

# Surviving, Not Thriving

Poverty in the Lower Columbia Region



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## INTRODUCTION

This research was compiled as part of the Teck Serv Student Applied Research Internship which provides an annual opportunity for a Selkirk College student to undertake a local applied research project with a sponsor community organization. The [Skills Centre](#), located in Trail was the sponsor organization for this 2016 applied research project. The research internship is generously supported by [Teck Trail Operations](#) and administered by the [Applied Research & Innovation Centre](#) at Selkirk College. The [Columbia Basin Rural Development Institute](#) (RDI) partnered with the Skills Centre with strong alignment to their [Poverty Reduction Indicators Project](#).

The purpose of this project is to support the development of a poverty reduction strategy for the Lower Columbia Region (LCR). The baseline indicators of poverty and information in this report provide insight into conditions of poverty and will serve to guide an upcoming poverty reduction planning process. The report provides an overview of indicators that are useful for informing planning processes, and can be used to track impact of poverty reduction initiatives over time. Data has been sourced from federal, provincial, and regional agencies, as well as through direct communications with local organizations.

The bulk of this report is authored by student intern, Tu Anh Phung, and the Skills Centre's Executive Director, Jan Morton, with support from a small informal poverty reduction advisory group. The RDI provided data and supported analysis, implementing poverty plans, and edited and prepared the report for publication.

## CONTEXT

BC is the only province in Canada that has not made a commitment to a provincial poverty reduction plan. Other provinces and territories are in varying stages of implementing poverty reduction initiatives not available in BC that help communities address poverty 'on the ground'. The federal government has recently issued a discussion paper which explores similar themes and indicator measures that could be incorporated into a National Poverty Reduction Plan.<sup>1</sup>

Apart from the importance of being concerned for the well-being of individuals living in poverty, there is an economic argument to be made for addressing poverty. The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives *The Cost of Poverty in BC* report notes that the costs of inaction far exceed the costs of taking action.<sup>2</sup> Their findings suggest that BC is spending between \$8.1 and \$9.2 billion per year to maintain the status quo of poverty, more than double what it would cost to significantly reduce those conditions.

Previous work done in the LCR with the [Women Creating Change](#) (WCC) project has, and continues to have, a positive influence on the lives of a number of women, some of whom are living in poverty. Recognizing that poverty touches more than just women, it is imperative that we bring together key organizations and stakeholders to develop a plan with strategies that make a measureable difference to individuals, families, and the region as a whole.

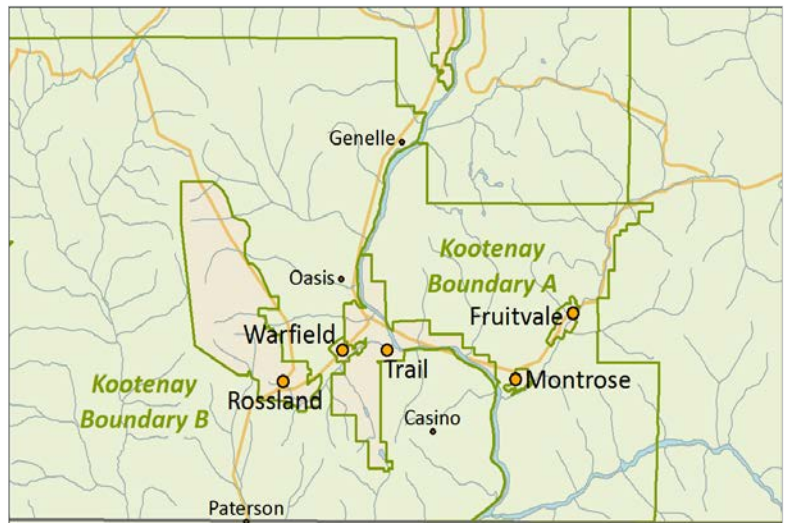
The Skills Centre is part of a larger network concerned with poverty reduction. In addition to working with other agencies in the LCR, the Skills Centre is in regular communication with a Poverty Reduction Working Group which has been convened by the [Columbia Basin Trust](#) (CBT). The group includes representation from the LCR, Nelson, Revelstoke, and Cranbrook, and also includes the RDI which provides assistance accessing and analyzing data which can be used to understand poverty and to measure impact of efforts over time. Extending the network further, there is both the [BC Poverty Reduction Coalition](#) and the Vibrant Communities program [Tamarack Institute for Community Engagement](#).

