

# **YOUTH AND ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION PROGRAM**

## **PROGRESS REPORT**

For the Period of April 1, 2008 to March 31, 2009  
Completed on June 7, 2009

PROGRAM FUNDED BY:

**MINISTRY OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY DEVELOPMENT**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Youth and Ecological Restoration Program (YER) has been operating in the Comox Valley for the past five years. Since its inception in July 2004 to March 2009, one hundred and twenty six youth have participated in the program. The YER mission is to help vulnerable youth build healthy community relationships with both the human and natural worlds. Through restoring local watersheds with community members, the youth gain a sense of worth, belonging and place.

YER is a twenty-hour work experience and training program that provides support, guidance and mentoring for youth who are having challenges with school, work and community situations. Sometimes called youth at risk or vulnerable youth, a more positive term of reference might be high potential youth. Helping youth to learn their highest potential and know themselves as productive, caring community members is to leave the world a better place.

YER has directly received Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) funding since April 2006. During the April 2008 to March 2009 fiscal year, the program had twenty-six youth participants. March 2009 also brought to a close Vancouver Foundation funding that supported the creation of YER, Phase Two (YERII). This report documents YERI results from April 1, 2008 to March 31, 2009 and includes a summary of YERII activities.

## 2. PROGRESS AND OUTCOMES

YER continued to provide a high quality service for high potential youth in the Comox Valley during the 2008/2009 fiscal year. Progress and outcome details are given below on the number of youth participants in the program for this past fiscal year, youth quotes illustrating each of the five main YER goals, a community celebration and support update, and a YER II summary.

### **April 2008 to March 2009 Youth Participants**

Twenty-six youth participated in YER from April 1, 2008 to March 31, 2009 (Table 1). The youth were twelve to eighteen years old; eight were girls and eighteen were boys. Twenty-four youth completed the program and two did not complete (Table 1a). The four organizations that referred youth to YER were: MCFD (12), Comox Valley Alternate Schools (12), Grunberg Patterson Counseling (1) and Community Living BC (1) (Table 1b). The latter two were new referral places; Grunberg Patterson Counseling is a community mental health professional and Community Living BC provides services to people with developmental disabilities.

Each youth was asked about their involvement with other Comox Valley youth services to understand broader community connections. Out of the twenty-six youth, twenty-three had connections to MCFD, ten with The Linc (youth resource centre), nine with John Howard

Society, and two with Comox Valley Boys and Girls Club (Table 1c).

The twenty-six youth conducted ecological work with eleven environmental and community organizations (Table 1d). The six main groups that continue to be especially supportive of YER and benefit from ecological services YER provides are: Tsolum River Restoration Society, Oyster River Enhancement Society, Millard/Piercy Watershed Stewards, Fanny Bay Enhancement Society, Mountaineer Avian Rescue Society, and Morrison Creek Streamkeepers.

Twenty-four youth completed YER with an oral presentation to a community group and gave speeches at fourteen different locations (Table 1e). Ten were at elementary, middle, alternate, and post secondary schools; two were at Glacier View Lodge; one at a MCFD team meeting; one at an alternative living complex; one at Kiwanis Lodge; one at a day care centre; one at a youth religious organization; and one at the YER community celebration. Twenty youth received fifty dollars, and four youth completed YER with community service hour contributions.

### **YER Goals and Youth Quotes**

The five main YER goals are: building healthy community relationships; gaining valuable work experience; improving ecological knowledge; increasing personal and social skills; and enhancing communication skills. Each youth participant is interviewed to document what they are learning and how the program is being effective. The interviews are analyzed to determine each youth's learning accomplishments and are summarized into percentages of knowledge gained (Table 2).

The most learning occurred in ecological knowledge and community relationships, and the least in work experience (Table 2). Personal, social and communication skill development was high, with the majority of youth gaining substantial knowledge in these areas. Quotes are given below to illustrate each of the five goals in the words of the youth participants.

