

Youth-Friendly North Shore

Youth Online Use Trends
and Youth Services Website
User Experience Audit



Prepared by BUNYAAD Public Affairs 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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We respectfully acknowledge the original Peoples of the lands and waters that situate and surround us wherever we work. We honour the səlilwətał (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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Executive Summary

A wide range of services across our caring and inclusive region play a vital role in supporting a diverse and thriving youth community. We believe North Shore youth deserve meaningful support and should feel respected and seen, including through digital experiences designed with their needs in mind.

Effective communication with youth on the North Shore requires presenting information in ways that reflect their unique needs, preferences and perspectives. Credibility is built through consistent, up-to-date and high-quality content, supported by visual design that is inclusive, welcoming and engaging.

This report includes a high-level overview of youth demographics and online behaviours, with a focus on how these relate to community services intended to reach and engage them. In 2022, 99% of Canadians aged 15 to 24 reported using the internet.¹ While there is no single, uniform “youth audience,” research shows that certain strategies can improve the reach and impact of digital communication from community organizations serving youth.

Websites remain a central part of an organization’s online identity and can significantly enhance the youth user experience. As outlined in the section [Youth and Websites: Habits, Behaviours and Trends](#), youth are increasingly starting and ending their online activity within social media platforms—most commonly YouTube, TikTok and Instagram. While we recognize this shift, we also emphasize that a mobile-friendly, well-optimized website strengthens an organization’s credibility with both youth and the broader community.

Given the wide range of social media representation by community agencies, websites remain the primary platform where youth—and secondary audiences such as parents, caregivers and youth service providers—can verify an organization and access the detailed information needed to take the next steps toward engagement. Social media posts, reels and stories are typically brief and designed for rapid consumption. While these tools are effective in reaching youth where they are, they offer limited space to convey the depth of information required to build trust and support decision-making.

¹Statistics Canada. Table 22-10-0135-01 Internet use by province and age group
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25318/2210013501-eng>

Youth attention spans are shaped by fast-paced digital environments, which favour short, high-impact interactions. Carefully curated social media content may spark interest or prompt initial engagement for some youth, but it does not provide the depth required to build confidence across a broader youth population.

This report builds on the commitments outlined in the *YFNS Evaluation Report* by identifying, defining and promoting actionable steps that youth-services organizations across the North Shore can take to improve their websites. Strengthening these digital platforms is a critical first step toward enhancing youth access to—and understanding of—the services available to them locally.

Introduction

This report builds on the findings of the 2024 *Youth-Friendly North Shore (YFNS) Youth Services Evaluation* and the 2023 *WelcoME Youth Action Team (YAT)* initiative. Both identified website design, content and navigation challenges as significant barriers to youth accessing community services.

In the first year of the project, YFNS engaged youth through the WelcoME Youth Action Team to assess how youth-friendly North Shore community spaces were. One of the key recommendations from youth was the need for websites to better reflect how young people access and process information online. Digital platforms often shape youth's first impression of a service, and they consistently reported difficulties with website design, navigation, accessibility and content. Many found municipally funded websites to be not youth-friendly (full report available [here](#)).

Building on these findings, the 2024 *YFNS Youth Services Evaluation* (full report [here](#)) confirmed that a major barrier to accessing youth services is simply being able to find accurate and relevant information online. While many organizations recognize the importance of clearly communicating their services, the evaluation also found that they are often constrained by limited resources and a lack of in-house digital communication expertise.

This report addresses that gap by offering an overview of youth online use patterns and providing actionable recommendations based on a one-time communications audit, aimed at improving program visibility and supporting consistent, user-friendly access to municipally funded youth services.

Part 1 | Offers a demographic overview of North Shore youth and highlights common patterns in how they engage online. Recognizing these patterns can help organizations design digital spaces that are more accessible, engaging and aligned with the expectations of today’s digitally fluent youth. Youth-friendly online environments are essential for building connections—they are often both a first point of contact and a vital complement to in-person services and supports.

Part 2 | Outlines the priorities, approach, inquiry process and key findings from a communications audit conducted between April and June 2025. This audit involved 21 municipally funded youth-serving organizations ([Appendix A](#)), focusing primarily on the websites youth are most likely to visit when seeking information about programs, services and activities that align with their needs and interests. The youth user experience was assessed using a standardized set of questions developed by the audit team and applied consistently across all sites.

Part 3 | The report concludes with a set of overarching recommendations to help agencies improve the online experience for youth. It also includes site-specific suggestions tailored to each audited organization. These recommendations reflect the practical realities of limited staff capacity and the varying levels of digital communication expertise across the sector.

DEFINITIONS

Youth: For the purpose of this audit—and in alignment with other activities under the Youth-Friendly North Shore initiative—“youth” refers to all individuals between the ages of 12 and 18. Research indicates that this age group also responds positively to the term “teen,” which is used interchangeably with “youth” throughout this report. Where a specific source defines youth using a different age range (e.g., 13–18), it is noted accordingly.

User Experience (UX): In this audit, “user experience (UX)” refers specifically to all interactions an individual has with an organization’s website. This is a narrower definition than the broader UX concept, which includes all interactions a person may have with an organization’s services, programs and products.