## STUDY AREA

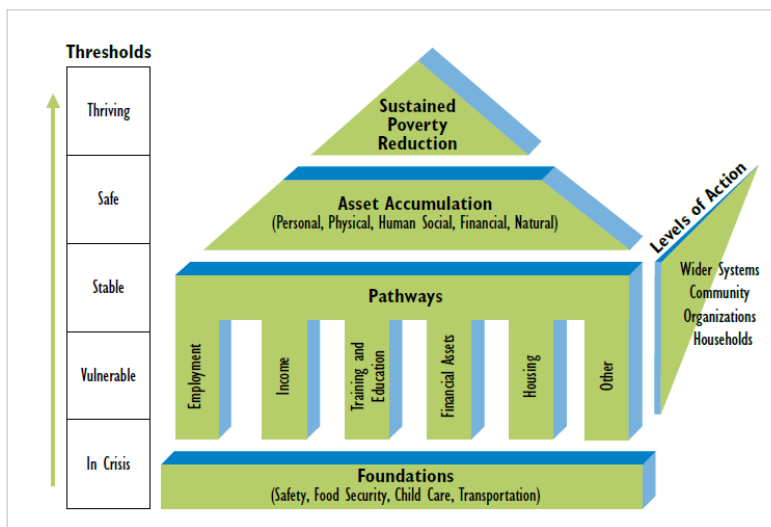
For this project, the study area is the Lower Columbia Region (LCR). Located in the West Kootenays, the LCR consists of the municipalities of Trail, Rossland, Fruitvale, Montrose, Warfield, and and Regional District of Kootenay Boundary (RDKB) Electoral Areas A and B. **Figure 1** shows the geographic area of the LCR.

## THE TAMARACK FRAMEWORK

When investigating poverty in communities, it is essential to consider it as a system, as opposed to a series of individual issues and initiatives that address the immediate symptoms of poverty. One useful model is the Comprehensive Framework developed by Tamarack's Vibrant Communities program which is a unique initiative that supports and links communities and regions from across Canada who are experimenting with comprehensive and collaborative approaches to poverty reduction. To help guide the participating communities, Vibrant Communities introduced a Comprehensive Framework in a report entitled [A Compendium of Poverty Reduction Strategies and Frameworks](#).



**Figure 1:** Map of Lower Columbia Region



**Figure 2:** Comprehensive Framework for Poverty Reduction<sup>3</sup>

The schematic shown in **Figure 2** describes the broad range of strategies that need to be implemented at a number of levels over a period of time to build up the range of assets that allow households to *thrive* as opposed to simply *survive*.

Through a process of planning that includes all the key stakeholders, a community or region will identify specific foundational strategies and pathways on which to focus its efforts. Key stakeholders include organizations delivering services, local and regional government, and the private sector. Communities typically select three to five key issues or pillars on which teams can work together to implement creative, collaborative, and efficient solutions that have a positive, measureable impact on individuals and households living in poverty.

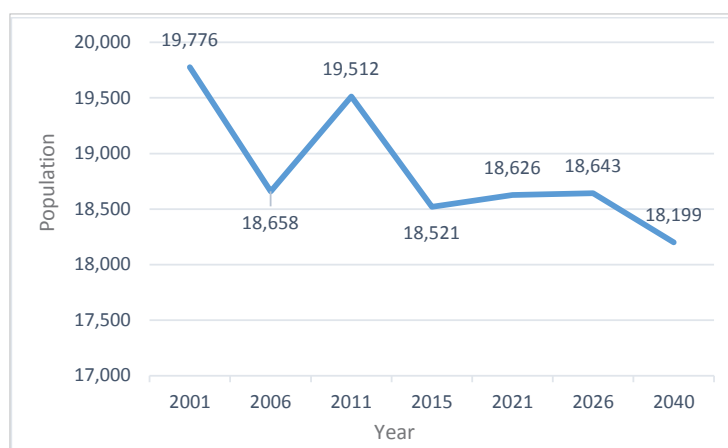
## DEMOGRAPHICS

To begin building a picture of poverty in the LCR, it is useful to understand it in context with regional demographics. According to Statistics Canada Census surveys, between 2006 and 2011, the population of the LCR increased by more than 600 residents, or by 3.3%. This represents a reversal of the population decline seen between 2001 and 2006, when the region lost more than 5% of its population, declining from 19,619 to 18,615, as shown in **Table 1**.

For all communities, except RDKB Area A which saw a slight increase, the population declined from 2001 to 2006. Rossland, Trail, Fruitvale, and Montrose then saw a growth in population from 2006 to 2011. Rossland saw the largest proportional population growth of 8.5%, followed by Trail, which grew 6.1%. Fruitvale and Montrose saw a growth of 3.3% and 1.8% respectively. Warfield and RDKB Areas A and B saw a decline in population. RDKB Area A lost more than 140 residents, a decline of 7.2%, while RDKB Area B lost more than 20 residents, or 1.6% of the population. Warfield's population declined by nearly 30 residents, or 1.7%. BC Stats Population Estimates for 2015 show a slight increase in population for Rossland and Fruitvale from 2011, while the other communities show a decrease.

In 2011, the largest population centre in the LCR was Trail, representing 40% of the population, with Rossland representing 19%. As shown in **Figure 3**, Fruitvale, Montrose, and RDKB Area A account for 25% of the region's population, while Warfield and RDKB Area B represent 9% and 7% respectively.