### **GOAL # 1: BUILDING HEALTHY COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS**

Cooperation, Support and Compassion; Positive Role Models and Mentoring; Increased Community Capacity and Caring

- I learned fish fences are hard to build alone, teamwork makes it easier. Getting stuff accomplished. Pretty cool, meeting people and doing stuff for the community, it was fun. *(Participant # 103)*
- It was awesome, I really like John. Just the way he acted, he was really easy going. He just stood back and let me do it and then he helped me when I needed it. Other people when I work with them they just get in there and I end up getting cut off. *(Participant # 108)*
- And the fourth time I went she picked me up and we were going to walk Morrison Creek and this car hit a small Hermit Thrush and I held it and I felt its heart going down and we went just past here and it died. So we have to have a moment of silence OK? *(Participant # 113)*

### **GOAL # 2: GAINING VALUED WORK EXPERIENCE**

Data Collection Methods; Working with Tools; Worksite Safety; Job Variety

- But it was not all fun and games counting fish, safety always comes first on the river; the strong current and deep water posed a hazard and reminded me to always be mindful of my surroundings and always to operate in a safe manner. *(Participant # 104)*

- The variety was good, it was all different things, and some things were harder. Some of it was hard to do and some things I didn't really want to, but it was good I did. The thing where I scooped the fish out of the water. When I pushed myself to do things, I learned it was good. *(Participant # 120)*
- On the first day of working we took temperatures and water quality of two streams that connect to the Tsolum River. Then the information we collected, we typed into a computer. I learned that some people do this for a living. I liked learning about everyone else's jobs and learning about what they do. *(Participant # 126)*

### **GOAL # 3: IMPROVING ECOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE**

Ecosystem Cycles and Interconnections; Identification Techniques for Plants, Animals and Fish; Understanding Environmental Impacts

- I learned that all trees, dead or alive have a huge part in the forest. The dead fallen trees provide shelter for some species of animals and other trees grow from it, these are called nurse logs. *(Participant # 101)*
- It takes more than just hatcheries to restore salmon. We also need to restore the habitat and reverse habitat loss. It means that we need to clean up habitat and stop deforestation near the fish rearing streams. That is why we must protect the forest to protect the river and protect the river to protect the forest. *(Participant # 115)*
- Salmon are the backbone of the BC coast. I learned that if the salmon dies a lot of other things could die, like a big stack of stones and if you pull out the salmon stone all the rest will fall. *(Participant # 117)*

### **GOAL # 4: INCREASING PERSONAL AND SOCIAL SKILLS**

Meaningful Participation and Empowerment; Commitment, Respect and Responsibility; Patience and Endurance; Accomplishment, Self-esteem and Success

- I learned that when you have to do something it's important to stick to it or else you let people down or ruin it and you have to make new plans and working is a responsibility. *(Participant # 106)*
- I learned that you have to do things yourself, you have to be independent. No one is going to do it for you all the time and you have to figure it out for yourself. *(Participant # 109)*
- I found this experience rewarding in the sense that I feel I have been helpful and gained confidence and also can do anything I set my mind to. I feel like a leader in my community. *(Participant # 122)*
- I am glad I took part of this program because it has made me a more confident person and would recommend it to anyone who wishes to help the environment or just wants to build their social skills. *(Participant # 123)*

### **GOAL # 5: ENHANCING COMMUNICATION SKILLS**

Public Speaking and Education; Active Listening and Engagement; Interpersonal Relationships

- It was good, no one gave me a hard time, I didn't get yelled at. Because I've worked with people that are nice at first, then they criticize you about everything. Everything you do you have to do better. *(Participant # 111)*
- I've learned to improvise when I have a problem and stuff in a better way than I used to. I've

- learned better listening skills, picking up better on stuff than I used to. (*Participant # 121*)
- I have better communication skills with everyone and have the experience of interacting with different sorts of people. I know that I have gained a lot of confidence from this and being able to speak in front of groups easier. (*Participant # 125*)

### **Community Support and Celebration**

Community support for YER continues to increase every year, as of March 31, 2009 the total number reached eighty-three. This includes eight referral agencies, twenty-eight groups that had environmental work completed, and forty-seven places where youth gave their oral presentations. YER has done much bridging work in the Comox Valley community; this is clearly demonstrated by the large number of groups with which the youth have interacted. Having support from a broad spectrum of our community is an important component of helping high potential youth.