Part 1 | Youth Demographics and Online Behaviours

YOUTH DEMOGRAPHICS

Before exploring patterns of youth internet use, it is important to understand the demographic profile of youth living on the North Shore. According to the 2021 Canadian Census of Population, there are 11,210 youth aged 15 to 19 across the North Shore's three municipalities. The census provides data on gender, school attendance, labour force participation, language spoken most often at home, Indigenous identity, citizenship, immigration status and visible minority status.

Among youth in this age group, 51% identify as male and 49% as female. 45% are participating in the labour force, and 80% speak English most often at home. 3% identify as Indigenous, 87% are Canadian citizens and 39% are identified as visible minorities.²

See [Appendix B](#) for a detailed breakdown of youth demographics on the North Shore from the 2021 Census.

LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY

“For youth who are English language learners, English proficiency is critical to navigate and understand online content. This underscores the need to use plain language, reduce jargon, include meaningful visuals and offer short-form video content to support comprehension.

Publicly funded organizations may find it financially unfeasible to implement a full translation management system. Instead of prioritizing complex translation tools, they can invest in youth-centered awareness campaigns delivered through social media, which often reach and engage diverse youth populations more effectively.

Many English language learners already use free tools like Google Translate, Google Lens and ChatGPT to translate or interpret text. However, even with these tools, it remains unclear whether better understanding of online information leads youth to visit original websites or engage with services—especially when those services are unfamiliar or outside their current frame of reference.

YOUTH AND WEBSITES: HABITS, BEHAVIOURS AND TRENDS

They say a year is an eternity for the internet. Given how quickly the digital landscape evolves, we focused our review on research published in the past three years. We made one exception: the NN/g Nielsen Norman Group's *UX Design for Teenagers (Ages 13–17), 3rd Edition*². Although released in 2019, many of its findings remain highly relevant and are reflected in the insights we share here.

Youth are not a monolith. Within the broad category, we can't assume uniform reactions, responses or behaviours. NN/g researchers note clear differences between the online habits of 13- and 14-year-olds and those of older teens. Factors like web savviness, device access and digital literacy shape how youth interact with online platforms and distinguish youth-oriented sites from those built for other audiences.

DAILY USAGE PATTERN

The Pew Research Center in 2024³ noted that 96% of American teens ages 13 to 17 use the internet every day. Of these, 46% said they were online "almost constantly." The study also found that teens from lower income households were less likely to have access to a computer or tablet at home. In this representative sample of U.S. teens, 95% had home access to a smartphone, 90% to a desktop or laptop and 65% to a tablet. With this in mind, we conducted our review using smartphones and laptops (see: "[Data Collection](#)").

²Joyce, Alita and Aurora Harley. *UX Design for Teenagers (Ages 13 - 17) 3rd Edition*. NN/g Nielsen Norman Group, 2019. <https://www.nngroup.com/reports/teenagers-on-the-web/>

³Teens and Internet, Device Access Fact Sheet. Pew Research Center, 2024. <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/fact-sheet/teens-and-internet-device-access-fact-sheet/>

PURPOSE OR PASTIME?

Whether researching a school assignment, looking for a job, shopping for clothes or learning how to make vegan macaroni and cheese, youth use the internet with purpose. Learning how to make, fix or operate things motivates many youth online. Sites that “show and tell,” especially through short instructional videos, are popular not just to watch but to replicate.

Images do more than decorate in youth UX. Browsing images is a popular pastime, and image search results often help youth find relevant sites. Google Images is a common go-to, and appearing high in image results (without scrolling) can draw youth to a website.

VERIFICATION BEHAVIOUR

Like adults, youth often rely on websites to verify the credibility and safety of services before choosing to engage. A 2022 study on sexual health information by Drab et al.⁴ emphasized that verification behaviour plays a key role in whether youth visit a website. The researchers stated that “many youth may hesitate to access services if they do not know whether their sexual identity will be affirmed. To mitigate potential stigmatizing experiences, youth may try to vet an agency through the internet, including utilizing online resources to evaluate the suitability and friendliness of organizations and providers prior to utilizing the resource.”

This finding highlights the critical role websites play not only in conveying information but also in building trust with youth. When websites lack clear, affirming and inclusive signals, young people may decide not to engage with services at all. For youth who experience marginalization or uncertainty around their identity, the ability to assess an organization’s values and approach before making contact is essential. Ensuring that websites reflect openness, respect and relevance to North Shore youth needs is not simply a matter of aesthetics or usability, it is a foundation for equitable access and meaningful engagement.

⁴Drab R, Wolfe JR, Chavanduka T, et al. Constructing a web-based health directory for adolescent men who have sex with men: Strategies for development and resource verification. *J Community Psychol.* 2022;50(3):1597-1615. doi:10.1002/jcop.22738

THE COSTS OF FUN FEATURES

Gamified activities can make youth websites more engaging, especially on mobile devices. However, these features can be expensive to design, implement and maintain. While gamification may offer new ways to connect youth with organizations online, it falls outside the immediate priorities recommended by this audit.

Youth are expanding their vocabularies, and although their own spelling is developing, many recognize misspelled words—which can undermine a website’s credibility. They also like knowing what content is popular. Widgets like “Most Read” or “Most Commented” can make navigation easier and more engaging.

