COWICHAN VALLEY YOUTH SERVICES

2025-26 ANNUAL REPORT

Building Futures Together

Here for youth since 1973



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 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.

Dear friends,

The past year was one of growth, reflection, and strengthening at Cowichan Valley Youth Services.

Throughout 2025-26, we remained committed to serving the ever-evolving needs of youth and families across the Cowichan region. We listened carefully, remained responsive, and continued investing in supports that help young people and their families navigate challenges, build resilience, and create meaningful connections.

One significant milestone was the conclusion of the Youth Employment Mentorship Program (YEMP). While saying goodbye to a program that supported many young people was not easy, it provided an opportunity to listen deeply to participants, families, employers, and community partners. Those lessons helped shape RISE: Resilience, Independence, Skills, and Empowerment, a program co-designed with youth that aims to provide flexible, relationship-centred support as young people transition into adulthood.

We were also honoured to receive support through Health Canada's Youth Mental Health Fund, creating opportunities to strengthen our practice, develop our theory of change, and deepen our understanding of how meaningful change happens for youth and families.

As we undertook this work, we found ourselves returning to one question...

“WHAT HELPS YOUNG PEOPLE THRIVE?”

Across our work, the answer remained clear: relationships matter. Relationships with self, family, trusted adults, and community shape a young person's sense of belonging, resilience, and hope. At Cowichan Valley Youth Services, relationships are both the foundation and the outcome of our work.

This year, we supported more than 825 unique individuals across over 10 communities and travelled more than 20,000 kilometres to bring services directly to young people throughout the region. Behind every number is a story of connection: families strengthening communication, caregivers feeling more supported, and young people feeling less alone.

None of this would be possible without our incredible community of supporters - donors, partners, volunteers, and friends like you.

Thank you for believing, as we do, that strong relationships have the power to change lives.

With gratitude,



ZOE LAUCKNER
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



CHRIS SCHULTZ
BOARD CHAIR

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT MENTORSHIP

A LEGACY OF CONNECTION, CONFIDENCE & OPPORTUNITY







> “The support from staff and from the others in YEMP gave me a sense of belonging that I didn’t realize I was missing.”
>
> **- Chris, 2015 participant**

For more than 20 years, the Youth Employment Mentorship Program (YEMP) helped young people across the Cowichan Valley gain confidence, build workplace skills, and discover their potential. What began as an employment program grew into a community where youth found encouragement, connection, and a sense of belonging.

Over its lifetime, YEMP supported more than 400 young people, helping them prepare for employment, explore career pathways, develop life skills, and build the confidence needed to navigate adulthood. Along the way, the program fostered meaningful relationships between youth, employers, mentors, and community partners, creating opportunities that extended far beyond the workplace.

As community needs evolved, YEMP concluded in 2025-26 and transitioned into RISE, a new model designed to provide more flexible, individualized, and year-round support to young people. While the structure has changed, the values that defined YEMP continue to guide this next chapter.

The legacy of YEMP can be seen in the hundreds of youth who found their first job, built lasting friendships, discovered new strengths, and gained confidence in their future. It can be seen in the employers who opened their doors, the community partners who invested in young people, and the families who watched youth take important steps toward independence.

> "My life has improved in ways I never imagined. I feel like I've rediscovered myself and found a clear direction for my future."
>
> **- YEMP Alumni**

A LEGACY WORTH CELEBRATING

20+ YEARS OF IMPACT

Supporting generations of young people in the Cowichan Valley.

400+ YOUTH SERVED

Building skills, confidence, and pathways to employment.

STRONGER COMMUNITIES

Creating relationships between youth, employers, mentors, and community partners.

LASTING BELONGING

Providing a safe, supportive environment where young people could thrive.

As YEMP closes this chapter, we celebrate the thousands of hours of mentorship, the hundreds of success stories, and the lasting impact created over two decades of investing in young people. Its legacy lives on through every youth who discovered their potential and every opportunity that helped shape their future.

Supporting the Whole Family

When youth receive support, caregivers benefit too



For the past decade, Beth* has been rebuilding.

As a single parent, she navigated a difficult divorce, chronic health challenges, multiple major surgeries, and the day-to-day realities of raising two teenagers.

Through it all, she worked hard to create the kind of family environment she never had growing up: one where difficult conversations could happen openly and no one had to carry their struggles alone.

A few years ago, Max*, one of Beth's teens, disclosed a traumatic childhood experience that had been carried in silence for years.