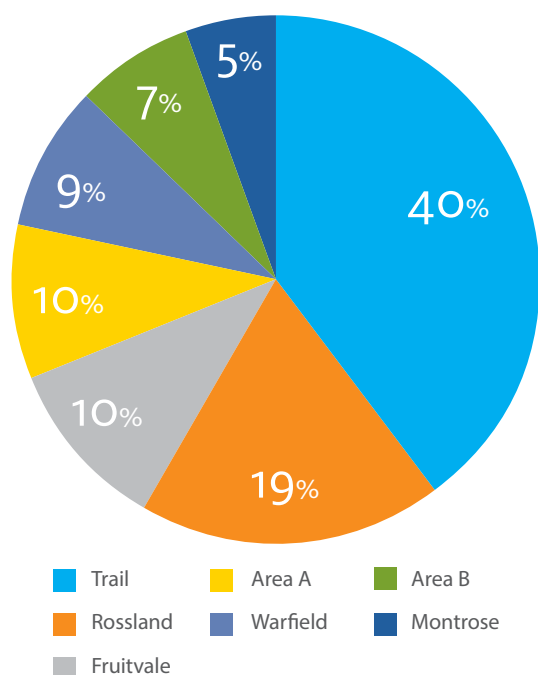
As shown in **Figure 4**, BC Stats projections indicate a slight growth in population in the Trail LHA to 2026, then a decline in population to the year 2040.



**Figure 4:** Population projections to 2040 for Trail Local Health Area<sup>6</sup>

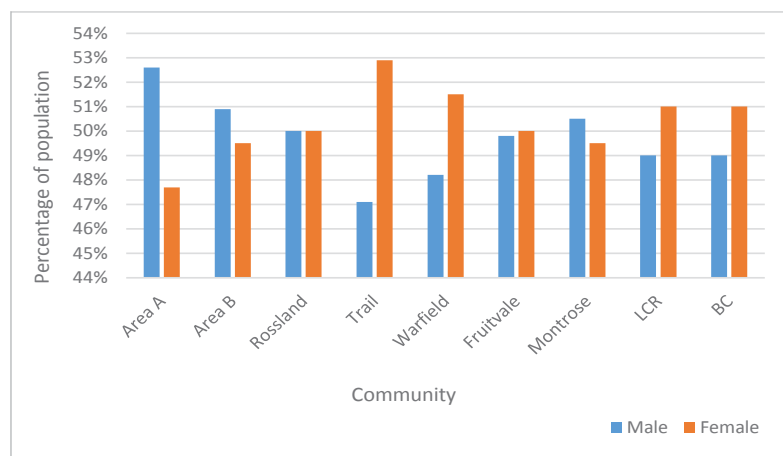
	2001	2006	2011	2015
RDKB Area A	1,984	1,989	1,845	n/d
RDKB Area B	1,583	1,418	1,395	n/d
Rossland	3,646	3,278	3,556	3,575
Trail	7,575	7,237	7,681	7,448
Warfield	1,739	1,729	1,700	1,662
Fruitvale	2,025	1,952	2,016	2,064
Montrose	1,067	1,012	1,030	1,010
LCR	19,619	18,615	19,223	15,759

**Table 1:** Population by jurisdiction for LCR for 2001, 2006, 2011<sup>4</sup> and 2015<sup>5</sup>



**Figure 3:** Population distribution of Lower Columbia Region for 2011<sup>4</sup>

The number of females in the LCR is generally slightly higher than males, though this differs by jurisdiction, as **Figure 5** shows. Overall, the region shows the same balance of sexes as BC as a whole, with women at 51% of the total population. In Trail, Warfield, and Fruitvale there is a higher proportion of women than men, while in Montrose and RDKB Areas A and B the opposite is true. Rossland has an equal number of men and women.



**Figure 5:** Proportion of the population by gender for LCR jurisdictions and BC, 2011<sup>4</sup>

	Median age 2006	Median age 2011
RDKB Area A	43.5%	46.9%
RDKB Area B	47.3%	51.2%
Rossland	41.9%	39.9%
Trail	49.4%	49.8%
Warfield	43.9%	45.4%
Fruitvale	43.5%	45.3%
Montrose	46.9%	50%
BC	40.8%	41.9%

**Table 2:** Median age for LCR communities and BC, 2006 and 2011<sup>4,9</sup>

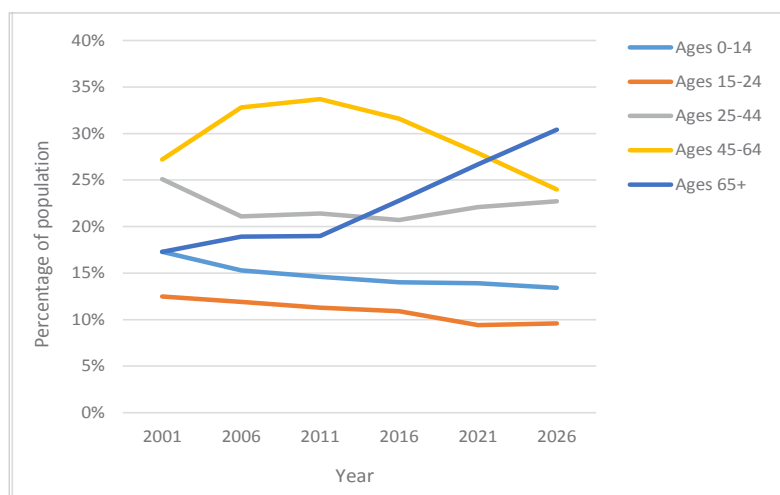
Of significance when looking at gender distribution is the lone-parent families in the region. As indicated in the *Gender Based Analysis of Economic Opportunity* report, lone-parents head 13% of the region's families, and there were more than three times as many female led lone-parent families (555) as male led lone-parent families (175) in the LCR in 2011.<sup>7</sup> While being a lone-parent family is not an absolute predictor of poverty, the challenges faced by that lone-parent to generate income, nurture the family, and maintain the household is more daunting than for a typical two-parent household. The 2015 [BC Child Poverty Report Card](#) notes that one in two children of single parents were poor in 2013.<sup>8</sup>

In all communities across the LCR, except Rossland in 2011, the median age is higher than that of BC (see **Table 2**). The median age in Rossland in 2011 was 39.9, two years younger than BC's median age of 41.9. RDKB Area B has the highest median age, 51.2, nearly ten years older than BC's median age, followed by Montrose (50) and Trail (49.8). Across the region, the median age in all communities except Rossland has increased since 2006, while Rossland's has dropped.

