharine Burr
Emerging Enterprises Inc.
Foxy Box
Michael Langtry
MNP Financial
Our Cowichan Community
Health Network
Panago Pizza Duncan
Rotary Club of Duncan
Royal Bank of Canada
Christopher Schultz
Western Financial Group
Communities Foundation

\$500-\$999

Anonymous
Beverly Corners Show &
Shine
Cobble Hill Mini Mall
Storage
Columbia River Carbonates
Elise Ketch
Bruce Leaman
Michael Lee
Lloyd Moulton LTD.

\$500-\$999 continued

Northwest Tank Lines Inc.
Pangea Logistics
QM Environmental
Sam Ratnasami
Southmountain Trading Inc.
Spartan Controls
TAC West Ltd.
Troop Impact Inc.
West Coast Pre Fab

Monthly Donors

Anonymous
Anonymous
Bonnie Cuthbertson
Identity Graphics
Matthew Huotari
Zoe Lauckner
Sarah Mullock
Pam Richmond
Patricia Seymour
Teri Young
Chris Wilkinson



**Thank you for
being Champions
for Youth!**

To learn how you can support youth in Cowichan, please visit cvyouth.ca or call 250-748-0232

for supporting youth & families in Cowichan





**COWICHAN
VALLEY
YOUTH
SERVICES**

Cowichan Valley Youth Services
294 Coronation Avenue
PO Box 743
Duncan, BC V9L 3Y1

office@cvyouth.ca
www.cvyouth.ca

Charity BN/Registration No:
118870989 RR 0001

**HERE FOR
YOUTH**

Since 1973



Ministry of
Children and
Development



**BRITISH
COLUMBIA**
The Best Place on Earth