

Welco**ME** Youth Action Team

Summary of 2025
Youth Engagements



Prepared by BUNYAAD Public Affairs and McCreary Centre Society for the Youth-Friendly North Shore initiative.

The initiative's work is led by the District of North Vancouver in collaboration with the City of North Vancouver, District of West Vancouver, Squamish Nation, and Tsleil-Waututh Nation.

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Public Safety
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Skwxwú7mesh
Úxwumixw
Squamish Nation



Tsleil-Waututh Nation
PEOPLE OF THE INLET



We respectfully acknowledge the original Peoples of the lands and waters that situate and surround us wherever we work. We honour the səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh), Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish), and xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), on whose territories we work, play and live. We extend our gratitude and raise up their ongoing relationship with land they have stewarded since time immemorial. As well, we recognize Métis Nation BC, Inuit and urban Indigenous Peoples who have deeply rooted relationships with the land we all call home.

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Table of Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	5
INTRODUCTION	7
WHERE YOUTH GO ON THE NORTH SHORE AND WHY	10
YOUTH-PREFERRED TIME FOR ACTIVITIES	12
QUALITIES OF A YOUTH-FRIENDLY SPACE OR PROGRAM	13
KEY AREAS OF CONCERN	19
YOUTH CENTRE DESIGNS	24
RECOMMENDATIONS FROM YOUTH	28
CONCLUSION	33

Executive Summary

The WelcoME Youth Action Team (YAT) is a youth engagement initiative delivered as part of the Youth-Friendly North Shore (YFNS) project. YFNS is a three-year (2023–2026) strategy to foster safe, connected, and inclusive communities for youth on the North Shore. Led by BUNYAAD Public Affairs, WelcoME YAT is delivered in partnership with McCreary Centre Society. The second year of the WelcoME YAT engaged 49 youth from across the Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Nations, North Vancouver, and West Vancouver in a series of sessions aimed at identifying what makes a space or program youth-friendly, the barriers youth face to increase belonging and participation, and suggestions to reduce these barriers.

Echoing the feedback of the first WelcoME YAT (2024 Summary Report available [here](#)), youth in 2025 continued to articulate a strong desire for connection to peers, supportive adults, and to their communities. Many positive features of North Shore spaces and programs were identified. Overall, youth on the North Shore feel a sense of safety and belonging. They prefer locations such as Park Royal, Lonsdale Quay and the City Library for their unstructured activities (e.g., browsing shops) and free/low-cost events (e.g., summer and winter events, markets) for youth to socialize with other youth. For participation in social and other unstructured activities, youth prefer spaces to be available through the later evening (i.e., 7 p.m. to midnight), especially on Friday and Saturday nights, and described having few options for safe spaces and activities during later evening hours.

Youth who went to public libraries most commonly did so to study in a quiet environment where they could access charger outlets, free Wi-Fi, and quiet workstations. Some youth lacked such spaces and resources at home and preferred a library's teen-only area where they feel more welcome. Other places youth stated they enjoyed spending time included: local skate parks (e.g., Mahon Skatepark); public libraries (e.g., North Vancouver City Library); and community centres that were nearby to their homes and had amenities they wanted, like a swimming pool (e.g., Delbrook Community Centre). Youth from Tsleil-Waututh Nation identified the local 7-Eleven, as well as the youth open gym and drop-in programs facilitated by a local youth worker as spaces they visited.

However, youth also shared concerns around affordability, limited access to transit, negative attitudes from adults, and a lack of dedicated and inclusive youth spaces or programs. Key areas of concern for the YAT included negative assumptions and prejudice about youth they experienced from adults in the community; the prohibitive cost of participation in youth programs on the North Shore; and a lack of affordable, accessible, and safe transit. Youth also identified swimming as an activity for positive health and well-being, but often felt unsafe at local pools during public swim times.

Youth expressed awareness and concerns regarding hostile (exclusionary and restrictive) architecture and other design features aimed at reducing

loitering simultaneously created barriers for them to socialize. Additionally, youth who skateboard noted stigma and barriers to participating in their chosen activity, even when following rules and using designated spaces.

Indigenous youth living on reserve described a shortage of opportunities to participate in unstructured programs within their own communities, and barriers to participating in programs off-reserve, such as the cost of transit, commuting far distances, and a preference for programs and spaces that were culturally appropriate.

Reflecting the recommendations of the 2024 YAT, youth identified clear criteria for what makes a space feel youth-friendly, including accessible and clean facilities; varied, inclusive, and comfortable design; activities designed by and for youth; and the presence of respectful, supportive adults. The YAT also expressed a desire for continued meaningful input into the programs and services intended to support them.

The YAT also offered their suggestions for creating more youth-friendly programs, spaces, and communications. These include: free transit for youth; creating youth-only program times and spaces; improving access to information about programs and services; and launching education and awareness campaigns to challenge negative stereotypes of youth. In addition, Indigenous youth recommended increasing the unstructured programming provided to them, and scheduling these programs for the late evening when they may have nothing else to do.

Members of the WelcoME YAT showed a clear interest in contributing to community planning and decision-making, especially for decisions that affect youth. Their insights and ideas offer tangible and systemic strategies to make the North Shore a more welcoming and inclusive place for all youth.

Introduction

Youth-Friendly North Shore (YFNS) is a three-year initiative to build healthy communities where youth thrive, reducing the risk of involvement in gang or organized criminal activities. Through targeted prevention and intervention activities, YFNS aims to reduce risk factors, such as negative influences, limited access to positive role models, and a lack of community attachment. Simultaneously, YFNS seeks to enhance protective factors, such as social belonging and access to social, recreational, and cultural services. The focus of YFNS is on (1) creating youth-friendly spaces by engaging youth and (2) improving the system of care for youth across the North Shore. To learn more about the initiative, visit the YFNS webpage [here](#).

McCreary Centre Society (McCreary) was contracted to lead youth engagement activities for the project, supporting the WelcoME Youth Action Team (YAT) from 2023–26. The WelcoME YAT are diverse youth from the North Shore who are interested in making community spaces more welcoming for youth. The first year of the YAT developed a tool to evaluate the youth-friendliness of community spaces and programs, and the second year built on the discussion to provide a new wave of perspectives.

YAT's second year engaged 49 youth and involved two separate groups meeting weekly for three weeks from January to March 2025. One group met in North Vancouver and the other in West Vancouver. A separate day-long session was held with a group of youth from the Tsleil-Waututh Nation. Combined, the various sessions allowed for more localized input, reduced transportation barriers, and engaged those who may not have the capacity for longer commitments.