BC Stats projections show that by 2026, seniors will be the largest age group in the LCR, representing over 30% of all residents in the region. The second largest group will be older adults (45 to 64), though this group will decline from one-third of the population to less than a quarter of the population as they age and become seniors. While the proportion of younger adults (25 to 44) will grow between 2016 and 2026, it will not recover to 2001 levels, when this age group represented more than a quarter of the region's population.



The proportion of children and youth will continue to decline between the present and 2026, and both groups combined will represent less than a quarter of the region's population by then. These projected trends are shown in **Figure 6** and detailed percentages are provided in **Table 3**.



**Figure 6:** Age group projections in the LCR to 2026<sup>6</sup>

	2001	2006	2011	2016	2021	2026
Ages 0-14	17.3%	15.3%	14.6%	14.0%	13.9%	13.4%
Ages 15-24	12.5%	11.9%	11.3%	10.9%	9.4%	9.6%
Ages 25-44	25.1%	21.1%	21.4%	20.7%	22.1%	22.7%
Ages 45-64	27.2%	32.8%	33.7%	31.6%	27.9%	24.0%
Ages 65+	17.3%	18.9%	19.0%	22.8%	26.7%	30.4%
Total Population	19,619	18,615	19,180	19,288	19,288	19,365

**Table 3:** Age group projections in the LCR to 2026<sup>6</sup>

## INCOME & EMPLOYMENT

A widely acknowledged indicator of poverty is income. The availability of sufficient resources to afford adequate food, shelter, clothing, transportation, child care, and other necessities are a measure of economic and social well-being. This section reviews the following indicators:

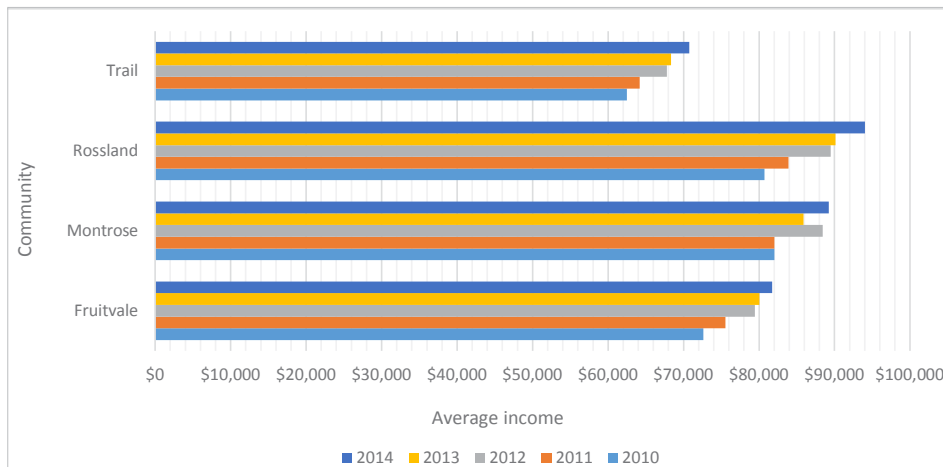
- Median & Average Income
- Low Income Measure
- Income Distribution
- Living Wage
- Market Basket Measure & Low Income Cut-off
- Employment Rates & Work BC Client Numbers

## MEDIAN & AVERAGE INCOME

This indicator includes both the median and average income for all families within the LCR. Median income values differ from average income values in that they represent the mid-point in an income distribution, meaning half of the population has incomes above that point and half below. The average incomes presented are based on the average for a census family<sup>1</sup>, while the median income presented is per individual. Data was sourced from the Statistics Canada Taxfiler data, and includes a comparison of the years 2010 to 2014. The data presented is based on postal code, and therefore does not fully align with legal municipal boundaries, nor does it include RDKB Areas A and B, but rather includes the municipality as well as the general area surrounding that municipality. For detailed information regarding boundaries, please [contact the RDI](#).

