



Community Connections

Community Connections Society of Southeast BC

2024-2025 Annual Report



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Community Connections
Community Connections Society of Southeast BC

Our Annual General Meeting marks another year of pursuing our mission, but for me it feels as though 2024-2025 was merely a blink. It was a year of delivering quality services and working towards things that we expect to come to fruition in the following fiscal;

- The Food Innovation Center
- Cozy Bear Older Adult Housing
- BCBuilds – Market and Affordable Housing New Build Application
- Shelter Opening

Some highlights and significant happenings:

- Our Facilities Manager Harlee came on board just at the end of fiscal and we don't know how we got it all done before she came.
- The first harvest of Cranbrook Urban Farm greens was exciting and tasty, and the farm produced well.
- Our Coldest Night of the Year raised 38K to support the Urban Farm and feed the hungry.
- The Shelter opened this month and although that is beyond the dates of this AGM reporting it just feels too big to go unsaid. We toured 130 people and another 70 after tour day.
- Charlene Stropky retired from the Infant development program.
- Laurie Harris moved on from Better at Home and we welcomed Erinn Willoughby into the position.
- We opened the Seniors Community Connector program, with funding from United Way BC, and Debbie Reid is now coordinator.
- Our longstanding programs that support our community continue to thrive with coordinators who are passionate about their programs and community.
- Be sure to check out the Year At-a-Glance to appreciate the huge scope of all we do.

Nancy Reid, MSW

Executive Director

Community Connections Society of Southeast BC



Board Chair and Vice Chair Reports

As you know, Colleen and Paul resigned last year. We would like to thank them for their years of service and their support as Rachel and I began our terms. I would also like to thank all current Board members for their continuing interest and involvement. I will appreciate everyone's patience as I learn how to chair this AGM!

Much of my term has been spent watching Nancy fly, as one project after another was started, finished, or imagined. It's been a delight working with Nancy and with her amazing staff!

Many of the items from last year's Strategic Plan were realised this year, including acquiring Administrative Support and a Facilities Manager. We had another successful Coldest Night of the Year, Paul returned to help us with the Staff Barbecue, and the Children's Carnival was full to bursting.

From a Board recruitment point of view, we have updated the Board application on the Website to make it easier to complete online. We tried a new strategy with a table in the Market and a draw for a gift card to the Heidout. We had interest from several individuals. I am also happy to report that we have two new nominees for Board positions to be voted on at this meeting:

Robin Hicks is currently Vice President Academic, College of the Rockies. She has extensive experience with Board structure and Governance and is interested in joining the Board to support the important work she sees Community Connections doing in and for our community.

Jayla Toonenburgh has recently started her own counselling service. She believes that joining the Board would give her the opportunity to contribute to an agency that aligns with her values and meets needs she believes are important to her community.

Welcome, Robin and Jayla!

Rachel has information on some of our large ongoing projects:

Community Connections has seen an incredible amount of progress and activity this year, and all of the staff and program employees deserve the highest praise possible. Our board has been cheering you all on as you've overcome some particularly lengthy obstacles with impactful results.

I'm going to highlight four of them:

1) The Cranbrook Urban Farm put its hydroponic growing operation into gear this January, with its first harvest a mere month later. To see all of that hard work and planning produce 600 heads of tender, sweet lettuce weekly, with no dirt, pesticides or herbicides was impressive. The proceeds from Coldest Night of Year this year (\$38,000), went to support this project that aims to grow local lettuce year round to help combat food insecurity. A portion of their yield was donated to programs such as school lunches and the Food Bank, and it was also available for purchase at various locations around town. Stay tuned for the first autumn harvest!

2) Only a couple of months later, aided by a one million dollar donation from United Way BC, the Good Food Programs of CCS finally achieved the go ahead to continue their dream of having all of their programming under one roof. After months of searching, an application for a zoning bylaw amendment, two city council readings, and a final public hearing that resulted in a unanimous vote in favour, the new Cranbrook Food Innovation Centre was truly born by securing the property they needed for their purposes: to continue supporting the community by combating food insecurity and making a basic human need available to everyone.

3) Continuing on the theme of months and/or years of planning coming to fruition, two major housing projects were finally realized. The Step Beyond Shelter recently opened its doors, where 40 welcoming and well thought out shelter spaces await folks experiencing homelessness. This project was done in conjunction with BC Housing and is said to be a model for other communities to follow. The dedication and perseverance required of CCS staff and program employees to make this project a reality is difficult to quantify.

4) The Cozy Bear is another housing project done in conjunction with BC Housing, with CCS as the operator. It will welcome local vulnerable seniors and older adults experiencing, or who are at risk of, homelessness. Thirty homes with a variety of support services are on track to open their doors sometime between December and January.