Many youth find pop-ups annoying. In NN/g research, one participant described them as “evil” for their power to interrupt and distract. This reflects both the purposeful way teens use websites and their digital literacy, as many learn in school to avoid clicking on pop-ups. Youth will quickly leave a site if it’s slow, glitchy, or shows errors—and a single pop-up may be enough to drive them away. At minimum, teens are pop-up averse.

They also won’t watch every video a site presents. As mentioned earlier, a compelling reason—like learning a new skill—can improve viewer rates. Effective videos are short and simple. Most youth won’t read a long introduction or the written transcript, but for accessibility, both must be available.

SKIMMING OR READING?

The *NN/g UX Design for Teenagers Report* explains that “people don’t read everything on the web, but rather skim pages trying to pick out a few sentences or even parts of sentences that hold the information they want. This behaviour is prevalent among teenagers.” The authors also note: “At this stage in their lives, many teens don’t consider reading enjoyable.”

Youth in the NN/g study showed awareness of advertising placement in search results. They generally know to scroll past paid listings for more reliable content. As mentioned earlier, pop-up calls to action and animated ads can undermine trust and reduce teen engagement.

Many youth will rely on trusted adults to recommend information sources. They also pay attention to domain extensions like .gov, .edu and .org, which can increase their confidence in a site’s credibility and purpose.

Youth are interested in reviews and ratings, but single, out-of-context quotes don’t carry much weight. Authentic user-generated content is far more effective than artificial-sounding, stock, or lack of genuine voice.

COLOUR: ENGAGING OR ANNOYING?

There’s a fine line between using colour to engage and overwhelming visitors.

Sites cluttered with bright, bold, or excessive highlighting can quickly fatigue teen users—especially given the amount of time they already spend online. A well-placed “pop” of colour for strategic emphasis is appreciated, but overuse can feel try-hard and invite skepticism.

Too much colour can also create confusion. Visually, one of the quickest ways to lose a young audience is to make a site look too childish. When services are meant for all, choosing gender-neutral imagery helps avoid alienating or excluding youth.

AND WHAT ABOUT ALL THOSE WORDS?

“Too. Many. Words.” might be the first thing a teen thinks when glancing at a website. Reading for fun? Not so much.

“Laborious” is how one teen described reading in a study on adolescent perspectives on barriers to reading for enjoyment⁵. While teens may be less conscious of reading as an activity when they are “on their phone” or “on” the internet, traditional reading was often viewed by youth respondents as a time-consuming activity—the antithesis of fun. Youth who have experienced difficulty reading in school, or who have had little control over what they read, are more likely to hold negative attitudes towards reading.

The study serves as a reminder that adolescents are growing into independence and have many options for how they spend their time. That reading is seen as “work” underscores the challenge of writing web content for youth—and the importance of making it as clear and easy to navigate as possible.

Lengthy, dense or complicated language is discouraging for many teens who prioritize getting to the information they want quickly. Diagrams and illustrations that explain steps, pathways or complex ideas are especially helpful.

Youth may skip unfamiliar words and, in scanning texts, miss key information. Bolded text and bullet points can help—when used logically. Bullet points are particularly effective in enhancing reading on mobile phones.

Health-related information should be delivered without condescension. Youth are more likely to relate to real stories and practical examples than to rigid “rules” for healthy living.

⁵Webber, C., Wilkinson, K., Duncan, L. G., & McGeown, S. (2024). Adolescents' perspectives on the barriers to reading for pleasure. *Literacy*, 58(2), 204–215. <https://doi.org/10.1111/lit.12359>

LLMS AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

Youth and student perceptions of large language models (LLMs) such as ChatGPT—which launched in late 2022—represent a relatively new area of research. To understand students’ attitudes and beliefs about using this LLM, we considered a 2024 study exploring student perceptions of ChatGPT in language translation⁶. Researchers collected data from 100 students (most between the ages of 17 and 24) engaged in English-Arabic translation tasks. The study found that the majority of respondents were frequent or very frequent users of the tool, with most expressing a high level of trust and satisfaction. Respondents also preferred ChatGPT over other online translation tools. As ChatGPT draws from online sources, its widespread use highlights the need for accurate, high-quality information on websites.

PRIVACY AND PARTICIPATION

Tech-savviness among youth extends to how they protect their privacy. Some use multiple email addresses—reserving one for sign-ups—while others use a single email for all online activity. Youth may also feel vulnerable when visiting certain websites, particularly if they fear being observed by a parent or family member.

CLICK, SWIPE OR SCROLL?

Youth prefer scrolling over clicking or swiping, though all three types of functionality have some appeal.

It’s often said that a teen’s entire world occurs between their hand and their nose. NN/g researchers found that one reason youth prefer mobile devices is that, when optimized for a phone screen, site navigation becomes simpler—making it easier to find what they need, even on a smaller display.

⁶Almahasees, Zakaryia & Rayyash, Hussein & Olimat, Sameer & Mahadin, Dana. (2024). An Analytical Study on Student Perceptions of Using CHATGPT in Language Translation. *Language Value*. 17. 1-23. 10.6035/languagev.7925.

SEO TERMINOLOGY

Older teens rely heavily on search tools across both social media and websites. Despite spending significant time online, many struggle with search terminology. According to research by NN/g, they often abandon a search after one or two unsuccessful queries. The same study found that many develop a habit of selecting the top search result without scrolling or exploring further.