<sup>1</sup>Family Categories are derived from Statistics Canada:<sup>39</sup> **Census Family** classifies people in the following manner: 1) couples (married or common-law) living in the same dwelling, with or without children; and 2) lone-parents (male or female) with one or more children. The residual population is called "persons not in census families" and is made up of persons living alone and of persons living in a household but who are not part of a couple family or lone-parent family. **Children** are taxfilers or imputed persons in couple and lone-parent families. Taxfiling children do not live with their spouse, have no children of their own and live with their parent or parents. The data available identifies children as 0 -17 years of age.<sup>40</sup> **Lone-Parent Family** is a family with only one parent, male or female, and with at least one child. **Couple Family** consists of a couple living together (whether married or common-law) at the same address, and any children living at the same address; taxfiling children do not live with their spouse, have no child of their own and live with their parent or parents. **Persons not in Census Families** are individuals who are not part of a census family – couple family or a lone-parent family. These persons may live with their married children or with their children who have children of their own (e.g., grandparent). They may be living with a family to whom they are related (e.g., sibling, cousin) or unrelated (e.g., lodger, roommate). They may also be living alone or with other persons not in census families. **Seniors (65+)** is a grouping of persons 65 years of age and over.<sup>40</sup> **Total Persons** is a grouping of Census Families and Persons not in Census Families.<sup>40</sup>

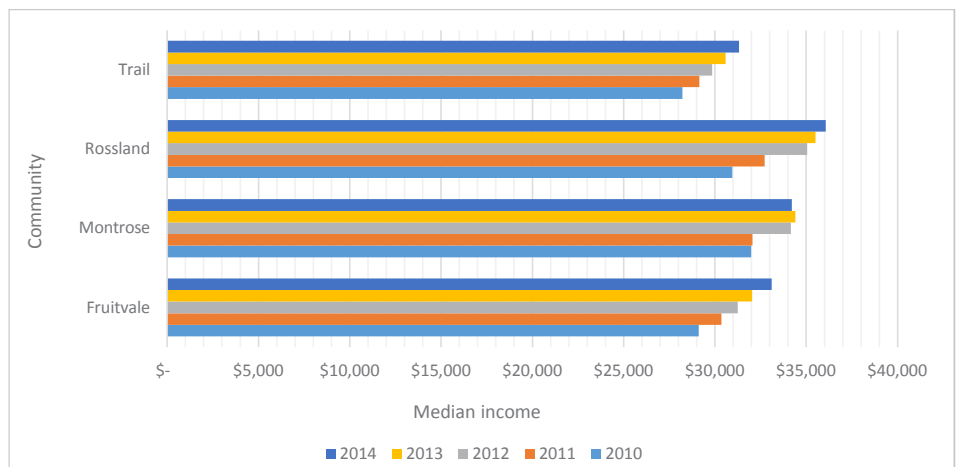




As shown in **Figure 7**, after 2010, families in Rossland consistently had the highest average income in the LCR. Rossland also experienced the greatest change in average incomes between 2010 and 2014, with a 17% increase, while Montrose experienced a 9% increase, and Fruitvale and Trail experienced increases of 12% and 13% respectively. Trail consistently had the lowest average incomes; on average the average incomes were \$20,936 less than in Rossland.

**Figure 7:** Average income for all families, by community, 2010 to 2014<sup>10</sup>

The median income for individuals shows less of a range than the average income for families; however, the general trends remain consistent between these two indicators. As shown in **Figure 8**, Rossland has the highest median income between 2011 and 2014, while Montrose had the highest median income in 2010. Rossland also experienced the greatest change between 2010 and 2014, with a 17% increase (from \$30,950 in 2010 to \$36,070 in 2014). Montrose experienced the smallest change between 2010 and 2014 of just 7%, while Fruitvale and Trail saw increases of 14% and 11% respectively. Trail consistently had the lowest median income of the four communities; on average the median incomes were \$4,244 less than in Rossland.



**Figure 8:** Median income for individuals, by community, 2010 to 2014<sup>11</sup>

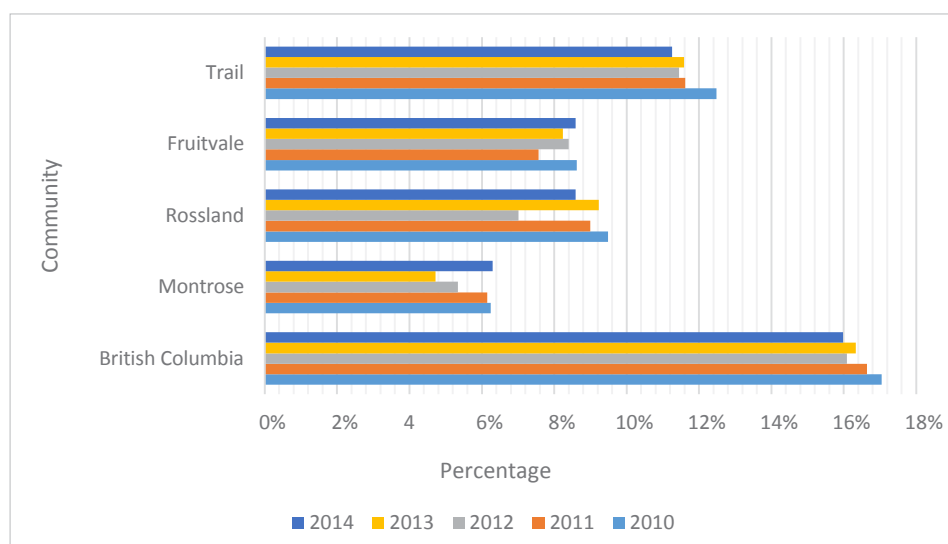
Income levels reflect relative opportunities in a local economy, and income is a significant determinant of personal well-being. However, looking solely at income should not be construed as a measure of poverty as it does not include external supports that a family may have access to that are not represented in income tax data (e.g., inexpensive child care, education, medical costs), the family's ability to participate in the economy (e.g., seasonal employment, disability, unemployment), nor does it factor in regional differences in the cost of living (e.g., food, shelter, transportation).<sup>12</sup> Looking at the Low Income Measure, Low Income Cut-off, Market Basket Measure, or other material deprivation measures can provide a more accurate measure of poverty.