**Susan Vollmer Board Chair and
Rachel Freitag Vice Chair**

APR '24 TO MAR '25

THE YEAR at-a-glance

SENIORS



146 clients
received avg. 8
services each



toy lending
library
borrowers



182
Affordable Child Care
Benefit applications
supported

CHILDREN & FAMILIES

217 children with
diverse abilities
supported



FOOD



302,420 LBS
of food diverted from
the landfill

24



program
volunteers



172
prenatal
vitamins
given



3573 times
Families attended
Early Years programs



228 families
served by Infant
Development
Program



\$587,859
value

recovered food
donated to
THIRTY-SEVEN
local programs



2200
volunteer
hours



300
Angel Tree
gifts given



109
lunches and
snacks provided



86 families
in parenting
programs
6 parenting
classes



163
referrals for
child care

73,240 lbs



of food provided for
animal feed



75 seniors
received
housekeeping
services



167
families
supported
pre and
postnatal

24 kids

attended
after school
care

3318

CAPC Cranbrook
attendees

1646

CAPC Kimberley
attendees

HOUSING & POVERTY REDUCTION



562
requests for hygiene items



26,086 nights
stayed in the shelter



212K
rental subsidies
given



179 families
housed



94,688
shelter meals



447 hampers
of recovered food given

10 Holiday
Hampers



6 info hours
6 workshops
+ 7 support
groups

WOMEN

1500+

menstrual product
packages given

900+ TIMES

help provided



100+ GYM MEMBERSHIPS

supporting our Women's Resource Centre



LEGAL

480

family law
issues



96 clients
assisted with
Legal Aid/info



482
poverty
law issues

Enhancing the well-being of the diverse
people in the East Kootenay region.



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ccscranbrook.ca | 250.426.2976 | reception@ccssebc.com



Community Connections

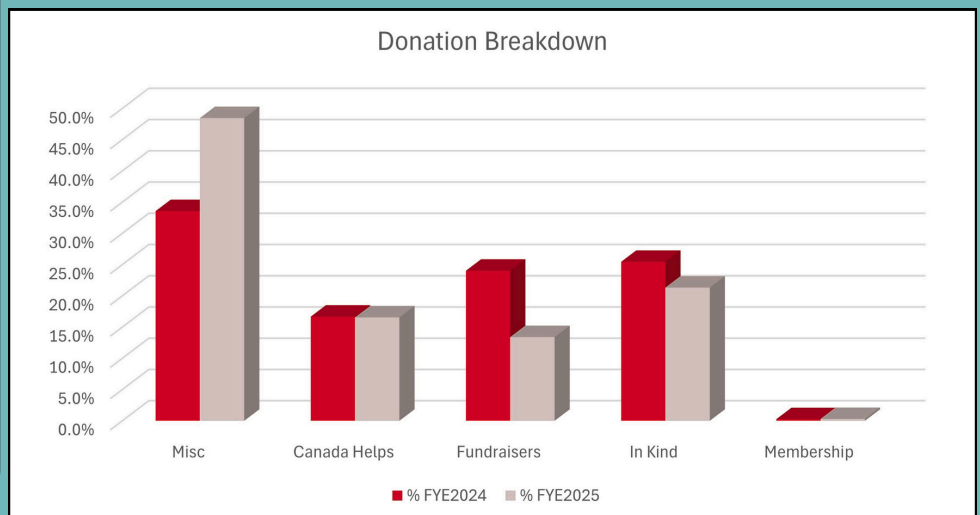
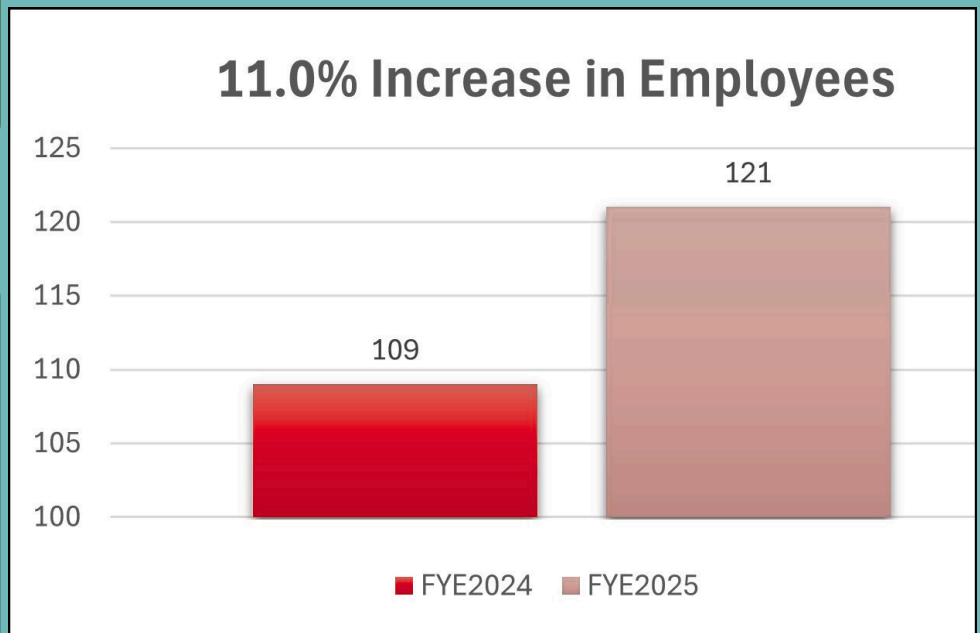
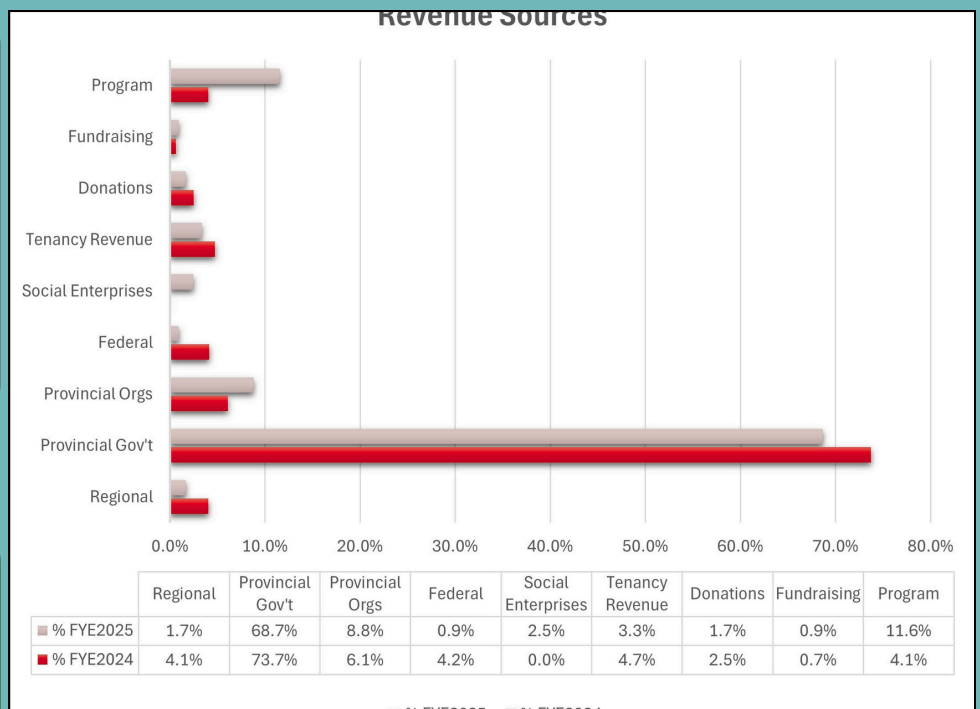
Finance & Administration

