

Career and Employment Information for Youth in the West Kootenay Secondary Schools, Selkirk College and Youth Centres

Over the past 4 months, nine interviews were conducted with teachers, guidance counsellors, work experience coordinators and youth centre staff to find out “Who’s Doing What for Youth” in the region. The following is a brief synopsis of the research findings.

Secondary Schools

- Different schools have distinct approaches to career and personal planning (CAPP), work experience and specialized vocational courses
- Many schools offer career choice and life skills computer programs such as “Career Explorer” and “Choices”
- Schools in Trail and Rossland offer “Navigator”, a self-directed program where students work with a teacher or mentor on an area of interest
- Specialized courses offered in schools in the region include forestry, environmental studies, adventure tourism, value-added wood and multi-media
- Some schools address gender and other equity issues in CAPP courses. This may include topics such as employment standards, rights and responsibilities, safety, harassment and confidentiality.
- Some schools have career related events though there is debate about their usefulness
- Most schools address equity primarily by supporting students’ choices and encouraging students to pursue their passions. Innovative examples include:
 - Subsidized travel provided for girl doing work experience on a cattle farm in Southern Saskatchewan
 - 9 girls being sent to Gulf Islands Film School to learn about technology and film
 - Team of students working with companies on mine site reclamation
 - Forestry Conference held at Selkirk College every 2-3 years with “Chicks in the Sticks” workshop
 - The West Kootenay Transitions Program linked with Selkirk College. One girl studying golf course management
 - Pilot project for electronic internships
 - 50:50 male-female participation in apprenticeship program in one school e.g. girl apprenticing to be a security alarm installer
 - Girl doing work experience for 10 weeks with CBC in Winnipeg. School attitude is “if we can arrange it, we do it”.

Selkirk College

- Provides one-on-one counselling, career choice and study skills development services as well as classroom visits and training assistance, upon request
- Utilizes interest inventories, discussion and referrals
- Formally supports “non-traditional” choices through the family and career counsellor services, Human Rights Education Coordinator and academic appeal procedures

Youth Centres¹

- Provide employment services to youth and employers e.g. take orders from employers and try to fill them
- Provide resume writing training, job search planning and self-employment assessment
- Educate youth and employers about labour standards and employee relations
- Host career fairs for secondary and junior high students and out-of-school youth
- Organize and promote mentoring and role modelling opportunities
- Promote youth as a resource and promote gender equity in job availability
- Informally discuss equity with prospective Summer Career Placement employers

Needs Identified

- An updated and updatable role model directory for non-traditional occupations
- Include people willing to be mentors and/or work experience hosts
- Broaden the “non-traditional” focus to include unusual fields (for anyone), innovative approaches to balancing work and lifestyle, and economic growth areas such as eco-tourism and avalanche guides.
- Provide a list of potential classroom speakers with specific topics of expertise
- Provide an introduction to one speaker to help establish the relationship.
- In smaller communities and rural areas, there needs to be access to career perspectives from outside the community. This means finding role models open to tele-mentoring, on-line correspondence and phone interviews.
- Specifically for youth centres: provide information on employment equity training opportunities, provide pamphlets or posters with relevant information, provide the centres with copies of tools for employers

Desirable Qualities in a Secondary School Role Model or Mentor

- Loves young people and relates well to high school aged youth
- Accepts young people where they are at in terms of language, appearance and attitudes
- Loves their work, communicates in a passionate way and has an approach of turning obstacles into challenges
- Is willing to reveal a bit of themselves e.g. will talk about experiences and feelings about those experiences
- Is encouraging, positive and realistic
- Feels that both she/he and the young people will benefit from the exchange
- Can help students articulate a goal, can see several paths to a goal or connect skills and ability to certain jobs or careers
- Is aware of post secondary and workplace expectations

¹ Not all youth centres provide the same services. This list is based on the Nelson Youth Centre. There are 4 or 5 youth centres in the West Kootenay at this time.