## LOW INCOME MEASURE

The Low Income Measure (LIM) is a relative measure of low income. "The LIM is a fixed percentage (50%) of median adjusted household income, where "adjusted" means that household needs are taken into account. Adjustment for household sizes reflects the fact that a household's needs increase as the number of members increases. Most would agree that a household of six has greater needs than a household of two, although these needs are not necessarily three times as costly."<sup>13</sup>

A census family is considered to be low income when their income is below the LIM for their family type and size. This report provides a picture of how different families are impacted by poverty over a five-year time span, from 2010 to 2014. Data presented is from the after-tax income reporting obtained from Statistics Canada Taxfiler data. Family categories are as defined by Statistics Canada<sup>1</sup>. The data presented is based on postal code, and therefore does not fully align with legal municipal boundaries, nor does it include RDKB Areas A and B, but rather includes the municipality as well as the general area surrounding that municipality. Due to the constraints with the data source, Warfield was not able to be adequately isolated and is therefore excluded, and in some cases Montrose was also excluded due to data quality concerns. Data for low income seniors (65+) was not complete, and is therefore not included.

The impacts of low income on health and education have been studied extensively.<sup>14</sup> Persons living with a low income may have difficulties accessing safe and affordable housing, nutritious food, adequate child care, transportation, and other necessary goods. Relying solely on the LIM to measure poverty however, can be problematic according to social policy researchers. Poverty line indicators such as LIM can underreport income not captured within tax data (e.g., cash, informal economy), and otherwise not capture specific experiences such as assets, access to inexpensive housing, external financial support, and others. Given the limitations of the LIM, incorporating a complementary measure such as a material deprivation index is recommended to complement the information that is part of a poverty line measure and provide a more accurate picture of the level of poverty.<sup>12</sup> This type of index however is not currently available.



As shown in **Figure 9**, all of the communities within the LCR are below the provincial average for the Low Income Measure. Montrose has consistently had the lowest incidence of persons with low income ranging from 4.7% in 2013 to 6.2% in 2014, while Trail has had the highest, ranging from 11.2% in 2014 to 12.4% in 2010.

**Figure 9:** Percentage of low income total persons by community and BC for 2010 to 2014<sup>15</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Family Categories are derived from Statistics Canada:<sup>39</sup> **Census Family** classifies people in the following manner: 1) couples (married or common-law) living in the same dwelling, with or without children; and 2) lone-parents (male or female) with one or more children. The residual population is called "persons not in census families" and is made up of persons living alone and of persons living in a household but who are not part of a couple family or lone-parent family. **Children** are taxfilers or imputed persons in couple and lone-parent families. Taxfiling children do not live with their spouse, have no children of their own and live with their parent or parents. The data available identifies children as 0-17 years of age.<sup>40</sup> **Lone-Parent Family** is a family with only one parent, male or female, and with at least one child. **Couple Family** consists of a couple living together (whether married or common-law) at the same address, and any children living at the same address; taxfiling children do not live with their spouse, have no child of their own and live with their parent or parents. **Persons not in Census Families** are individuals who are not part of a census family – couple family or a lone-parent family. These persons may live with their married children or with their children who have children of their own (e.g., grandparent). They may be living with a family to whom they are related (e.g., sibling, cousin) or unrelated (e.g., lodger, roommate). They may also be living alone or with other persons not in census families. **Seniors (65+)** is a grouping of persons 65 years of age and over.<sup>40</sup> **Total Persons** is a grouping of Census Families and Persons not in Census Families.<sup>40</sup>

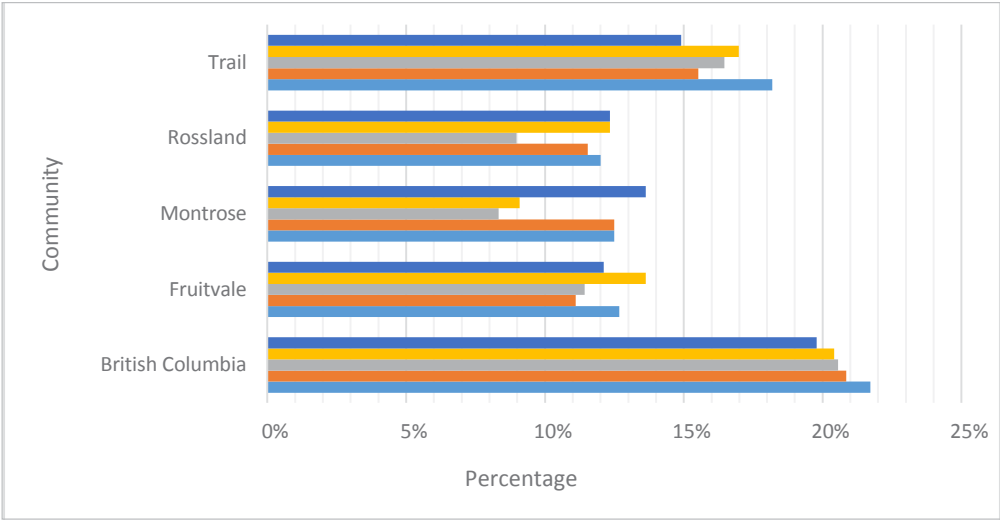


Figure 10: Percentage of low income children (ages 0 to 17) by community and BC for 2010 to 2014<sup>15</sup>