1219 Instances of Help Total

Leisure Access Pass Clients Assisted 210

Hygiene and Other Items 562 Instances

Food Recovery Hampers Handed Out 447



Good Food Programs

2024



saved
365,081
kg of CO2
emissions



Diverted
302,420lbs
of food from the landfill



Donated
\$587,859*
worth of food



distributed food to **37**
community programs,
events, schools and groups



Provided
73,240lbs
of animal feed



6
employees



5 special events
with **137**
participants



Logged
2200 hrs
of Volunteer time



25,878
meals made
for community

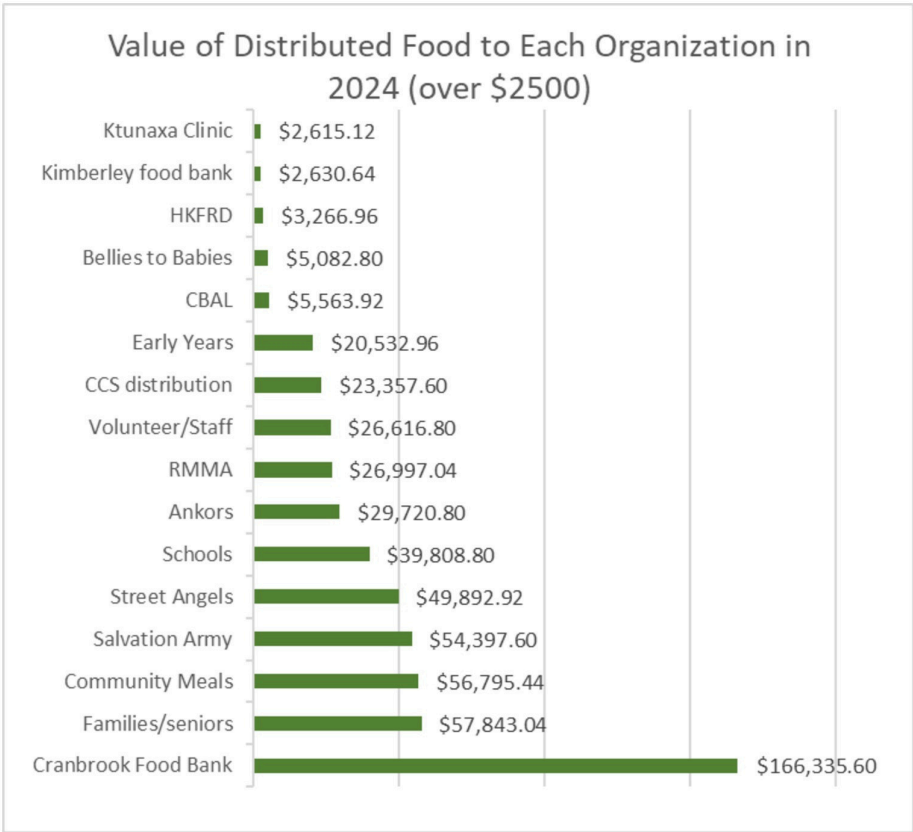
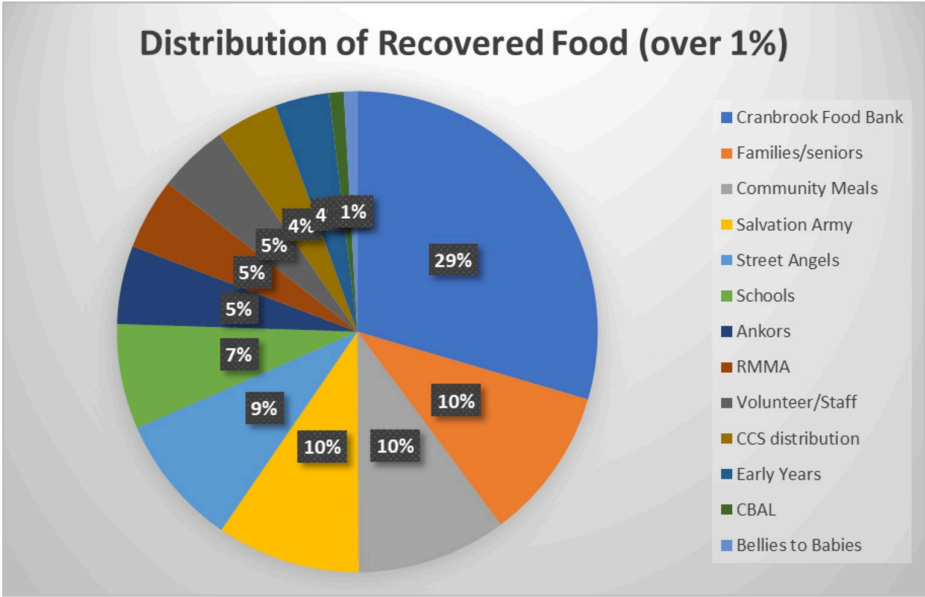
Commissioned
One
Hydroponic
Farm and Hub



- based on \$3.52/lb, see appendix for value per organization

Good Food Programs

Appendix





United Way helping seniors remain independent.

**1178 Services
Provided to 146
Individuals to help
Cranbrook seniors
stay in their homes!**



Thank you to our volunteer Superheroes!!
24 Active Volunteers supported our
program over the course of the year.



300 People
gifted by the 50+
Angel Tree
Project

80 Local seniors received BC
Farmers' Market Nutritional
Coupons this year



Services Provided

- Transportation Assistance
- Grocery Shopping (assisted or delivered)
- Light Housekeeping
- Light Yard Work and Snow Removal
- Odd Jobs/Minor Repairs
- Information and Referrals
- Social Gatherings
- Freezer Meals
- Grocery and Gas Gift Cards
- Taxi Vouchers
- Friendly Visits

LAY COUNSELLING
ADVOCACY
INFORMATION
REFERRALS
CRISIS SUPPORT
WORKSHOPS
SUPPORT GROUPS
HYGIENE PRODUCTS
MENSTRUAL PRODUCTS
CLOTHING

Cranbrook Women's Resource Centre



Our Mission & Services

The Cranbrook Women's Resource Centre (CWRC) works to improve the status of women and their families through direct service provision and by advocating for social and systemic change. We have been a leader in supporting women in our community since 1982. The CWRC's support services include advocacy, lay counselling, information, referrals, crisis support, workshops, peer support groups, free hygiene products, free menstrual products, and free clothing to women in our region. The CWRC is funded fully by donations, grants, and fundraisers. Staff host yearly events to increase awareness about the challenges women face, build community, and raise funds to continue providing programming.

2024/2025 Snapshot

The Women's Centre introduced services in Kimberley this fiscal year, hosting drop-in services on Mondays from 11am-3pm at Grow Cake & Chocolate Factory. Kimberley access is supported by the Kimberley and District Community Foundation. We also continued to provide drop-in hours on Wednesday evenings from 6pm-8pm for What's On Wednesdays (WOW).