Teens also frequently depend on Google's AI-generated snippets. This reliance highlights the importance of aligning website content with the language teens actually use. However, when snippets provide seemingly complete answers, they may discourage users from clicking through to the source site.

The rise of large language model (LLM) tools like ChatGPT introduces new challenges. While these tools are popular, they pose risks—such as inaccuracies, misleading content, display issues, and ethical or legal concerns—that can compromise search engine optimization (SEO) and information integrity. Organizations should approach LLMs with caution and prioritize maintaining current, accurate content on their websites.

Spelling errors are common among older teens, so SEO functionality should account for common misspellings by returning accurate results regardless of spelling. For example, searches for “counselling” and “conselling” should lead to the same content.

NAVIGATION NOTES

PDF files are often overlooked by teens and, when opened, can pull them away from the main site. Whenever possible, content should be provided in HTML format. Back arrows must also function reliably, as teens often use them as a primary navigation tool.

PATIENCE AND PROGRESS

Even when sites and pages are designed with teens in mind, overly complex layouts can prevent them from accessing key information about available supports, services and activities on the North Shore. While teens may tolerate a slow-loading site if they see progress, such as a visible load percentage, their patience is limited. A lack of feedback often leads them to abandon the page or switch to another device, like a mobile phone, which can result in disengagement or a shift in focus, such as texting.

According to NN/g researchers, “Teens encountered the greatest challenges on large sites with dense content and poor navigation schemes. Government, non-profit and school sites were the biggest culprits of poor usability.” Although these sites contain valuable information, high-friction experiences often cause teens to leave before accessing any of it.

Part 2 | The Audit

In addition to incorporating current research on youth and digital media, this audit drew on data and recommendations from the March 2024 *WelcoME Youth Action Team (YAT) Review of community spaces on the North Shore*. The questions in Appendix C explore the specifics of each of the YAT's key areas of inquiry.

ABOUT THE QUESTIONS

We developed the audit questions by combining key areas of inquiry from best practices in website audits with a focus on what teens value in a digital experience. Each site review involved an in-depth analysis of up to 70 questions. This level of detail enabled us to provide targeted recommendations and break down improvements into manageable, actionable tasks.

To build on the general questions used by the YAT in their exploration of youth-friendly digital spaces, we created more specific questions designed to generate clear, concrete and practical recommendations. Additional resources consulted in developing our inquiry framework included the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 AA and the open-source youth UX usability guidelines from the Nielsen Norman Group (NN/g).⁷

⁷<https://www.nngroup.com/articles/usability-of-websites-for-teenagers/>

AUDIT CATEGORIES

We conducted a two-part audit focusing on the user experience of each website included in this study.

- 1 | Style and tone audit:** We assessed visuals, voice, tone, consistency, youth-centered content, brevity and inclusivity.
- 2 | Human experience audit:** Testers evaluated each site's user experience, focusing on clarity, simplicity, navigability and accessibility.

Although SEO performance is usually audited separately, we included it through a task-based test exercise, since SEO is a primary route for site discovery.

Our audit questions applied a consistent approach to evaluate each website based on:

- Youth-friendliness in a digital space
- Ease of discovery using SEO keywords familiar to teens
- Ease of navigation from the landing page
- Clarity of purpose and services provided
- Simplicity and brevity of presented information
- Welcoming tone and visual style
- Use of graphical enhancements and visual appeal
- Functionality of search tools

DATA COLLECTION

Data was collected by two communications professionals (aged 23 and 58) using laptops and mobile phones. The devices varied in age to reflect the range commonly found among teens, where devices are often several generations old and operate with slower processing speeds.

For efficiency, each site was reviewed by a single auditor. This approach allowed for a more detailed exploration of each site's user experience through a larger set of questions.

- Auditor 1 used a 16-inch MacBook Pro running macOS Sequoia 15.5.
- Auditor 2 used a 14-inch Microsoft Surface 4 Laptop running Windows 11 Enterprise.

Both auditors set their laptop screens to a default Google Chrome font size of "Medium" and a window size of 1440 x 900 pixels. Precise location services were enabled in their browsers. For mobile optimization testing, one auditor used an iPhone 8 and the other an iPhone 13.

Each site audit also included a scenario-based "task test" tailored to the site's purpose. Auditors developed 1 to 3 relevant task questions that a teen might realistically search for and then traced and recorded the user journey and results, starting from a Google search query. Task questions covered topics such as health supports, social activities and volunteering.

Examples include:

- "You have some free time and want to do something fun on the North Shore."
- "Your friend seems depressed. How can you help them?"
- "You're experiencing daily migraines and don't know why. Who can help you find out?"
- "You want to get a part-time job this summer on the North Shore. Where would you look for leads?"

DATA ANALYSIS

Data were collected from 21 organizational websites using a structured Google Form survey. Each site was evaluated against 70 questions listed in [Appendix C](#). Each question received a score of 0, 0.5, or 1, indicating the absence, partial presence, or full presence of a specific feature or functionality. If a question was not applicable—for example, if a site did not include an embedded video—it was marked as “n/a.” As a result, the maximum possible score varied by organization, with 59 as the highest attainable score for any website (see [Limitations](#)).