Throughout the sessions, youth shared their insights into current practices and spaces that impact them. They described their hopes for a North Shore that truly welcomes youth and their observations ranged from specific improvements to transit, libraries, and recreation centres, to broader cultural shifts around how adults engage with youth in public.

This report builds on the discussions and recommendations of the first WelcoME YAT (2024 Summary Report available [here](#)). It highlights the characteristics of a space or program that were considered youth-friendly, and explores current barriers to a youth-friendly community. The report concludes with an overview of youth recommendations for how the North Shore could support a greater sense of belonging, safety, and connection for themselves and their peers.

WelcoME YAT Participants

Participants were recruited through schools, community partners, and other local outreach, including through the YFNS Community of Practice. Each participant received an honorarium for their time.

A total of forty-nine youth between the ages of 12 to 18 participated in three WelcoME YAT groups, and included youth from the Squamish Nation, Tsleil-Waututh Nation, North Vancouver, and West Vancouver. The groups reflected diverse gender identities, cultural backgrounds, and lived experiences. Quotes from these participants and images of activity materials are included throughout the report.

Session Design

Two groups met for a series of three, 90-minute sessions over a three-week period. A third group met for four hours over a single day. Each session included a variety of small and large group discussion, reflection exercises, and interactive tools and activities.

While discussions and activities were adapted for the diversity of each group, sessions followed a similar format:

- Identifying where youth feel welcome and unwelcome in the community, and what contributes to feeling that way;
- Identifying qualities of those spaces or programs that feel welcoming and friendly for youth;
- Evaluating facilitators and barriers youth experience in specific spaces;
- Discussing ways the North Shore could be more youth-friendly, and developing recommendations for improving youth spaces and programs; and
- Designing their ideal youth space.

Limitations

The WelcoME YAT included participants with diverse life experiences from different geographic regions of the North Shore. However, the YAT's experiences may not be representative of the experiences of all youth, and their access to all community spaces, on the North Shore.

Youth-only spaces

- Study spaces
- Places for youth to hang out
 - Youth pool tables
 - Open gym for youth
- Medical & mental health support
 - Sound proofed spaces
- Youth exercise spaces (e.g., basketball court, martial arts, dance studio)
- Escape rooms
- Youth markets
- Covers over benches
- Youth arcade & bowling

Lounge spaces (safe/ac/heated/activities)

Gym passes for teens

Youth-only programs & activities

- Youth games nights
- Sports tournaments (including dance)
 - Video game tournaments
- Youth gallery event (showcasing art)
- Book clubs
- Fitness training programs
- Art programs for beginners
- Music lessons
- Cooking lessons
- Debate programs
- Free movie night
 - Youth self-defense lessons
 - Tours of youth spaces
- Peer tutoring club
- Mentorship programs
- Cultural Celebration Events
- Potluck fundraising event
- Career guidance/education event
- Field trips
- Laser tag

Creative programs for youth (cost free/not expensive)

Online youth spaces (e.g., websites, social media)

- App or website showing live bus times
- Free digital bus pass for youth
- North Shore group chats or IG/TikTok accounts for specific interests
- AI room
- Teaching cooking skills online
- Online/social media advertising for youth public services
- More public computers
- Counselling websites for youth
- North Shore social media account for youth

Navigating & wayfinding

- Newsletter showing all youth opportunities
- Monthly/bi-monthly meetings at school promoting youth programs and events
- School announcements about different youth places
- Free transportation for youth under 19
- More streetlights
- Website with short & clear information about what's available for youth on the North Shore
- Ad campaign to promote youth spaces

Free transit for youths

Where Youth Go on the North Shore and Why

Each of the 2025 YAT meetings began with a discussion of the spaces youth frequent, and what influenced their decision to go to those places.

Across all groups, several common gathering places on the North Shore were mentioned. Park Royal Shopping Centre, the Lonsdale Quay, and friends' houses were consistently identified as places youth across the North Shore frequented.

Other places youth stated they enjoyed spending time included: local skate parks (e.g., Mahon Skatepark); public libraries (e.g., North Vancouver City Library); and community centres that were near their homes and had amenities they wanted, like a swimming pool (e.g., Delbrook Community Centre). Youth from the Tsleil-Waututh Nation identified the local 7-Eleven, as well as the youth open gym and drop-in programs facilitated by a local youth worker as spaces they visited.

Most youth typically kept to the North Shore, describing a sense of safety and convenience of staying local. For those who frequented places elsewhere, they most commonly went to Vancouver for specific stores, special events, or to visit the Seawall.

A small minority of youth described going to places on the North Shore with parents or guardians to do shopping or run other errands but reported that they did not go out in the community socially. Instead, they stayed home and engaged in activities like video games or streaming TV or movies. These youth were mostly younger (under age 14) and often lacked information about available programs and activities, transportation to get to or from, and someone to go with them (such as peers or parent/guardian) to a space or activity.

The reasons youth gave for choosing to visit different places on the North Shore were largely similar across all groups. Overall, they valued spaces where they could have some passive and unsupervised things to do, like window-shop and spend time with friends, such as at the Park Royal Shopping Centre and the Lonsdale Quay. These places provided space and features that encouraged youth to "hang out" (e.g., open space, benches). They also offered unstructured activities (e.g., browsing shops) and free/low-cost events (e.g., summer and winter events, markets). Youth could passively engage in these activities, and they also fostered a sense of community. Both Park Royal and the Quay also attracted other youth, and whether they knew them or not, seeing peers in a space increased a youth's own sense of belonging.

"[I like going to] Park Royal. It's just something to do."

They often sought out places where they could engage in activities they enjoyed, such as swimming, basketball, shopping, or skateboarding.

“[I like] going to Park Royal because it’s the only place near us that has different stuff, such as Cineplex or different stores that teens can go and buy stuff they like. Also, free Internet.”

Youth preferred places located within their own neighbourhood due to the proximity, convenience, and the sense of familiarity. They mostly participated in these activities with their peers, so visiting these spaces offered opportunities for fun and social connection. Youth were more likely to visit a space, and to travel outside of their neighbourhood for this space, if they did so with peers and if the activity or space was low- or no-cost to access (e.g., park, skate park, community centre).

“I go to a lot of skate parks because I like to skateboard, and I like the skateboarding community and the feeling of skateboarding.”

“I like going swimming at Delbrook with my brothers.”

Youth who went to the library most commonly did so to study in a quiet environment where they could access outlets, free Wi-Fi, and quiet workstations. Some youth lacked such spaces and resources at home. These youth also liked the library for being a place that harmonized with their love of reading and because most libraries have a teen-only area where they feel welcome.