900+
Women Served
Directly

The WRC also received funds from the Community Foundation of the Kootenay Rockies to support the creation of a resource library. Thanks to the Foundation's generosity, we have a variety of resources on current women's health and wellbeing issues available for service users to access while in the Centre.

The WRC implemented a new offering this year called Info Hours. Info Hours bring information about community resources directly to women in a conversational, welcoming manner. WRC staff or community partners lead Info Hours on various subjects, including Family Law Protection Orders, the Intimate Images Protection Act, Sexualized Assault Reporting Options, Housing Options and Support Resources, Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing Therapy and other resources. Groups have been well-attended, with participants ranging from service users to community partners.

150+
Menstrual Product
Packages Distributed

The WRC has continued to partner with United Way BC for the Period Promise campaign, which provides funds for menstrual products to girls and women who need them. This year we saw increased access by youth in Kimberley, providing over 50 products to girls who, according to another service provider, would not otherwise have access. We also continue to provide free clothing and hygiene products for any woman in need.

Staff continued to host peer support groups for women to connect with others who share their experience. Groups offered over this period included Healing From Coercive Control, Single Mom's Mental Health, Separation and Divorce, and Infertility Peer Support Groups.

COUNTLESS
items of clothing and
hygiene products were
donated and distributed

Finally, CCS acquired Life Balance Health and Fitness over this fiscal. The WRC continues to provide support to operations and work with the gym to increase access for women who wish to improve their physical health and mobility in a supportive social environment.

We are excited to continue serving our community and introduce new programming in the year to come!

EAST KOOTENAY COMMUNITY LAW ADVOCACY PROGRAM

281

Related to
Income Security

96

Related to
Housing

18

Related to
Debt

13

Related to
Debt

74

Related to
Debt



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Community Connections Society of Southeast BC

THE  **LAW**
FOUNDATION
OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

FAMILY LAW ADVOCATE

FUNDED BY THE LAW FOUNDATION

Providing advocacy services throughout the Kootenays to individuals with assets under \$20,000

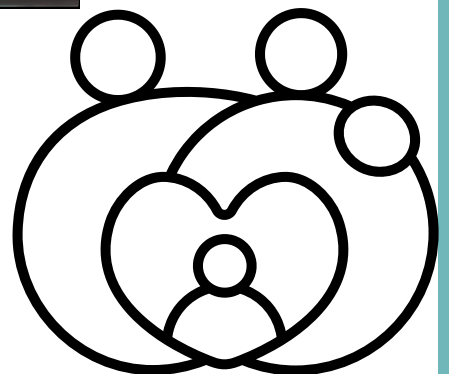
- Legal Issues Include:**
- Guardianship
 - Parenting Time
 - Parental Responsibilities
 - Child and/or Spousal Support
 - Child Protection
 - Divorce/Separation Agreements
 - Protection Orders
 - FMEP
 - Relocation
 - Emergency Asset Restraint

The advocates also refer to community programs and Legal Aid as needed, liaise with community programs and legal counsel; and provide legal information workshops to community.

30-40
Clients served
every month



The Family Law Advocate Program is seeing approximately 450 clients per year, and although we are based in the Creston and Cranbrook area the clients accessing the program range from throughout BC and Alberta (we even had a call from a woman in New Brunswick)





COMMUNITY PARTNER & JUSTICE NAVIGATOR

Legal Aid

The Community Partners Program and the Justice Navigator assists with Legal Aid applications, attending the Cranbrook and Creston courthouses on remand and family law days to assist individuals who do not yet have legal aid or representation.

Provides free legal information, assistance with legal aid application, and help clients access legal resources online. We assist clients in person, over the phone, or through email. Over the past year the programs reputation has grown and is now receiving referrals from the Cranbrook Courthouse, probation, lawyers, and the Native Court Worker. Being present in the courthouse on family and criminal Remand days has helped this process significantly.

Throughout the year, the advocate attends monthly CP meetings. These meetings keep the advocate up to date on any changes within LABC helping to deliver the best support to clients. Working alongside LABC also allows the programs to speed up time sensitive legal aid applications.