To address the subjective nature of qualitative questions and reduce human and observational errors, we implemented a multi-phase reliability check. Following inter-rater reliability practices, initial audits were conducted independently by different team members. Discrepancies were resolved by having the auditor who had not previously reviewed the site re-assess the contested components. If differences persisted, auditors discussed their observations to reach a consensus. This process was applied to six sites to mitigate interpretive bias and ensure consistency across the audit.

During the audit, we identified questions that required further clarification or refinement. We updated these questions to enable more detailed and meaningful annotations early in data collection. These refinements improved clarity in later responses and enhanced the overall integrity of the audit. This approach balanced standardization with contextual sensitivity and strengthened the reliability of the findings.

Despite these efforts, some degree of measurement error is inevitable in complex audits. Potential errors may arise from individual auditors' interpretations, human mistakes, or uncontrollable factors such as user cookies and SEO variables (see [Limitations](#)). While inter-rater checks, question refinement and collaborative reviews minimized errors and bias, some may remain. Acknowledging these limitations ensures transparency and accountability in the audit process. If you have questions or concerns about our findings, please contact us at Bunyaad for clarification.

LIMITATIONS

This audit does not fully replicate youth experiences interacting with the studied websites. Youth often use “hand-me-down” or shared devices, and the auditors recognize that factors such as the type, age and functionality of the device a youth might own, share or borrow will vary. As professionals, the auditors worked in a focused manner, limiting distractions more than teens likely would while performing their reviews.

The audit may also be subject to temporal bias, as we reviewed sites at a specific point in time. Some issues we observed, such as outdated pages, may have been updated before this report was finalized.

Some features were marked as “N” (no) even if they existed within the site’s architecture but were not obvious or detectable during the review. This was common with alt-text. Recognizing the importance of alt-text for accessibility, we encourage all clients to consistently apply it rigorously for both accessibility and improved SEO.

Differences exist even within age groups; a 12-year-old and an 18-year-old might access and use a site differently. As youth mature and develop digital literacy, their online activities may change. Other uncontrolled variables include where youth access sites (public spaces, bedrooms, bathrooms, windowless rooms), literacy levels, privacy considerations and emotional state at the time of access. The 2022 B.C. Connectivity Report noted that although cellular phone plans in British Columbia have decreased in cost since 2017, plan prices still exceed the Canadian average. While many youth have high-speed internet access at home, school or elsewhere, many operate devices without data plans, limiting the time and space where they can safely and efficiently access websites.

Where we sought consistency in language, such as addressing the second person, we applied leniency, recognizing that in some contexts, second person may not be appropriate. For example, healthcare pages describing symptoms are better suited to third-person language.

We did not perform a word count on every page but reserved concerns for text that appeared overwhelmingly long and required multiple scrolling. Fortunately, both auditors noted good attention to concise text in youth-centered content across all sites reviewed.

Search engines like Google use Search Engine Optimization (SEO) to provide tailored search results based on a user's query. The algorithm draws on previous search history, cookies and account data to prioritize website listings it predicts will interest the user most. Since our auditors differ in age, gender and online search histories, the prominence of a website listing sometimes varied even when the same search terms were used. Due to these inherently confounding SEO factors, a site prioritized for one or both auditors may appear in a different order on a youth's device.

Part 3 | Recommendations

This report’s recommendations were developed from audit data, synthesized with the YAT’s earlier work, and combined with the expertise of the audit team. The recommendations are defensible, timely, realistic and appropriate for improving the effectiveness of youth-centered website communications. Many focus on practical, actionable items that do not require a full website redevelopment or advanced technical skills.

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Fix broken links** using the provided list. Use a broken link checker—free or pro versions—to identify and repair links thoroughly.
2. **Add subheads** to all content longer than two sentences.
3. **Promote free programs and services** by clearly stating “free” wherever possible to improve search results and encourage youth engagement.
4. **Display contact roles** instead of personal names to avoid outdated information as staff change.
5. **Create a warm and welcoming tone** with minimal verbiage in a creative, inclusive format that resonates with youth.
6. **Update visuals** to be intriguing, warm and welcoming. Avoid human representations that youth identify as “not me,” such as children or adults.
7. **Keep contests and special events up to date** by removing expired offers promptly and including a simple form to capture youth contact information for future notifications.
8. **Incorporate short, practical how-to videos** addressing immediate youth needs to enhance engagement beyond click-through referrals.
9. **Poll youth occasionally** by adding optional polls or comment sections that invite youth input and increase engagement.
10. **Hire youth to assist with content creation** through [Youth Action Grants](#) or practicum students (aged 12–20) from programs such as Capilano University’s IDEA School of Design Interaction Design Program.
11. **Observe youth interacting with your site** by conducting one-on-one usability testing with a UX specialist, potentially in partnership with practicum students.