“At the library, there’s free Internet.”

“The library, because my friends and I all like books, and it’s a nice place to be.”

Beyond specific activities, youth also emphasized the role of autonomy and independence as factors in their location preferences. They valued the ability to hang out with peers, whether or not adults were present, and appreciated spaces where they could feel ownership over their time and decisions.

“We just enjoy messing around with our friends wherever lol depends (friend’s houses so we can do whatever we want lol).”

Friends played a major role in influencing where youth chose to spend their time, and going to a place alone could be a deterrent. The barriers to YAT participants’ friends going places were similar to their own barriers, and included transportation barriers, a lack of activities of choice, and a lack of spending money (noted later in this report).

“If I’m going to Park Royal solo, I’m gonna have a shit time.”

Finally, youth from all groups discussed the appeal of having access to food and drink at locations they visited, either provided through the program or for purchase nearby, such as at a store or food court.

Youth-Preferred Time for Activities

The time of day youth prefer to visit spaces or participate in activities depended on a number of factors. Overall, for school or work-related activities (e.g., studying, volunteering), youth preferred after school hours on through the early evening. For participation in social and other unstructured activities, youth preferred spaces to be available through the later evening (e.g., 7 p.m. to midnight), especially on Friday and Saturday nights. They described having few other options for safe spaces and activities during the late evening hours, when they may be more likely to want to socialize and participate in activities.

There were also other factors affecting a youth's scheduling preferences. Younger youth (under 15) were less likely to want to participate in activities in the late evening, due to lack of transportation and possibly having less independence than older youth. The cost of transportation, not feeling safe on public transit late at night, and not having reliable and frequent nighttime transit were all cited as limitations to participating in late night activities.

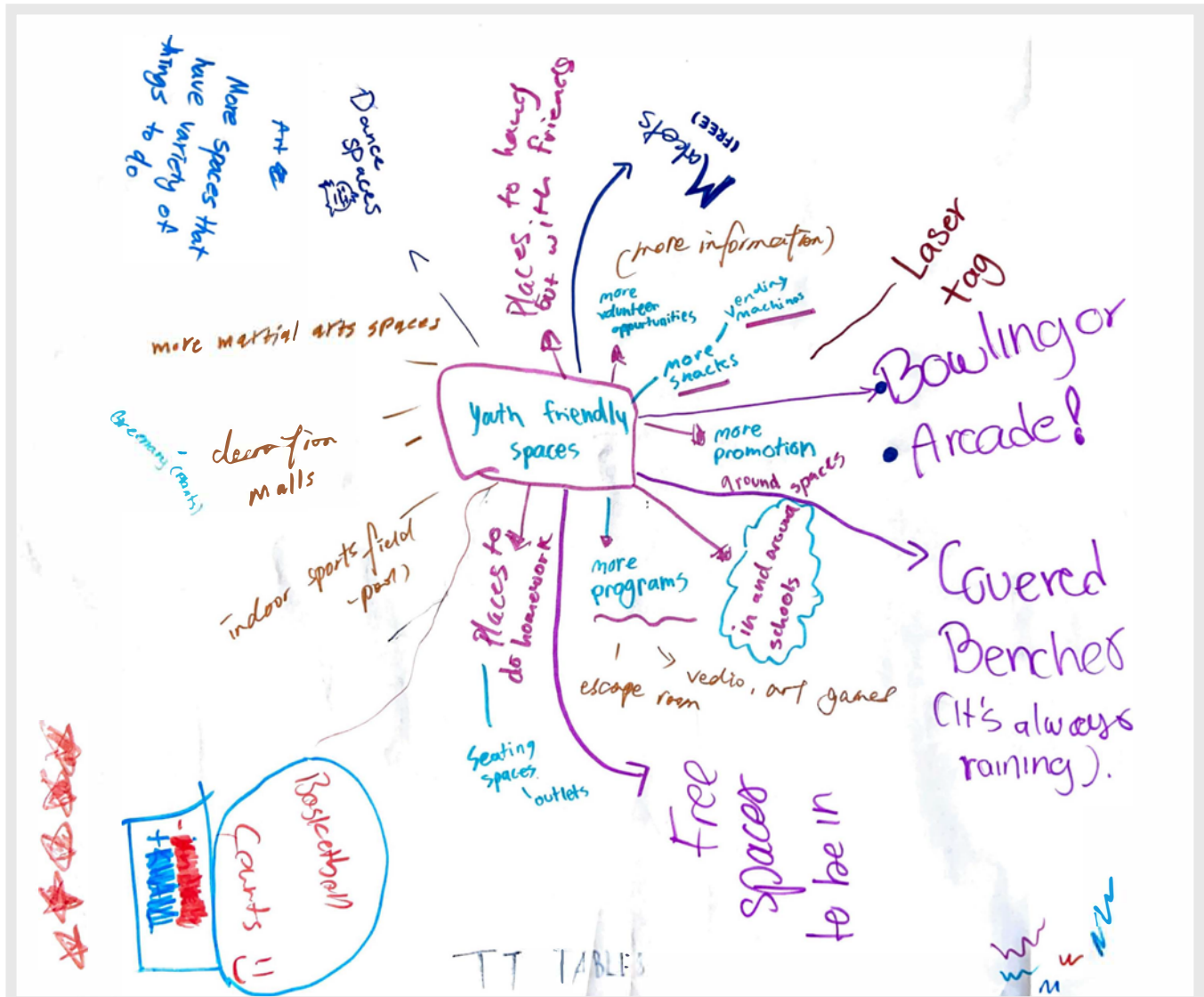
Additionally, some public spaces lacked features that allowed youth to access them safely at night. For example, Mahon Skate Park does not have lights, which prevents youth from skateboarding in these areas after sunset and they may, as a result, skateboard in other public spaces not designated or intended for skateboarding.

Qualities of a Youth-friendly Space or Program

Across all groups in 2025, youth shared similar insights about the specific features of a space or program that contributes to their feelings of safety, comfort, and belonging. Much of what was noted this year is similar to the discussions from 2024. In particular, youth emphasized:

Getting to and from

- **Accessible, safe bus stops:** covered, well-lit bus stops close to their start and end locations (i.e., within a 5-minute walk of either) were favoured by youth, especially at night and during inclement weather.



“Bike racks right outside for those who cycle.”

“I like that there’s free parking outside the Youth Hub.”

“Lights to be able to see what’s around you.”

“Benches, places to sit.”

“Outdoor green spaces nearby [make a space feel youth-friendly].”