As Max began processing what had happened and exploring their identity, Beth knew they needed support. What she didn't expect was how much support she would need herself.

When Max connected with Cowichan Valley Youth Services, Beth saw the impact almost immediately.

And Max didn't attend only because Beth wanted it – it became a vital part of his routine.

"He gets upset when he has to miss an appointment," she says.

**Name and identifying details have been changed to protect privacy.*

As a parent, watching that trusted relationship develop brought an enormous sense of relief. She knew Max had a safe adult to turn to, someone who could provide guidance, support, and care during a complicated chapter of their life.

The family was also supported in navigating gender-affirming care, accessing resources, and Beth was better able to understand what Max needed. Eventually, Beth realized she needed support too.

Feeling overwhelmed by the challenges her family was facing, she connected with CVYS for parent coaching.

"I feel so safe and validated," Beth says.

Having a dedicated space to talk, ask questions, and sort through the worries she carried as a parent made a tremendous difference. As someone who tends to replay concerns over and over in her mind, Beth found that being able to talk things through helped her gain perspective and move forward.

She also joined CVYS's Connect caregiver program, where she met other parents navigating similar challenges and realized she was not alone.

"I feel so safe and validated"

Over time, Beth's family has found greater stability and peace. She is the first to acknowledge that many supports contributed to that journey, including services accessed during and after her divorce, her own recovery and growth, and the resilience of her children. But she says having CVYS available for both her youth and herself has been an important part of that picture.

Today, Beth still worries about the challenges her teenagers may face, just as any parent would. The difference is that she no longer feels like she has to navigate those challenges alone.

For Beth, one of the greatest gifts CVYS provided was knowing that her teens had a safe place to turn, and that when she needed support herself, there was a place for her too.

Learn more about the support available to parents and caregivers of youth by visiting cvyouth.ca

Building A Future Worth Believing In

The Power of Consistent Support



*Name and identifying details have been changed to protect privacy.

Tess* arrived at the CVYS office with a cheerful smile and an “Iced Cap” in hand, wearing a pair of bright green platypus pajama pants.

Staff greeted her by name as she walked through the door, reflecting a relationship built over years. A self-described “nerd,” Tess loves drawing, comic books, and collecting fashion dolls. Today, she works two jobs and aspires to build a career helping others.

But when Tess first connected with CVYS at age 11, she was struggling in the aftermath of a family tragedy and a difficult transition to a new community.

A few years earlier, she had lost her grandmother, someone she described as her best friend, under tragic circumstances. The loss deeply affected Tess and her family and eventually led them to relocate to the Cowichan Valley.

Looking back, Tess remembers a young person who struggled to see a future for herself.

> **“I was very apathetic toward life. I didn’t even want to try to be happy. I didn’t see the point.”**

CVYS became a consistent presence in Tess’ life; a safe place where she could express herself, even when she felt like she wasn’t making progress.

As Tess grew older, support evolved alongside her needs. When family circumstances led to Tess moving out on her own at 17, CVYS showed up for her with connections to resources, and even helped her with practical needs like getting to appointments, grocery shopping, and doing her taxes.

One of the most significant milestones came through CVYS's Youth Employment Mentorship Program (YEMP). The program helped Tess build employment skills, obtain certificates, and secure a job at a local thrift store, where she still works today. Tess credits the program to helping her become confident in her skills and believe in her own worth.

Building on the success of her time in YEMP, Tess attended Vancouver Island University and obtained her Community Mental Health Certificate. She hopes to return to university to pursue a degree in social work so she can explore a future career of helping others.

Today, Tess sees a direct connection between the support she received and the future she hopes to create.

"CVYS helped me feel like I could really be who I am on the inside, and that I didn't have to hide or pretend, or be embarrassed."

OUR IMPACT

Together, we're creating brighter futures for youth and families.

825
PEOPLE SERVED

13,500+
HOURS OF SERVICE

214
GROUP PARTICIPANTS

10+
COMMUNITIES SUPPORTED

20,000+
OUTREACH KILOMETRES TRAVELLED

119
GROUP OPPORTUNITIES



"Before coming to Cowichan Valley Youth Services, I felt like I was facing everything on my own. Having someone believe in me helped me start believing in myself.

Thank You for investing in today's youth and Cowichan's future

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Behind every young person is a community that says:
"You matter"














Thank you to the donors, businesses, foundations, service clubs, and community members that make it possible for CVYS to be there when young people need us.

Thank you for being Champions for Youth

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

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