12. **Update your information on the North Shore Youth Services Directory** quarterly to maintain accurate and current content.
13. **Pin at least one youth-focused social media post** at the top of your social media platforms consistently.
14. **Shift from “news” to storytelling** by framing content as timeless stories unless you can update news regularly (at least twice weekly). Find an example of a “storified” homepage here.
15. **Add a concise, memorable tagline** at the top of your site to help youth quickly identify the site’s relevance.
16. **Use helpful, descriptive alt text on images**—such as “three teens playing basketball”—to improve accessibility and SEO instead of vague labels like “image.6.”
17. **Make images clickable** and use carousel images to showcase multiple themes without lengthening page scroll or consuming extra space.
18. **Provide clear and obvious links** to youth programs and services directly from home and landing pages.
19. **Incorporate youth-created content and authentic youth voices** to enhance the site’s character, authenticity and familiarity.
20. **Enable content sharing** by activating share icons on your site.
21. **Respect Indigenous style** by presenting content by, for and about Indigenous youth in ways that honor Indigenous terminology, language and capitalization. Refer to *Elements of Indigenous Style: A Guide for Writing By and About Indigenous Peoples* by Gregory Younging for guidance.

SEO CONTENT STRATEGY RECOMMENDATIONS

To maximize the power of Search Engine Optimization (SEO) and help youth find your site:

- Create blog-style pages that answer specific questions (e.g., “How can I deal with anxiety as a teen?”).
- Develop Q&A sections using language that reflects long-tail (specific, multi-word) search queries (e.g., “How can I text a counselor on the North Shore?”).
- For sites with a youth landing page, include a button linking to <https://nsyouth.ca/>.
- Optimize page titles and meta descriptions with SEO keywords such as “Free Support for Youth Mental Health | North Shore” or “Find Youth Events & Help in North Vancouver.”

Conclusion

The word “audit,” even within organizational cultures focused on continuous improvement, can feel intimidating. What will be found? How will we be perceived? Have we done something wrong?

By now, we hope you see this process as an invitation—grounded in research and careful evaluation—to reconsider your website through the eyes of youth. Along with your site’s individual review, this report provides a practical starting point for actions that can make a difference—perhaps even sparking the beginning of a website redevelopment project.

We conducted this review with the understanding that community service delivery involves a heavy workload. We hope this report has clarified concerns you already had and revealed opportunities to approach things differently moving forward. By reading this far, you have already invested time equivalent to some of the recommendations we suggest.

Raising the youth-friendly factor of your site opens opportunities to shift energy toward functionality that may enhance your outreach. May you draw inspiration from the possibilities described here, just as you do in your important work with youth.

Appendix A - List of Audited Organizations

Organization Name	Website
1. Capilano Community Services Society	https://www.capservices.ca/
2. City of North Vancouver	https://www.cnv.org/
3. District of North Vancouver	https://www.dnv.org/
4. District of West Vancouver	https://westvancouver.ca/
5. Family Services of the North Shore	https://www.familyservices.bc.ca/
6. Foundry North Shore	https://foundrybc.ca/northshore/
7. Hollyburn Family Services Society	https://www.hollyburn.ca/
8. Hollyburn Community Services Society	https://www.hollyburn-society.ca/
9. Impact North Shore	https://impactnorthshore.ca/
10. Lynn Valley Services Society	https://www.lvss.ca/
11. North Shore Crisis Services Society	https://www.nscss.net/
12. North Shore Disability Resource Centre	https://nsdrc.org/
13. North Shore Neighbourhood House	https://www.nsnh.bc.ca/
14. North Shore Restorative Justice Society	https://www.nsrj.ca/
15. North Shore Women's Centre	https://www.northshorewomen.ca/
16. North Vancouver City Library	https://www.nvcl.ca/
17. North Vancouver District Public Library	https://www.nvdpl.ca/
18. North Vancouver Recreation and Culture	https://www.nvrc.ca/
19. Parkgate Community Services Society	https://parkgatesociety.ca/
20. Vancouver Coastal Health	https://www.vch.ca/en
21. West Vancouver Memorial Library	https://westvanlibrary.ca/

Appendix B – North Shore Youth Demographics

The table below illustrates the diversity of youth aged 15 to 19 on the North Shore in terms of gender, race/culture, socioeconomic status and school participation. This data is drawn from the 2021 Canadian Census of Population, based on a 25% sample.

Table 1. 2021 Census Demographics for Youth Aged 15–19 on the North Shore: District of North Vancouver (DNV), City of North Vancouver (CNV) and District of West Vancouver (DWV).

Characteristic	North Shore		DNV		CNV		DWV	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Age Group 15 - 19	11210	100%	5700	51%	2515	22%	2995	27%
Gender								
Male	5735	51%	2875	50%	1320	52%	1540	51%
Female	5485	49%	2825	50%	1200	48%	1460	49%
Total	11220	100%	5700	100%	2520	100%	3000	100%
School Attendance								
Attended Elementary or Secondary School Only	9445	73%	5075	72%	2245	76%	2125	71%
Attended Post Secondary Only	2375	18%	1290	18%	430	15%	655	22%
Did Not Attend School	1085	8%	620	9%	265	9%	200	7%
Attended Elementary or Secondary and Postsecondary	45	0.3%	20	0.3%	10	0.3%	15	0.5%
Total	12950	100%	7005	100%	2950	100%	2995	100%
Labour Force Status								
In the Labour Force	4420	45%	2580	23%	935	8%	905	8%
Not in the Labour Force	6790	55%	3125	28%	1575	14%	2090	19%
Total	11210	100%	5705	51%	2510	22%	2995	27%
Language Spoken Most Often at Home								
English	8920	80%	4835	85%	1815	73%	2270	76%
Non-Official Languages	1645	15%	610	11%	505	20%	530	18%
English and Non-Official Languages	510	5%	185	3%	145	6%	180	6%
French	110	1%	55	1%	35	1%	20	0.7%
English and French	10	0.1%	10	0.2%	0	0%	0	0%
Total	11195	100%	5695	100%	2500	100%	3000	100%