Programs have assisted with over 96 Clients/consults this last year

HOMELESS OUTREACH & PREVENTION



What we do:

- Provide info about housing including tenant and landlord rights
- Connect people with housing when available
- Help with housing applications
- Advocate and refer individuals to available resources
- advocate for more housing in Cranbrook
- Provide short term rental subsidies or one time assistance
- Work with other community agencies to help maximize support systems

What we don't do:

- Provide housing
- Help home owners
- Provide assistance outside of Cranbrook/Kimberley
- Subsidize those who are subsidized in their housing
- Be a persons only source of income
- We are short term helpers not long term financial support

Who we serve:

- People of all ages on a case by case basis
- Unhoused Persons
- Unstably housed
- Couch surfing or at a high risk of homelessness

2024 at a Glance

Fielded 4000+ phone
calls per month

Met with 335 new people

Provided service to 600+
individuals and families

79% of individuals + families
housed by our program
remain housed at 12 months

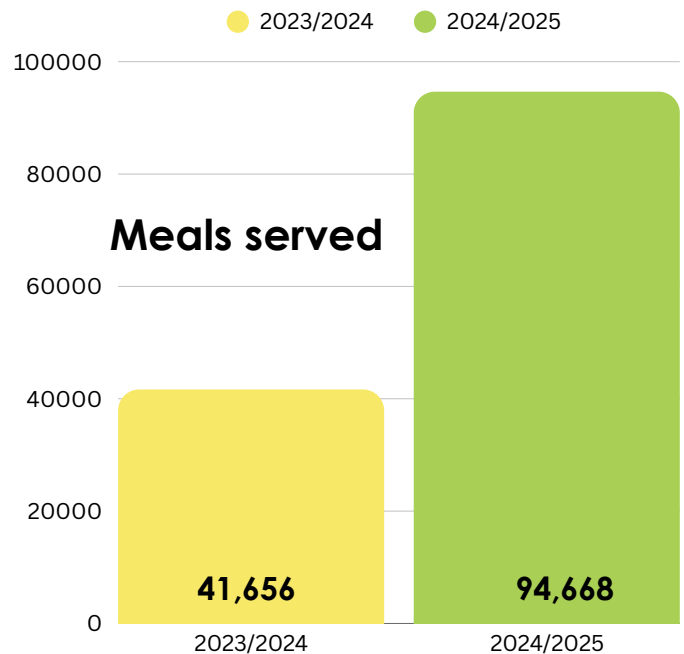
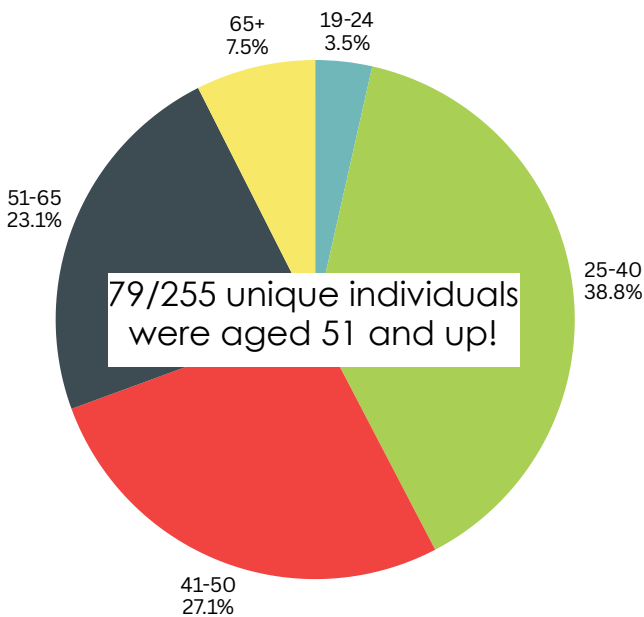
179 individuals and families were housed
through our programs



**Community
Connections**

Community Connections Society of Southeast BC

Homeless Shelter 2024/25 Traffic



We received an additional 9 rooms in November to house more folks through the cold weather.

26,086 bed stays this year up from 20,828 last year.



255 unique individuals served-43% of which are local to Cranbrook/Kimberley

Bellies to Babies

Pregnancy & Family
Resource
Program



Bellies to Babies Pregnancy Outreach Program

Families enjoy learning, connections and support

Bellies to Babies offers pre and postnatal drop in groups each week in Cranbrook and a mixed group and Outreach to Kimberley and Surrounding Areas.

This Spring we raised over \$1000 through Flora's Walk, our first ever Perinatal Mental Health fundraiser

Outreach support needs have increased by approximately 60%



Groups Include

- Mindfulness Practices
- Prenatal Education
- Mental Health
- Yoga
- Walking
- Swimming

We have distributed 172 bottles of prenatal vitamins and supplements and countless items of clothing and diapers

We have provided 109 lunches and snacks during our group sessions to families

We have provided information, support and resources to 167 Prenatal and parenting families