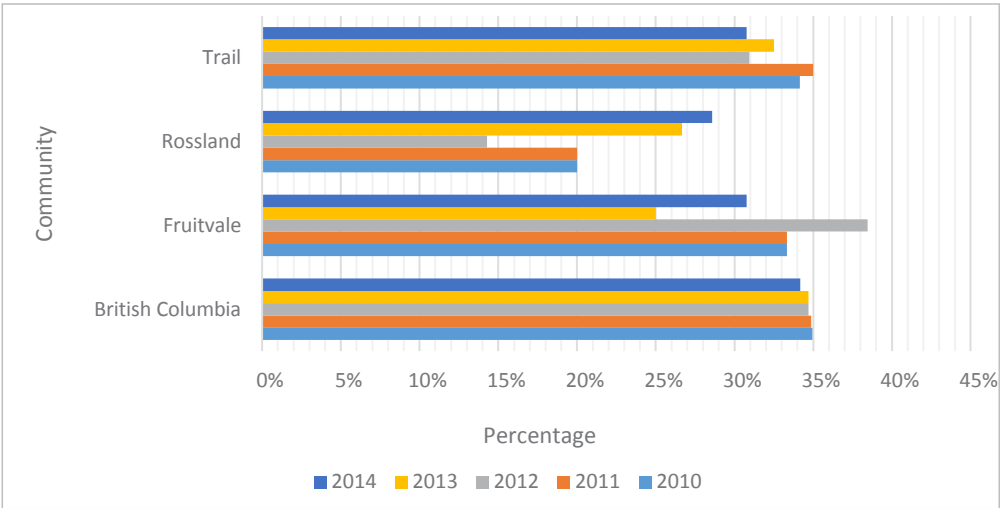


Figure 11: Percentage of low income lone-parent families by community and BC for 2010 to 2014<sup>15</sup>

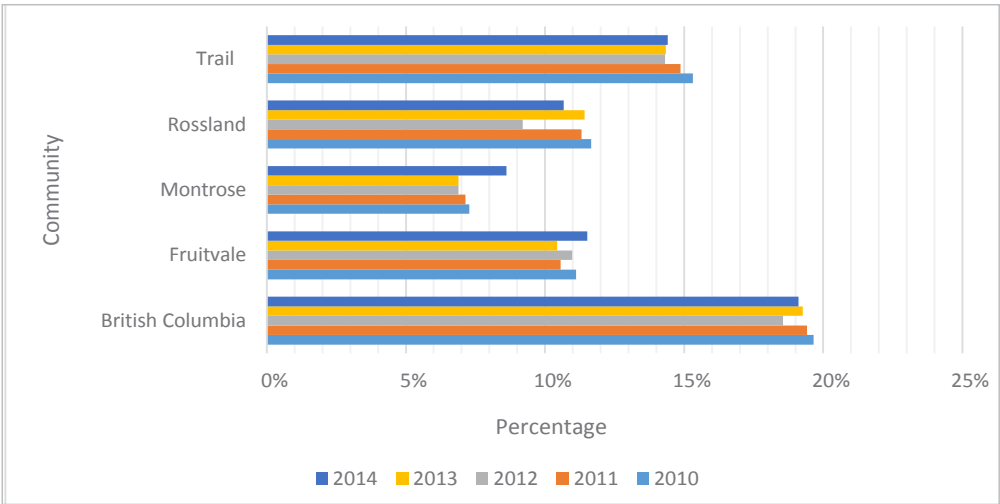


Figure 12: Percentage of low income families by community and BC for 2010 to 2014<sup>15</sup>

In the Kootenay Boundary Regional District in 2013, there were 990 children living in poverty. Due to a variety of limitations in available data, a discrete number cannot be provided for the LCR.

As shown in **Figure 9** to **Figure 14**, all of the communities for all the family types show below provincial average percentages for the Low Income Measure (LIM). In most family categories, Trail has the highest percentage of low income persons, however this is not the case for couple families between 2010 to 2013, when Rossland had the highest incidence.