Characteristic	North Shore		DNV		CNV		DWV	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Indigenous Identity								
Non-Indigenous Identity	10915	97%	5530	97%	2420	96%	2965	99%
Indigenous Identity	300	3%	170	3%	100	4%	30	1%
Total	11215	100%	5700	100%	2520	100%	2995	100%
Citizenship								
Canadian Citizen	9805	87%	5165	91%	2090	83%	2550	85%
Not Canadian Citizen	1405	13%	535	9%	425	17%	445	15%
Total	11210	100%	5700	100%	2515	100%	2995	100%
Immigrant Status								
Non-Immigrants	8280	74%	4560	80%	1740	69%	1980	66%
Non-permanent Residents	575	5%	250	4%	155	6%	170	6%
Immigrants	2360	21%	895	16%	615	25%	850	28%
Total	11215	100%	5705	100%	2510	100%	3000	100%
Visible Minority								
Not a Visible Minority	6805	61%	3940	69%	1395	56%	1470	50%
Chinese	1385	12%	495	9%	125	5%	765	26%
West Asian	945	8%	400	7%	320	13%	225	8%
Filipino	480	4%	155	3%	270	11%	55	2%
South Asian	405	4%	150	3%	110	4%	145	5%
Korean	305	3%	140	2%	90	4%	75	3%
Japanese	215	2%	80	1.4%	50	2%	85	3%
Multiple Visible Minorities	190	2%	100	2%	40	2%	50	2%
Latin American	175	2%	95	2%	60	2%	20	0.7%
Black	95	0.9%	65	1.1%	15	0.6%	15	0.5%
Southeast Asian	75	0.7%	30	0.5%	20	0.8%	25	0.8%
Visible Minority Not Included Elsewhere	75	0.7%	30	0.5%	15	0.6%	30	1.0%
Total	11150	100%	5680	100%	2510	100%	2960	100%

Appendix C – Audit Questions

Shaded responses invite your further consideration.

Note that items with an asterisk do not count towards a score.

1. Accessibility and Inclusivity	Max Score 5
Are there alt text descriptions on all images?	Y = 1
<i>*Test 3 images. How many have alt-text descriptions?</i>	Notation
Are body-text fonts between 12 and 14 points in size?	Y = 1
Is the site's language simple and easy to understand?	Y = 1
Is language consistently in the second person (you/yours/we/ours)?	Y = 1
Are paragraphs typically no more than 2 sentences, each less than 25 words?	Y = 1

2. Content, Multimedia and Look and Feel	Max Score 20
Do pages appear cluttered, with more than 3 sections on a screen?	N = 1
If the organization offers special events and activities for youth, are they organized together and prominently displayed?	Y = 1
Does the site display a visible tagline of three to five words?	Y = 1
Does the homepage feature a carousel of clickable visual images that includes representation of youth?	Y = 1
Does the footer include contact information and priority links?	Y = 1
Do any main pages for youth include a carousel of clickable images?	Y = 1
Does the site have photographs of the physical spaces the organization operates for youth?	Y = 1
Do images feature a diversity of youth?	Y = 1
Are any images slow to load?	N = 1

Are images clickable as a route to more information?	Y = 1 / N = 0 Some = 0.5
<i>*Are there unintended negative meanings in any images?</i>	Notation or N/A
Are any logos or icons labelled to ensure no misunderstandings?	Y = 1 or N/A
Is auto-play off for any videos?	Y = 1 or N/A
Is the sound auto-muted?	Y = 1 or N/A
Does the site include third-party advertising?	N = 1
Does the site include "how to" or other instructional videos?	Y = 1 or N/A
Are any of the site's videos longer than 3 minutes?	N = 1 or N/A
Are videos embedded with other content?	Y = 1 or N/A
Is the play button visible over any video content?	Y = 1 or N/A
Do video clips begin with a commercial?	N = 1 or N/A
Do videos display with captions?	Y = 1 or N/A

3. Navigation and UX	Max Score 11
Is the navigation intuitive and organized by user needs (e.g., "I need help with housing," or "I'm looking for youth mental health support")?	Y = 1
Is there a search box at the top of each page?	Y = 1
Is the search box wide enough (allowing for at least 40 characters)?	Y = 1
Is the search filterable by age, category, or location?	Y = 1
Does the site utilize "link more" or "learn more" in topline navigation? (These phrases are too vague for youth).	N = 1
Does the back button work?	Y = 1
Is the site optimized for mobile?	Y = 1
Does the site have indicators like: "most read" or "most commented upon"?	Y = 1
Does the site use any single "Call-to-Action" (CTA) buttons?	Y = 1
<i>*What are the CTA buttons for?</i>	Notation or N/A
<i>*Are there any broken links?</i>	Notation or N/A
Can associated physical locations be found easily with an embedded locator function, map tool or postal code entry?	Y = 1
Is the URL short, descriptive and easy to remember?	Y = 1