The annual YER community celebration in March 2009 was attended by twenty-five people. We had the traditional talking circle where people shared their nature experiences and one youth did a presentation, which was followed by sharing pizza, pop, coffee and homemade celebration cake. A good discussion was initiated at the gathering about terminology we use to define youth who fit into YER. This prompted a celebration follow-up newspaper article written in collaboration with MCFD employees to give a clearer description of youth referrals. The annual YER celebration is a wonderful opportunity to honour our youth.

### **Youth and Ecological Restoration Program Phase II (YERII)**

YERII has been beneficial for the youth as a follow up to the mentoring and caring that they experience in YERI. YERII accomplishments through Vancouver Foundation (VF), Robert and Florence Filberg Fund include: ten youth completed YERII; twelve youth interviewed for longer-term evaluation of YER; YER paper presented at Community-University Partnerships conference [www.cuexpo08.ca/program/abstracts/youthcommunityrelationships.pdf](http://www.cuexpo08.ca/program/abstracts/youthcommunityrelationships.pdf); and creation of the YER website ([www.youthecology.ca](http://www.youthecology.ca)).

YERII youth participants advanced their communication, cooperation and personal confidence skills, even surprising themselves sometimes as they strived to reach the goals before them. YERI interviewees stated that involvement in the program helped them to feel better about themselves by making positive contributions in our community. YERII has clearly proven its significance for the vulnerable youth in the Comox Valley. This extension of the program as a pilot project has now been completed with a VF report (which is available on request).

### **Program Promotion**

Promoting YER occurs through articles and presentations during the year. This year newspaper articles included: May 28, 2008 article “Important work being done: Wendy Kotilla” written by Comox Valley Record staff reporter Colleen Dane; Comox Valley Echo and record articles to advertise a BC Rivers Day walk in September 2008; and YER celebration articles in both local papers in March 2009. Presentations were made at MCFD Youth mental health and over 12 Youth team meetings in January 2009; one youth participant did a presentation at Senior Alternate and Independent Learning alternate schools in October 2008.

## **3. BUDGET UPDATE**

The final budget for YER from April 1, 2008 to March 31, 2009 was \$30,285.38 (Table 3a). Funds were provided by MCFD in the amount of \$30,000.00 and \$242.61 in interest was gained from investing the principal in a term deposit. Funds in the amount of \$15.78 remained in the account at the end of the fiscal year. Expense items are listed below and presented in Table 3a. Monthly expenditures are presented in Table 3b.

- **Professional fees** included fees, administration costs and program evaluation.
- **Honouraria** for youth participants was calculated at \$50 for 21 youth participants.
- **Equipment** purchased for YER operation was several pairs of chest waders.
- **Transportation** costs were calculated at \$2944.69.
- **Supplies** included office, lunch costs and general materials required for YER work.
- **Miscellaneous** expenses included program insurance; bank charges; and food items and room rental for the YER celebration.
- **In-kind Contributions** were given by environmental organizations providing training and work tools and donations for the YER celebration.

#### 4. SUMMARY

YER connects high potential youth to the natural world and human community. Through being involved with meaningful environmental work and working with community members, they feel empowered and valued. Over the past five years, YER has worked with one hundred and twenty-six youth in the Comox Valley community. In the April 2008 to March 2009 fiscal year, YER had twenty-six youth participate in the program; twenty-four completed and two did not complete the program.

Community organizations that support YER through referring youth, having environmental work done and being given presentations by the youth has now reached eighty-three. The different kinds of community groups that support the program is extensive and includes: environmental, seniors, youth, government, school, mental health, local businesses, service clubs and religious groups. YER youth continue to learn from the diversity of supportive groups that they have opportunities to connect with our community.

YERII provides an important continuation of learning for the youth who have completed the first phase of the program. It has also given longer term monitoring of the affects that the program has had on their lives, which has been significant for most of them. Funding opportunities have not yet been found to continue this extension of services for youth involved with the program.