- **Frequent buses:** it was important for youth that buses ran frequently, especially during peak times of the day (e.g., after school) and in areas frequented by youth (e.g., near high schools, to the mall and library).
- **Transit that feels safe and comfortable:** this included buses not being overcrowded and youth not waiting alone at bus stops for long periods of time.
- **Easy-to-access, well-marked parking and drop-off areas:** youth who were driven or drove themselves appreciated no- or low-cost parking (e.g., first hour free), or areas near an entrance for easy drop offs – well-marked and near main roads.
- **Safe streets and sidewalks:** youth were more likely to want to visit community spaces when they felt safe getting there. This included having well-lit and well-maintained sidewalks separated from the main road; slower speed limits in busy pedestrian areas; and clearly marked, pedestrian-controlled crosswalks.
- **Infrastructure for active transportation:** features that supported active transportation (e.g., bike racks, bike trails and routes, and clear paths for skateboarding) contributed to youth feeling welcome and encouraged to visit that space.

Outdoor Physical Space

- **Clean, safe, and well maintained:** spaces that were clean, free from litter, and well looked after were considered more youth friendly than those that were not. Many youth mentioned how spaces with litter and drug paraphernalia were perceived as unsafe.
- **Adequate lighting, shelter, and seating:** considering the high precipitation and long, dark winters on the North Shore, outdoor spaces with adequate lighting and shelter/coverage made it easier for youth to engage in meaningful outdoor activities throughout the year. Seating helped them to feel invited and encouraged to stay. Skateparks were commonly cited as an example of areas which lacked adequate lighting and shelter (see page 10).
- **Access to green space:** youth appreciated having access to nearby green space, such as a major city park, trees or flowers, or parklets.

“Free Wi-Fi is good, and allows youth to connect their devices without worrying about using their data.”

“Places to fill up water or to drink water.”

“A calm but positive space with some soft music.”

“Having different areas where youth can be loud and chat with friends, but also areas for quiet time/study.”

Indoor Physical Space

- **Meeting basic needs:** youth identified access to Wi-Fi, water, and food (within a space or nearby) as necessary features of a built space, whether a community centre, library, or youth drop-in space.
- **Comfortable, youth-centred design:** youth appreciated spaces that were physically comfortable and visually inviting. Physical elements that stood out included:
 - Comfortable seating and couches;
 - Warm, soft lighting and colour schemes;
 - Youth-oriented signage and posters;
 - Pride flags and materials in languages that reflect the diversity of the community; and
 - Comfortable room temperature, not too hot or too cold
- **Variety of needs-based spaces:** different activities require different types of spaces, and one space may not be able to meet multiple needs. For example, youth who want a safe and comfortable place to study need tables, chairs, and quiet surroundings. Youth who want to play video games or socialize may prefer a space with couches where they are permitted to speak at higher volumes. Youth appreciated when spaces had dedicated areas or times for different activities or to meet varying youth needs.

Programs and Activities

- **By and for youth:** activities should reflect the interests of the youth in that area or who access that space. As with other domains, youth felt it was important to have a say in the types of programs and activities provided in a space. This could include the types of structured programs available (e.g., photography workshops, study support) and the unstructured activities (e.g., preferred board games or video game consoles).

Dedicated Youth Programs

1. Events
2. Game nights (Board games)
3. sports tournaments (Including Dance).
4. Video game tournaments
5. Youth gallery events. (Art, Digital art, photography, painting).
6. Reading clubs
7. Debate Programs
8. Instrument clubs (music club)
9. Youth familiarization events (related to the living space, etc.)
10. peer tutorial club
11. Some movie nights about growth.
12. Self defence lessons for free.
13. Potluck for youth.
14. Field trips (lessons before).

Free pool

Free gym/open gym for youth

Pilates

gracious

more youth sports programs

more volunteering opportunities

more youth programs

“Events that are by teens,
for teens (because they
know what teens like!).”

“Hands-on activities,
games, or creative
opportunities like art,
music, sports or tech
related projects.”

“Video games that spark
conversation.”

“Youth-only pool times.”

“Video games, board
games, fun activities,
active sports.”

- **Developmentally appropriate:** youth preferred when programs were specific to youth of different developmental stages. For example, when younger youth (ages 13 to 15) had dedicated and separate programming from older youth (ages 16 to 18). Program times should reflect the needs of these groups, such as meeting earlier for younger youth and later for older ones.
- **Opportunities for exploration and connection:** programs that offered an opportunity to explore new interests and hobbies in a non-judgemental environment were appreciated by youth. It was particularly helpful if materials and/or equipment for these activities was provided at no cost. Such programs also provided youth an opportunity to connect and socialize with peers, which many youth identified as lacking in the community.

Sense of Belonging

- **Representation of Indigenous culture and values:** Indigenous youth felt a greater sense of belonging, comfort, and familiarity when they were in a space or program that reflected their Indigenous identity, traditional practices, and cultural values. This could include: visual representation of their culture such as drums, carvings, or other artwork; engaging in traditional practices like smudging, learning traditional languages, or canning; or having programs staffed by adults from their community.

“I want to be smacked in the face by culture.”

- **Diversity and inclusion:** having visual displays, staffing, and resources that reflected the diversity of youth in the community contributed a sense of connection and belonging. This included Indigenous drums and artwork, Pride flags, signage and other materials in different languages.
- **Emotional safety:** feeling free from judgement, harassment, and unwanted attention from peers and adults helped youth feel a stronger sense of safety and belonging.
- **Welcoming and supportive adults:** adults who treat youth with kindness, respect, and genuine interest are considerably more youth-friendly than those perceived as frustrated, judgemental, or dismissive of youth. Youth appreciated adults who did not punish or shame them for acting in ways that reflect their development, but provided opportunities for engagement, connection, and empowerment.

“Greetings at the entrance in different languages—reflects diversity, representation.”

“[Having adults] that are not too strict or high strung.”

“Teen specific rooms and staff that enforce the rules (e.g., telling adults to leave the teen room if necessary).”

- **Clear expectations and guidelines:** youth appreciated when expected behaviour in a space was clearly outlined, such as the volume of their voices or types of activities allowed. This gave them a clear understanding of how they should behave. For example, libraries have dedicated areas for no or limited noise, which are marked by clear signage. The expectations in these spaces are clear and easy to identify by youth. Similarly, participants appreciated when staff enforced guidelines for use of spaces that were dedicated for youth (such as ensuring adults did not use the space).
- **Youth-only spaces:** youth valued any opportunity to connect with peers, especially in a dedicated space or program, for giving them a feeling of belonging and agency.
- **Meaningful youth engagement:** having opportunities to share their perspectives and inform changes that impacted them increased youth's sense of belonging, ownership, and connection to a space or program. To be most effective, these opportunities had to be meaningful, empowering, and lead to tangible change.