4. Content Clarity and Relevance	Max Score 10
Is content easy to skim and scan, making consistent use of subheads?	Y = 1
<i>*Which links are clearly out-of-date information?</i>	Notation or N/A
Is any content written in all-caps?	N = 1
Is text primarily black on a white background?	Y = 1
<i>*If text is on a coloured background, is the contrast as high (easiest to read) medium (more difficult to read) or low (difficult to read)?</i>	High/Medium/Low or N/A
Does "youth" appear in the site's topline navigation?	Y = 1

Excluding “Our People” or “Our Team” pages, are youth-serving staff listed by name?	N = 1 and Notation or N/A
Does program information include associated costs for participating?	Y = 1
Are costs presented at the top of the program’s information or bottom?	Top = 1 / Bottom = 0 or N/A
Are categories clear and jargon-free?	Y = 1
Are youth voices (e.g., testimonials) and youth-created imagery represented in content?	Y = 1
Is relevant information grouped easily to facilitate one legible screenshot?	Y = 1

5. Trust, Credibility and Input	Max Score 4
Is there a way for users to submit feedback or suggest a correction?	Y = 1
Does the site offer polls, commenting functions or other ways of youth adding content?	Y = 1
<i>*Which links need correction?</i>	Notation or N/A
Is the site free of pop-ups?	Y = 1
Is texting a clear route of contact (i.e., are phone numbers prefaced with “text” or “call”)?	Y = 1

6. Technical and Mobile Performance	Max Score 3
Is the site loading fast (loads in under 2.5 seconds) and responsive on mobile?	Y = 1
Is the site fast (loads in under 2.5 seconds) and responsive on a laptop?	Y = 1
Is urgent help “one click” accessible and visible on appropriate sites?	Y = 1 or N/A

7. Social Media	Max Score 2
Does the site connect to the organization's social media?	Y = 1
<i>*Which social media accounts does the site connect to?</i>	Notation
Does the site or pages have a convenient copy button link to facilitate sharing?	Y = 1
<i>*What appears in the organization's social media "link in bio" section (TikTok/Instagram)?</i>	Notation

8. Security and Privacy	Max Score 4
Are site visitors required to make an account to login?	N = 1
Does the site collect data on youth by requiring them to register and provide personal information for anything?	N = 1
Can creating an account or entering registration information be bypassed?	Y = 1 and Notation or N/A
For sites on sensitive subjects (e.g., health, sexuality, safety) is there a "Leave Page Quickly" button?	Y = 1 or N/A
<i>*If there is a "Leave Page Quickly" button, where does it lead?</i>	Notation or N/A

9. Other	Total Score Max 59
<i>*Task test (unique to each site reviewed)</i>	Notation
<i>*In your opinion are there any other notable features that enhance or challenge the site's youth UX? If so, describe briefly and provide a link to the example.</i>	Notation

Appendix D – Examples of Revised Voice and Tone

Example 1 – CTA-First Messaging: Prioritizing Action in Crisis Communication

Existing Text

The existing text is strong and easy to understand, but it misses putting the call-to-action right at the start. For youth, who prefer quick, direct messages, leading with what to do helps them get the information fast without having to read through extra details.

988 Suicide Crisis Help Line

You deserve to be heard. We're here to listen. A safe space to talk, 24 hours a day, every day of the year. Call or text 9-8-8.

Revised Text

Puts the action first, which is crucial in crisis communications where readers may have limited focus or be in urgent need. For contact CTAs aimed at youth, we'll always lead with "text" instead of "call," since texting is what they are most comfortable with. CTA-first messaging ensures youth know immediately what to do, then follows with the compassionate, reassuring language that builds trust and safety.

988 Suicide Crisis Help Line

Text or call 9-8-8 anytime. You deserve to be heard. We're here to listen. A safe space to talk, 24 hours a day, every day of the year.

Example 2 – From Factual and Institutional to Empathetic and Inviting: Shifting the Reader’s Experience

Existing Text

Reads like a directory listing or program description. It focuses on background details (launch date, address, structure of the program) and uses institutional language (“mobile civilian-led team,” “trauma-informed, culturally safe support”). The program is designed for youth, but the reader is positioned more as an observer of the service than as an active participant.

Peer Assisted Care Team (PACT)

1835 Lonsdale Avenue suite 300 North Vancouver BC V7M 2J8

PACT is a mobile civilian-led team launched on November 4, 2021 that will respond to crisis calls related to mental health and/or substance use on the North Shore. The program pairs a mental health professional and a peer worker to provide trauma-informed, culturally safe support to ages 13+ or adults in the North Shore.

Revised Text

Speaks directly to the reader with second-person pronouns (“We are here for you,” “If you’re 13 years or older and in distress...”). It shifts emphasis from the program’s origins to what it can do for you now. The language is conversational, empathetic, and action-oriented, with phrases that convey care and accessibility.

Peer Assisted Care Team (PACT)

We are here for you. If you’re 13 years or older and in distress, a PACT mental health professional and peer worker will team up to listen, counsel and connect you with more support. We can text, talk or meet you in person to help you in crisis, listening without judgment and suggesting other services that can help you find your way forward.



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