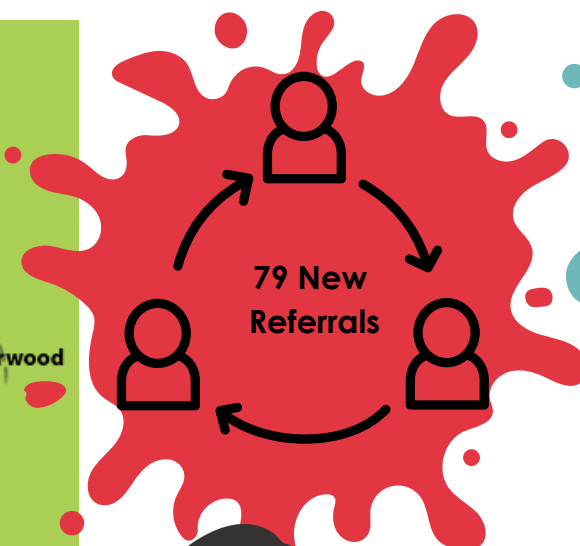
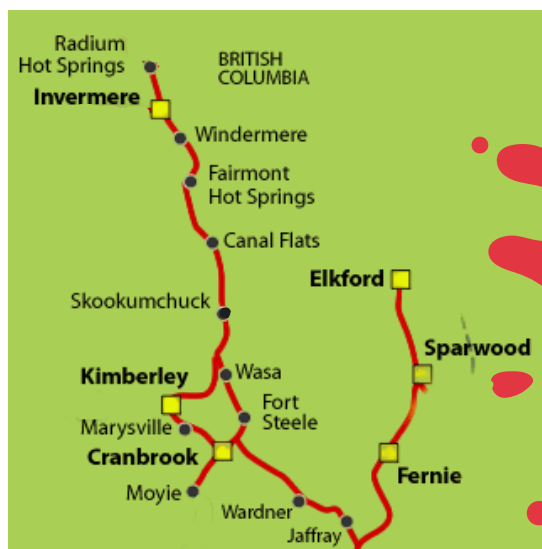
We are partnering with a local yoga instructor to provide subsidized Recovery Based Yoga sessions to families

As always we are grateful for the support of our community!
We receive countless donations on a regular basis that make it all work!

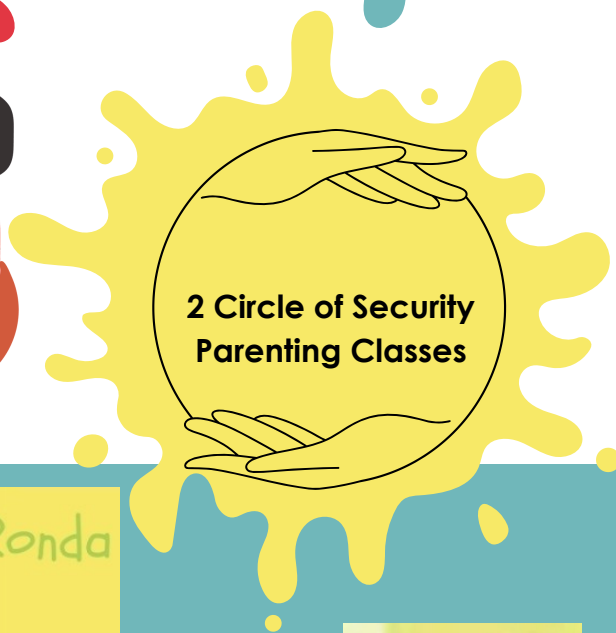


East Kootenay Infant Development Program

Walking with Families on their journey



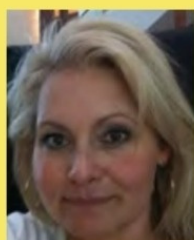
Developmental Communication Groups in partnership with Interior Health's Speech and Language program Supported 24 Families Participating in 6 week series sessions.



Charlene



Ronda



Jackalin



Verena



Michelle

Charlene has retired after 17 great years with IDP. She will be missed!

Southeast Kootenay Child Care Resource and Referral



April 2024 marked a significant period of change for CCRR. After more than 30 years of supporting child care programs and families throughout the entire East Kootenay region, CCRR is now contracted to support the Southeast Kootenay region. The new service area includes Cranbrook and the Elk Valley. To reflect this shift in service area, our name has changed from East Kootenay CCRR to Southeast Kootenay CCRR. Additionally, through a subcontract with Golden CCRR, we continue to support the town of Kimberley as well. Rita Romeo retired after over 30 years of dedicated service with CCRR. Frankie Seitz assumed the role of Coordinator for SKCCRR. Additionally, Colleen Watts, who had worked with CCRR for over five years, moved on to pursue other opportunities.

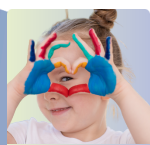
For a couple months SKCCRR operated with a team of three staff members: Frankie Seitz, Shirley Jowsey, and Rachel Drew until December 2024, when Susan Gilchrist joined the team. Relocating from Ontario to Cranbrook. SKCCRR was once again operating at full staff capacity!

We hosted numerous successful workshops and conferences. some examples are:

- October 2024, we partnered with East Kootenay Supported Child Development and EK Early Years to bring in Dr. Deborah MacNamara, who presented on her topic titled *Eat, Sleep, Play: What Kids Need from Caretakers*. The conference had over 150 child care professionals, community partners, and families in attendance.
- March 2025 we hosted *Let's Talk About Touching*, "a comprehensive program designed to support children's learning about personal safety and body awareness, specifically aimed at increasing abuse resistance skills in children aged 0-8 years" (Let's Talk About Touching website). This session was attended by 21 child care professionals.