Key Areas of Concern

“[Adults can] view youth as a nuisance and have a negative demeanour towards them.”

“[I would like to see] less adults who assume teens are going to, like, destroy property.”

[A space is youth friendly when] there are no annoying adults bothering you, like security or something.”

“Adults tell us to get off our phones and go outside, but then they harass us when we do.”

Reflecting some of the concerns reported by youth in 2024, youth in 2025 emphasized five key areas of concern negatively impacting their sense of belonging and safety on the North Shore.

Adult Perceptions and Prejudice

Youth from all groups felt that adults they interacted with in public places (e.g., public transit, malls, libraries) held preconceived notions about them and treated them differently because they were teenagers. They often felt their actions, though harmless, were perceived as threatening, disrespectful, or otherwise inappropriate. Youth were frustrated that they were treated negatively for behaviours often similar to those of adults. For example, one youth had been scrolling on their phone while at a library, and was scolded by an adult they did not know for being on their phone. Other adults in the library had not been treated this way, despite behaving similarly.

Similarly, youth in all groups reported being treated with suspicion when they gathered or socialized in public places. Youth felt adults often assumed they were engaged in mischievous or deviant behaviour simply because they are gathered in a group.

Youth Reflections and Recommendations

Building connections, understanding, and empathy can help address adult’s misperceptions of youth. This could be done through an awareness campaign to show ‘a day in the life’ of a youth; through opportunities for youth and adults to have open, non-judgmental dialogue in the community; or through other campaigns to humanize youth (e.g., t-shirts or posters that read: ‘I am human’).

“[I wish there was]
More cheap stuff (I
want to keep my money
in my pocket).”

“[What is a barrier to
engaging in programs
and activities?] I’m too
broke to go. Everything
costs money.”

Affordability

A lack of affordable activities was identified as a concern for all groups, as many youth felt there were few things to do on the North Shore that did not involve spending money. Even if a program or space was free to access, such as the library, other associated costs could discourage youth from going, such as the cost of transit or purchasing food and drink.

Youth Reflections and Recommendations

Youth felt encouraged to visit a space if there was free or affordable food there for them to access. The availability of free amenities, such as Wi-Fi in the library, made it a welcoming space for youth, as they could use their devices without having to worry about using their mobile data. They could also visit such places to study or do homework.

Information about where youth could go on the North Shore to receive support with meeting basic needs or participating in programs (e.g., with fees, equipment or transportation) could be shared on an easy-to-find, youth-friendly website. This information could also be provided on the webpages for the respective programs.

Information about paid job opportunities could be available through a variety of methods, like school newsletters, posters at school and in high traffic areas in the community, and on a youth-friendly social media account or website.

“There’s no bathrooms
at Phibbs, and now
there’s no bushes too.”

Transit Accessibility

Taking public transit was one of the primary ways most youth in the YAT reported getting around the North Shore. Youth in all groups felt transit was unaffordable, and that security would unfairly target youth for fare evasion, which could dissuade them from taking transit at all.

Some shared that the irregularity of transit service and long commutes around the North Shore meant they couldn’t easily meet up with their friends who lived in different communities. For youth who lived further from friends or areas of interest, there was a common frustration expressed about a lack of public washrooms, especially at Phibbs Exchange.

Youth also described awkward, uncomfortable, or unsafe interactions on transit due to unwanted attention from other passengers, predominantly adults. This was of particular concern for youth from Tsleil-Waututh Nation who often travelled across the North Shore to access community spaces, like Park Royal Shopping Centre.

Youth Reflections and Recommendations

“Need a free compass card please!! Need to get to my father’s and the mall.”

Youth felt that transit should be free for anyone under the age of 18. This would encourage independence, participation in meaningful activities, and increased opportunities for connection. Increased lighting and other safety features at bus stops could help youth feel safer while waiting for transit. Addressing prejudice faced by youth may also lead to more positive interactions with adults on transit.

“Going swimming with friends and I enjoy it because I enjoy doing physical activities and the pool is a great place for that.”

Swimming Safety

Swimming was identified by many youth as an activity they enjoy both competitively and recreationally. It provided an opportunity to engage in physical activity, as well as to socialize with peers.

Youth across groups described feeling unsafe and uncomfortable at swimming pools, due to unwanted attention from adults. Others described not having opportunities to develop their swimming confidence and skills, due to a lack of space and time dedicated for teens.

Youth Reflections and Recommendations

Youth recommended the implementation of teen specific swim times at the public pools on the North Shore. These do not necessarily have to be provided on a weekly basis. However, any opportunity for youth to visit the pool with peers and near-peers would create a safer pool experience, as well as increase youth's physical activity and lifesaving skills.



Hostile Architecture

In multiple groups, youth discussed the role of hostile architecture in creating a sense that they are unwanted and do not belong. They described various features including arm-rests on benches, fences and gates, and high pitch noise deliberately emitted from buildings. Youth felt they should be permitted and encouraged to socialize in public spaces, but felt they were punished for doing so through these tools. They felt such elements reiterated a belief that youth who gather in public spaces are engaging in mischievous or deviant behaviour.

Youth Reflections and Recommendations

Hostile architecture should be removed, and public spaces should have features that encourage socializing and community connections. This includes benches, shelter, and other architecture that is inclusive and promotes gathering.

“[What was not youth-friendly was when someone] on Lonsdale, when me and my friend had skateboards and were skateboarding outside a building, said absolutely nothing to me and started filming me which was very weird and made me feel uncomfortable. It’s a lot better if she would have just told us to leave instead of filming us.”

Skateboarding Experiences

In addition to the types of judgement previously noted, youth who skateboard felt they experienced additional prejudice when skateboarding or carrying their skateboard in public spaces. Some described harassment by adults, including community members and security guards, despite following the rules of a space and being respectful of pedestrians. One youth shared that they had been filmed without their consent by a community member when skateboarding in a public area where they were permitted to do so.

Youth who skateboarded explained that many skate parks lack lighting or shelter, making it difficult to utilize the park at night or in poor weather. This often means they will skateboard in well-lit public areas where they may encounter greater stigma from community members.

Youth Reflections and Recommendations

Install lighting and shelter at skate parks to encourage skateboarders to use infrastructure appropriate for their sport. Address public prejudice of skateboarding as deviant, rebellious, and disrespectful, instead reframing it as outdoor physical activity, a mode of active transportation, and an opportunity for positive social connections.