It has been five years since YER was initiated and it has grown to become a recognized and viable service for high potential youth in the Comox Valley community. MCFD continues to grant YER with funds to keep the basic program operating so that our youth can learn to have more self respect and confidence. Helping them to gain personal, social and communication skills is a positive contribution to the future health of our community.

<b>TABLE 1: YOUTH AND ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION PROGRAM (YER)</b>	
<b>YOUTH PARTICIPANT SUMMARY TABLE FOR APRIL 1, 2008 TO MARCH 31, 2009.</b>	
YER is a 20-hour work experience/training program for Comox Valley high potential youth funded by BC,	
Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD). Youth were given a number to protect their	
anonymity. There were 26 youth participants (Numbers 101-126); 8 girls and 18 boys; ages 12 to 18.	
<b>Table 1a: YER COMPLETION</b>	<b>YOUTH</b>
<b>YER completion required finishing 20 hours and giving a community presentation.</b>	<b>TOTALS</b>
Total Complete: Participant # 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 125, 126	24
Total Incomplete: # 112, 124	2
<b>TOTAL 490 WORK EXPERIENCE HOURS</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Table 1b: YOUTH ORGANIZATION REFERRALS</b>	
<b>Youth participants were referred by four agencies in the Comox Valley.</b>	
MCFD: # 101, 102, 103, 104, 106, 109, 111, 112, 119, 123, 124, 125	12
Probation Services 101, 102, 123, 124 ; Parent Teen Mediation 106, 109	
Mental Health Team 103, 104, 111, 112, 119 ; Over Twelve Team 125	
Comox Valley School District: # 105, 107, 108, 110, 113, 114, 117, 118, 120, 121, 122, 126	12
Sandwich Alternate 108, 110, 113, 118 ; Senior Alternate 107	
Independent Learning 121, 122, 126 ; Contract Tutoring 105, 114, 117	





Comox Valley Project Watershed Society: # 118	1
World Community Development Education Society: # 102	1
<b>TOTAL 11 ENVIRONMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS</b>	
<b>Table 1e: COMMUNITY PRESENTATIONS</b>	
<b>Attended by a total of 391 community members.</b>	
Comox Valley Alternate Schools: 102, 103, 104, 105, 107, 110, 113, 117, 118, 123	10
Sandwich # 110, 113, 118 ; Senior Alternate # 102, 107	
Independent Learning # 104, 123 ; Contract Tutoring 103, 105, 117	
Glacier View Lodge: # 101, 116	2
MCFD, Over Twelve Team: # 106	1
Creekside Commons: # 108	1
G P Vanier Senior Secondary School, Grade 8 Science Class: # 115	1
Youth and Ecological Restoration Community Celebration: # 125	1
Merry Andrew Day Care: # 126	1
Fanny Bay Enhancement Society: # 114	1
Courtenay Elementary School, Grade 5 and 6: # 120	1
Courtenay Elementary School, Grade 3 and 4: # 122	1
Kiwanis Lodge: # 111	1
Lake Trail Middle School, Grade 8 and 9 Science Class: # 109	1
Aspen Park Elementary School, Grade 3 and 4: # 119	1
Youth for Christ: # 121	1
<b>TOTAL 17 COMMUNITY PRESENTATION LOCATIONS</b>	<b>24</b>

<b>TABLE 2: YOUTH AND ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION PROJECT (YER)</b>	
<b>GOAL SUMMARY TABLE FOR OF APRIL 1, 2008 TO MARCH 31, 2009.</b>	
Funded by BC, Ministry of Children and Family Development, 26 Comox Valley high potential youth were involved with YER in 2008/2009. All participants were given a number (101-126)	
to protect their anonymity and interviewed to document what they learned. Interview analysis	
was conducted to verify youth's learning accomplishments and categorized by percentages.	
Youth participant # 112 and 124 did not complete and 24 youth completed YER.	
<b>GOAL #1: BUILDING HEALTHY COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS</b>	
Cooperation, Support and Compassion; Positive Role Models and Mentoring;	
Increased Community Capacity and Caring.	
100%: # 104, 106, 108, 116, 120	5
75%: # 102, 103, 105, 107, 109, 110, 113, 114, 115, 117, 118, 119, 122, 123, 125, 126	16
50%: # 101, 111, 121	3
25%:	0
	24
<b>GOAL #2: GAINING VALUED WORK EXPERIENCE</b>	
Data Collection Methods; Working with Tools; Worksite Safety; and Job Variety.	
100%:	0
75%: # 104, 114	2
50%: # 102, 103, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 116, 117, 120, 122, 123, 126	13
25%: # 101, 105, 111, 112, 115, 118, 119, 121, 125	9
	24
<b>GOAL # 3: IMPROVING ECOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE</b>	