May 2024 allowed the opportunity for SKCCRR staff to attend the ECEBC Conference in Richmond, BC. It was a rewarding three days filled with learning, connection, and professional growth.

The year 2024 and the beginning of 2025 brought changes and challenges for the SKCCRR team, but we persevered and have grown into the resilient team we are today.



ChildCareReferrals

163



PeopleBorrowing Toys

1181



Workshop Attendees

443



Affordable Child Care
Benefit Supports

182



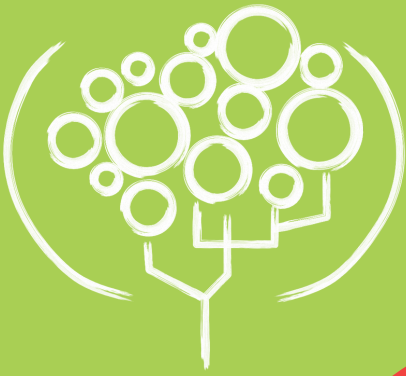
Visits to Licensed Child
Care Facilities

217



ECEBC PeerMentoring
ProgramParticipants

10



nobody's perfect

We Provided 4 Sessions in Cranbrook. 1 Session in Kimberley and 2 Virtual sessions to a total of 86 families with children aged 0-6

Families love these sessions, They are dynamic and fun! We fill up fast and often have a waitlist. Our next session will begin in mid September!

The program reduces barriers to families by offering flexible timing, transportation supports, childminding and food

Families Reported feeling increased connection to community and new resources



Just 4 KIDS

Our Licensed After
School Child Care
Program Provided
Quality Care For 24
Children; After
School, Pro-D and
Non Instructional
Days

This year we have
an amazing team
of 6!



THANK
YOU!!

Thank you to School
District 5
for hosting our
program at
Highlands Elementary

EARLY YEARS CRANBROOK/KIMBERLEY

Food Recovery pick up weekly to support food cost and connection to other resources supports up to 20 families per week

Weekly Park program to support physical literacy, socialization and community connections supports up to 15 families per week



"The employees are kind, activities are organized and new every week. If I have questions about anything at all they always guide me in the right direction. It is also an amazing place to build community and connect with parents that my child will be growing up with."

CAPC Kimberley

Our weekly "Family Fun Night" program offered a less structured opportunity for working parents and their children to connect. Up to 20 families attended each week



Clients say:
"We attend the music group in kimberley, which is wonderful. We also have attended other groups in the past and are so impressed with the variety of activities and times available to spend at the early learning centre."

Modified programming moved 100% outdoors this summer as all Kimberley Early Years programs prepare to move into a brand new space

our music program was often waitlisted as we worked to provide communication skills turn taking, gross motor movement and musical literacy skills to over 40 families this year





Annual Report 2024/2025

In partnership with families , childcare providers and community partners, Supported Child Development (SCD) promotes quality inclusion for Children.

Program Enhancements

- Consultants took Circle of Security Classrooms
- Preparing to train all Support Workers in Circle of Security Classrooms
- Service delivery change was completed, building a more inclusive, collaborative program
- Three surveys sent out yearly. Received back twice as many as previous years.

Survey Feed Back

“They do a wonderful job supporting our child and keeping us in the loop.”

“We appreciate SCD because of their dedication, kindness and support. My son would not be seeing his success without it.”

505 loans
from the
specialized toy
library

139 children on
caseload and 217
children received
Consultant
services

Averaging 3,250
qualified hours
monthly
supporting
children in the
East Kootneys

34 people
employed

31 Childcare
Programs
Supported

91% of parents
felt their child
is welcome
and included in
the program
they attend
due to SCD

CAPC Cranbrook

Community Action Program for Children & Cranbrook Family Resource Program



All three of these drop-in programs are free for families with children from birth to six years of age. Each program is offered once a week, except during school holidays.

Ball Play at the Soccer Dome

We used the soccer dome once a week, instead of once a month, while Tumble Time was getting renovated.

This location was so popular with families that we decided to continue using it on a weekly basis.

Wiggle, Giggle & Grow

This program is offered in the Bellies to Babies space at the Child Development Centre. Tumble Time and Ball Play offer mostly gross motor activities where else at Wiggle, Giggle & Grow there are a variety of toys, playdough, crafts and a circle time with songs and stories. We also offer a healthy snack.



Tumble Time

Tumble Time, located in the basement of St. Mary's Catholic Independent School, needed to be renovated at the beginning of September 2024 and became available to us again in March, 2025. During the renovations, we found temporary locations at the Ktunaxa gym and the soccer dome.

**2024-2025
saw over 447
new children
and 406 new
adults
attending our
groups!**