Youth Centre Designs

The final activity for each group was a community design, where youth were invited to design a centre they felt was friendly, welcoming and met their needs and interests. Below are a few examples of the youth centres created by participants in 2025.

- Free youth only workout classes *eg pilates (with reformers)*

- ~~Center~~ divided in 4 sections

Workout Space

- private spaces
- treadmill
- stairmaster
- free gym courses or use
- free towels
- air conditioning
- free showers
- w amenities
- changerooms + lockers

homework / focus

- ground proof walls
- those study cubes
- outlets
- free wifi
- accessible computers
- textbooks (library)
- books by choice of members
- cozy lighting

Food

- Affordable meals + snacks
- snack bar
- drinks
- health restrictions in honor of Sarah B.

Fun

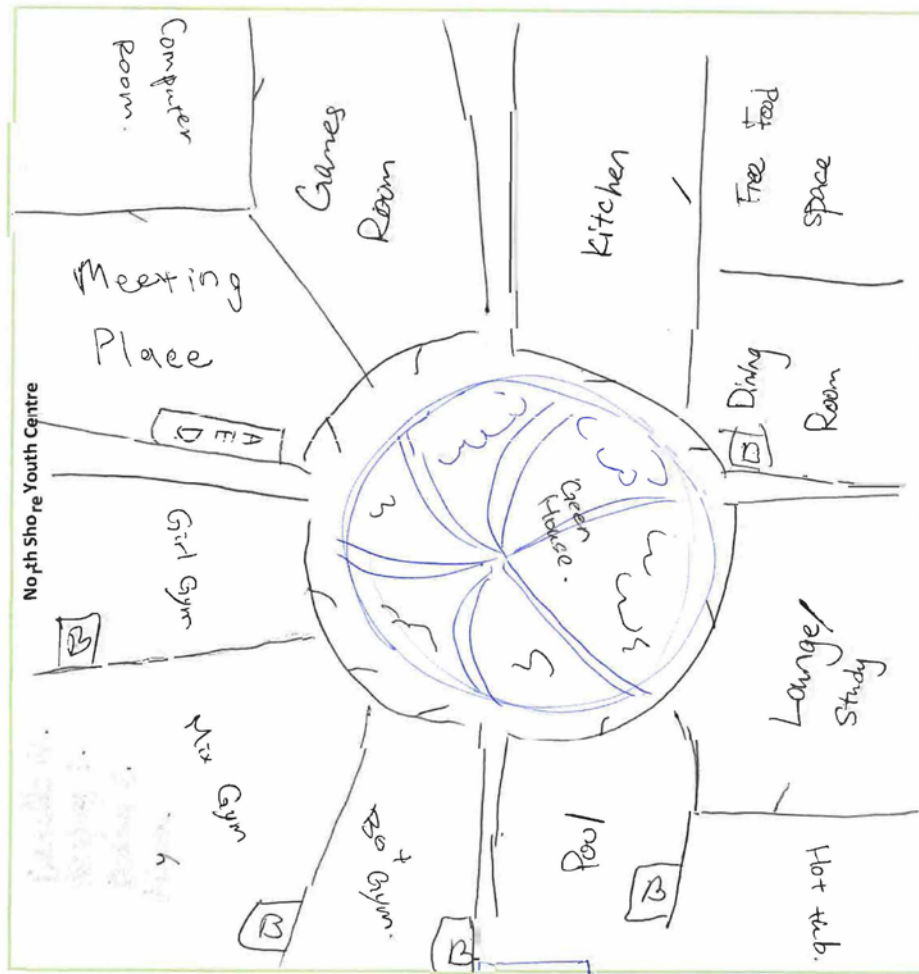
- tv
- video game
- board games
- crafts
- comfy seating
- bar house vibes
- lots of rugs
- wooden floors
- ambient lighting
- beanbags

What programs and activities are offered here?

Career workshops
pilates classes
volunteer opportunities
hobby oriented programs + activities
mental health, therapy
career guidance

What are the staff like?

Big Kind and gracious souls who make youth feel heard and like they matter



- Foundation of programming.

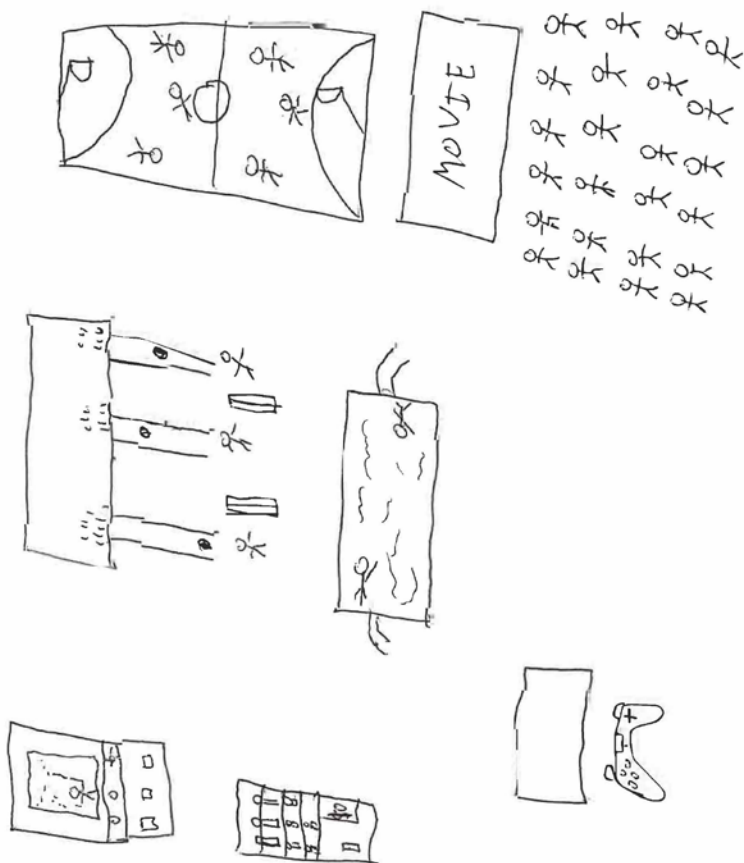
What programs and activities are offered here?

- Free snacks.
- Affordable food prizes
- Salon for weekly/monthly meetings to meet people.
 - o Everyone brings something
- Youth time for gym specific times.
 - 1-2 times a week
- Gym, art, cooking, music, dance lessons.
- Tournaments every month. (Judge and ask)
- Social media.