Ecosystem Cycles and Interconnections; Identification Techniques for Plants, Animals and Fish; Understanding Environmental Impacts.	
100%: # 104, 106, 114, 117, 120, 125	6
75%: # 101, 102, 103, 105, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 115, 116, 118, 119, 121, 122, 123, 126	17
50%: # 112	1
25%:	0
	24
<b>GOAL #4: INCREASING PERSONAL AND SOCIAL SKILLS</b>	
Meaningful Participation and Empowerment; Commitment, Respect and Responsibility; Patience and Endurance; Accomplishment, Self-esteem and Success.	
100%: # 106, 109, 122, 125, 126	5
75%: # 102, 104, 107, 108, 110, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 121, 123	15
50%: # 101, 103, 105, 111	4
25%:	0
	24
<b>GOAL #5: ENHANCING COMMUNICATION SKILLS</b>	
Public Speaking and Education; Active Listening and Engagement; Interpersonal Relationships.	
100%:	0
75%: # 102, 103, 104, 107, 108, 109, 116, 120, 121, 122, 123, 125, 126	13
50%: # 101, 105, 106, 110, 111, 113, 114, 115, 117, 118, 119	11
25%:	0
	24

**TABLE 3: YOUTH AND ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION PROGRAM (YER)  
BUDGET TABLE FOR APRIL 1, 2008 TO MAR 31, 2009.**

Expenses, income and in kind contributions required to conduct work experience and training program for high potential youth in the Comox Valley. YER 2008/2009 funding was provided by BC Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD).

Expense Item	Expenses	Income	In Kind Contributions
Program Delivery	\$20,600.00	MCFD \$30,000.00	Training \$3,000.00
Administration	\$2,000.00	07/08 Account \$58.55	
Evaluation	\$2,000.00	08/09 Interest \$242.61	
Honouraria	\$1,050.00		
Equipment	\$457.59		
Mileage	\$2944.69		
Supplies	\$852.01		Work Tools \$300.00
Other	\$381.09		Celebration \$250.00
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>\$30,285.38</b>	<b>\$30,301.16</b>	<b>\$3,550.00</b>

	09/10 Account \$15.78	
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**TABLE 4: YOUTH AND ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION PROJECT (YER)  
MONTHLY EXPENDITURES FOR APRIL 1, 2008 TO MAR 31, 2009.**

Month	Total	Fees	Honour	Mileage	Equip.	Supplies	Misc.
Apr/08	3,549.59	3,000.00	50.00	288.45		71.29	139.85
May/08	4,346.81	3,840.00	100.00	347.85		48.34	10.62
June/08	3,035.55	2,400.00	250.00	304.78		69.38	11.39
July/08	1,107.52	960.00		122.99		16.22	8.31
Aug/08	345.62	240.00	50.00	29.89		16.65	9.08
Sept/08	2,331.58	1,920.00		272.44		131.60	7.54
Oct/08	4,549.40	3,600.00	200.00	659.54		80.78	9.08
Nov/08	4,500.67	3,360.00	150.00	419.93	457.59	102.53	10.62
Dec/08	1,340.91	960.00	150.00	92.61		125.37	12.93
Jan/09	784.91	720.00		18.62		10.29	36.00
Feb/09	2,439.53	2,160.00		231.28		35.33	12.92
Mar/09	1,953.29	1,440.00	100.00	156.31		144.23	112.75
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>30,285.38</b>	<b>24,600.00</b>	<b>1,050.00</b>	<b>2,944.69</b>	<b>457.59</b>	<b>825.01</b>	<b>381.09</b>