- Boy/Girls separate gyms

What are the staff like?

- Positive
- Good vibe
- Mostly young ppl.
- Diverse
- Alumni (past youth)
- Wear great outfits with a tag saying they are staff



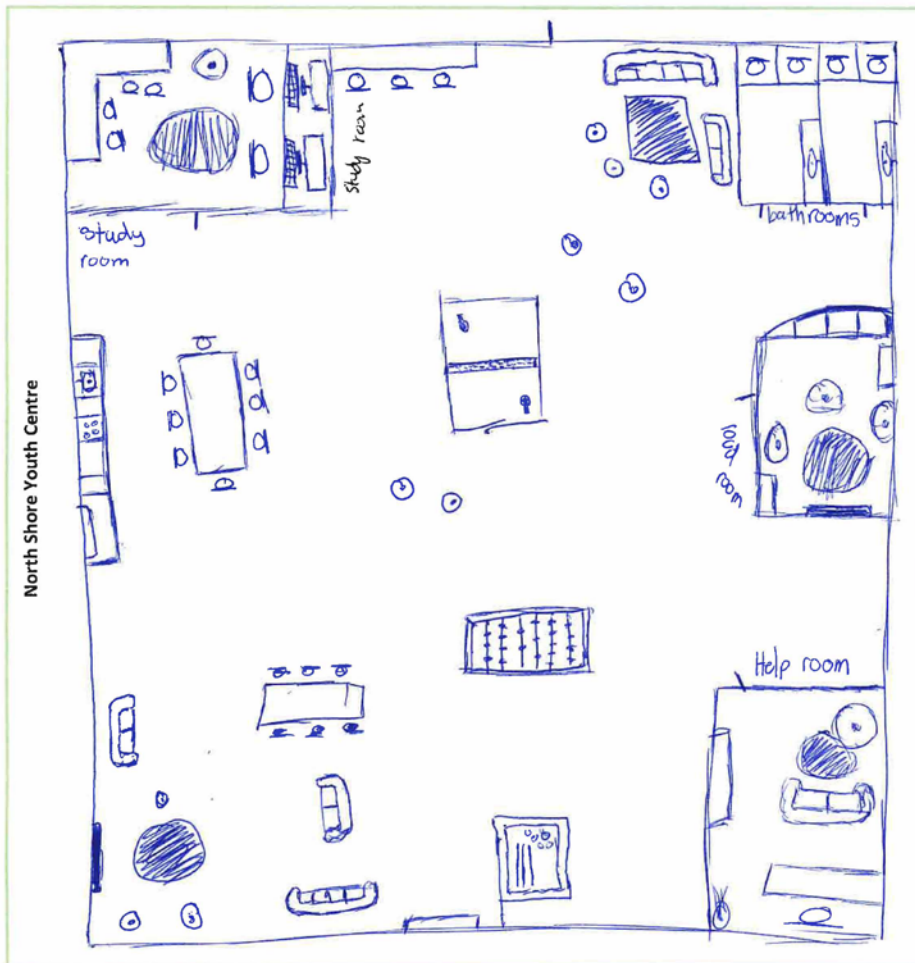
What programs and activities are offered here?

1. Arcade
(Game area)
2. Bowling
3. Chilling area for
like video games and
phone time
4. Sports activities
5. Snack, lots of
food
6. Movie Space

What are the staff like?

The staff are super
friendly and are
willing to help at
any time.

North Shore Youth Centre



What programs and activities are offered here?

- Help room (counselling)
- Study area (peer tutoring)
- A loud room
- Board games
- Kitchen
- TV
- a lot of colours

What are the staff like?

- mix of youth volunteers and adult staffs
- Friendly / trustworthy
- Diverse
- Lots of knowledge
- youth program

Recommendations from Youth

The 2025 WelcoME YAT shared a variety of ideas to make the North Shore more youth-friendly including being more accessible, inclusive, fun, and safe. As discussed in this report, their recommendations ranged from infrastructure and program improvements to addressing systemic barriers to participation. Youth recommendations also consistently reflected a desire for spaces and activities that they could co-design. The following notes summarize the 2025 YAT's recommendations.

Programs and activities youth would like to be able to access in their community

Youth emphasized the importance of having access to activities that allow them to build skills, connect with peers, and explore interests and hobbies in non-judgemental environments. These included:

Social and recreational activities:

- Youth-only swim times and programs
- Youth-only times in fitness centres and other exercise studios
- Non-competitive sports tournaments (volleyball, basketball, dance)
- Video game tournaments or gaming nights
- Free movie nights with snacks
- Youth games nights (e.g., board games, arcade games, bowling)
- Open gym time for unstructured play
- Outdoor community-building activities (e.g., slip-and-slide events, community snowball fights)
- Laser tag or escape room events
- Reading/book clubs
- Fitness training programs for youth (e.g., Pilates)
- Free youth self-defense classes

Creative and cultural programming:

- Youth art gallery events (e.g., digital art, paintings, photography)
- Beginner level art and music lessons
- Youth-led open mic nights
- Culture days to showcase and celebrate different backgrounds
- Youth markets to sell their crafts, art, or other passions

Skill-building and education:

- Cooking lessons or “tutor chef” programs
- Survival skills workshops
- Youth debate programs
- Mentorship programs for teens to mentor pre-teens/younger youth
- Career guidance, summer job information sessions, and work study prep

Physical spaces youth would like to be able to access in their community

In addition to the existing youth-friendly spaces (e.g., Youth Hub at Park Royal, Teen Room at North Vancouver City Library, open gym time for Tsleil-Waututh youth), youth brainstormed tangible ways various community spaces could better respect their needs and lifestyles.

Improvements to outdoor infrastructure:

- Improved lighting in skateparks
- Removal of hostile architecture or other features aimed at reducing social gathering
- Increased cleanups of public areas to remove litter and dangerous items, including community cleanup events

Dedicated youth spaces:

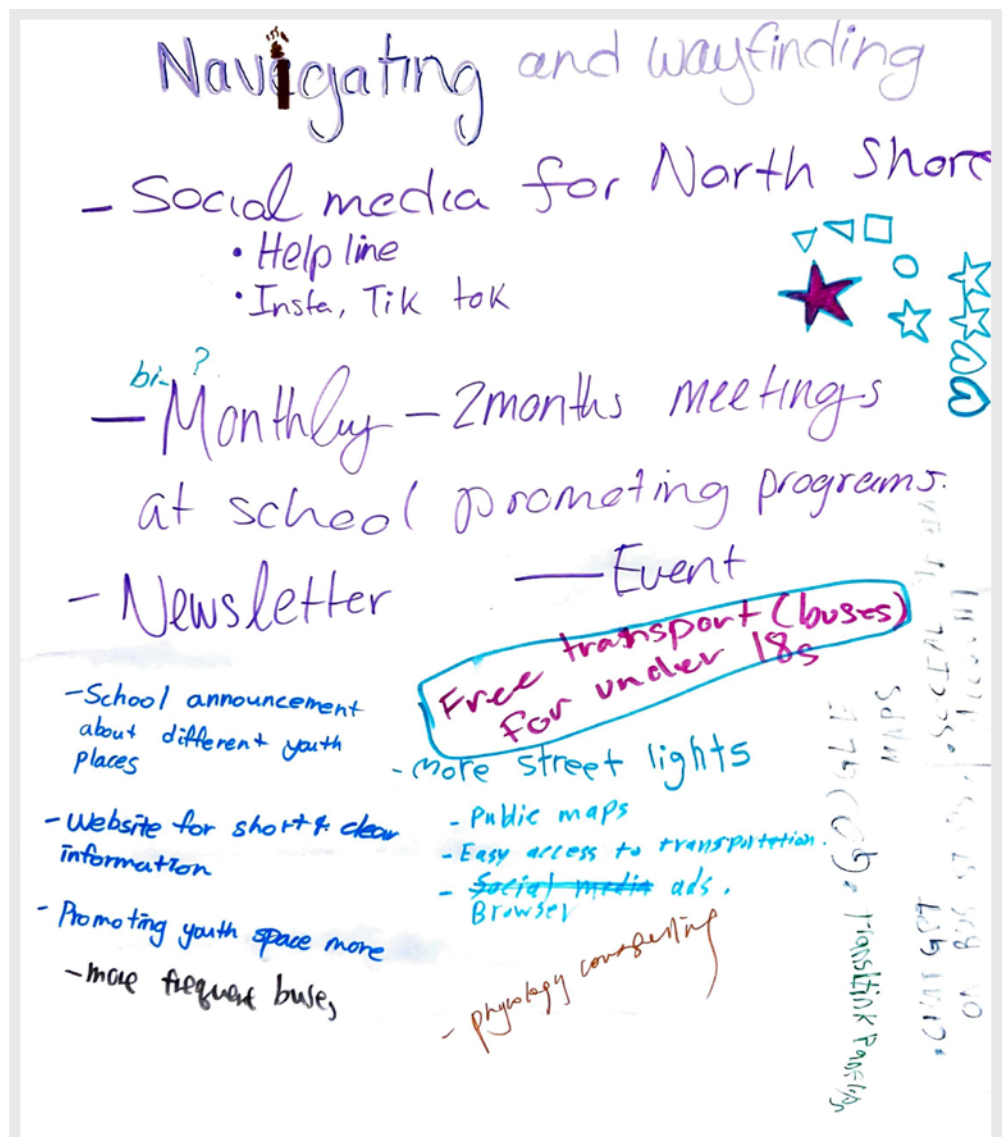
- Youth centres or other semi-structured spaces to hang out near schools
- Dedicated study rooms with comfortable seating and Wi-Fi
- Soundproof rooms for music practice or quiet time
- Arcade and gaming rooms (including retro games)
- Indoor sports complex with multi-use space (e.g., basketball, dance)

Better advertising and increased awareness of opportunities

Throughout discussions, youth acknowledged that many youth-friendly programs, activities, and spaces already exist on the North Shore. However, information about these opportunities is not provided in ways that reach them. To this, youth recommend:

Sharing information about existing programs or spaces:

- Share program info through social media (e.g., Instagram, TikTok, and school announcements) and in-person school visits



- Produce real social media content (not advertisements) and make it funny, eye-catching, trendy, and relatable for youth
- Use QR codes on posters to link to event sign-ups or more information
- Host events to introduce and tour youth around youth spaces (e.g., a 'welcome house' event)
- Create youth-run social media accounts for North Shore youth activities and opportunities
- Create a North Shore Youth website to show upcoming youth events, mental health supports, and community resources
- Share monthly newsletters in schools with upcoming programs and space hours (digital or printed)
- Put posters and pamphlets in high traffic public areas, like transit shelters and community centres

Transportation and accessibility

Youth shared multiple ideas for making it easier and more affordable to get around the North Shore.

Improving transit accessibility and safety:

- Provide free bus passes for youth under 18
- More frequent bus service to and from schools, youth programs, and spaces where youth frequent
- Improve lighting at bus stops
- Design more visible, safer bus stops near youth centres and schools

Adult prejudice or misconceptions about youth

Youth called for more youth- and community-led efforts to address the negative beliefs about youth and youth behaviour on the North Shore.

Increasing empathy, understanding, and intergenerational connection:

- A campaign using video, photos, art, or other means to showcase 'a day in the life' of a youth
- Events or other opportunities for youth and adults to have open, non-judgemental dialogue about beliefs and assumptions
- Youth-led t-shirt or poster campaign with the message 'I am human'
- Education, training, and resources for parents or other adults to learn about youth development and understand behaviour

Conclusion

“Meeting with other youth and learning about the community.”

“The knowledge that youth care about the community and want to make change.”

“Learning what other youth think.”

The second year of the WelcoME YAT provided the opportunity for 49 youth to share their experiences accessing spaces, programs, and activities on the North Shore. What they offered communicated their desire for belonging, connection, and engagement with other youth and with the greater North Shore community.

At the end of their participation, WelcoME YAT 2025 youth were invited to reflect on what they took away from the experience. The themes that emerged included:

- Greater awareness of community resources;
- Increased confidence in sharing their ideas and perspectives;
- Connection with peers they wouldn't normally meet;
- Understanding of the experiences of other youth;
- Excitement about making a difference; and
- Interest in continued involvement in advocacy and participating in community conversations.

As facilitators, we note there are a myriad of ways by which the North Shore supports meaningful community connections. There are also many opportunities still to be realized that can further increase inclusion, participation, and belonging for youth. Many of these were identified in the 2024 WelcoME YAT report, and continued to be of importance to youth in 2025. Including youth voices is an essential part of designing a more youth-friendly North Shore, and youth engagement in the YAT process indicates their ongoing interest to be part of the conversation.

The WelcoME YAT is part of a three-year project to foster a more youth-friendly North Shore. The final phase of the program will run from October 2025 through January 2026, and will build on the work accomplished by the YAT groups of 2024 and 2025. Recruitment for the third YAT will begin in early Fall 2025.

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