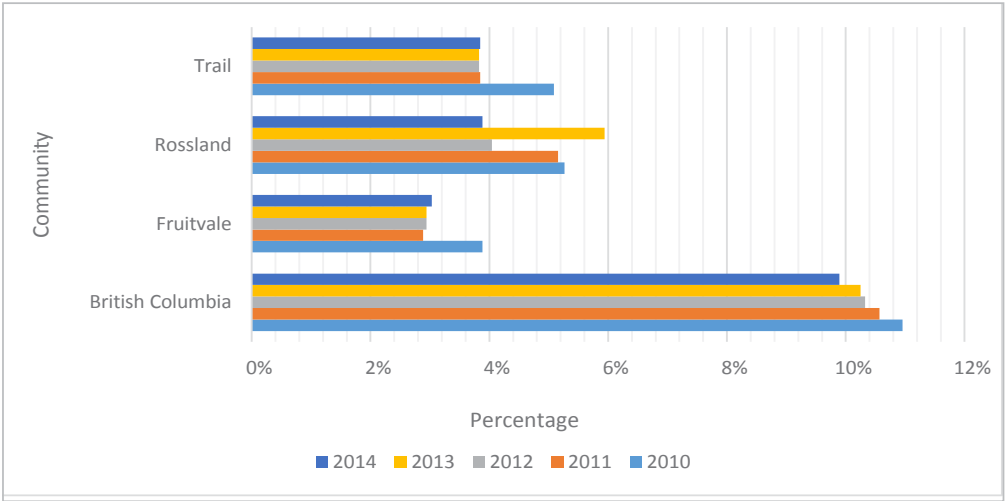


Figure 13: Percentage of low income couple families by community and BC for 2010 to 2014<sup>15</sup>

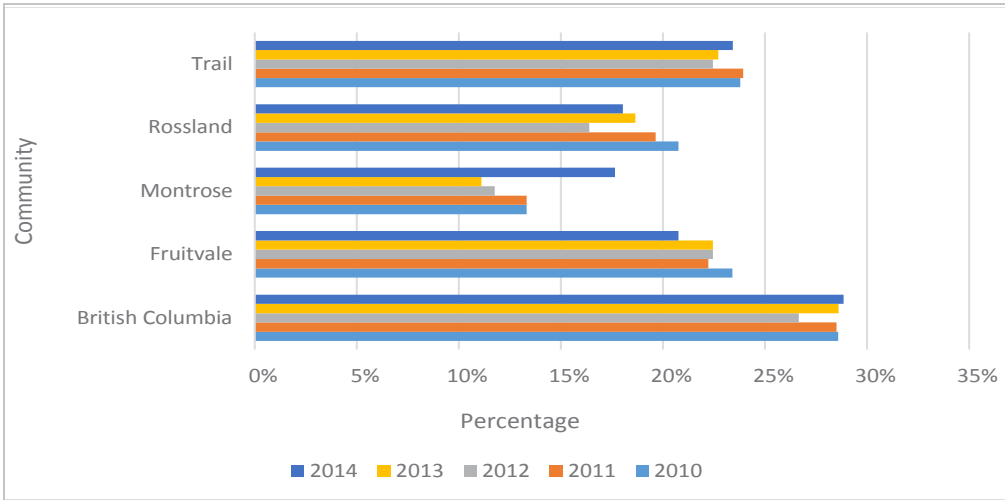


Figure 14: Percentage of low income persons not in census families by community and BC for 2010 to 2014<sup>15</sup>

In 2014, the lowest percentage of low income families in the category of non-family persons was in Montrose (17.6%), while the highest was in Trail (23.4%). For the category of couple families, the lowest percentage was in Fruitvale (3.0%) in 2014, while the highest was in Trail (3.8%). For the category of families, the lowest percentage was in Montrose (8.6%) in 2014, while the highest was in Trail (14.4%). For the category of lone-parent families, the lowest percentage was in Rossland (28.5%) in 2014, while the highest was in Trail and Fruitvale (30.7%). For the category of children, the lowest percentage was in Fruitvale (12.1%) in 2014, while the highest was in Trail (14.9%).



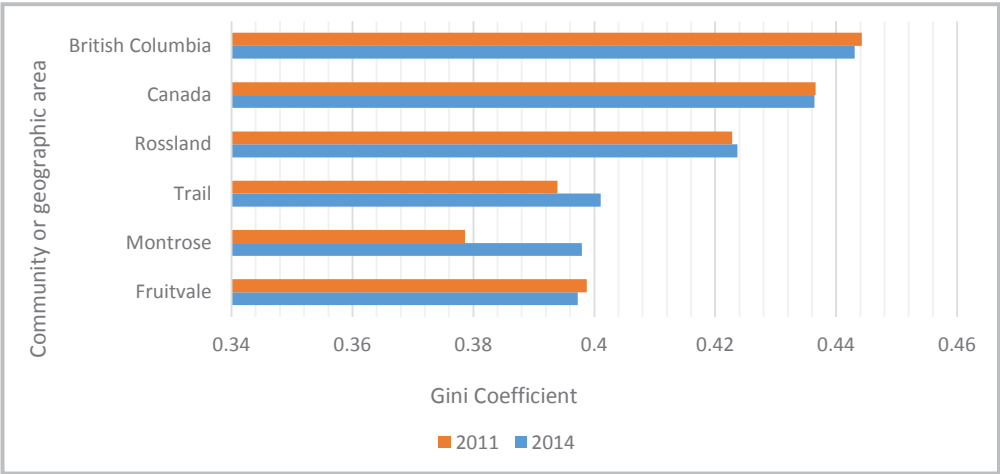


INCOME DISTRIBUTION

This indicator tracks the distribution of personal income, by postal code, using the Gini Index. The Gini Index is a measure of inequality.<sup>16</sup> The RDI's analysis calculates Gini coefficients for after-tax incomes. Data for this indicator were gathered from Statistics Canada's Taxfiler statistics.<sup>ii,17</sup>

Information on the distribution of income shows how well our communities are doing at providing earning opportunities. The Conference Board of Canada notes that income inequality "is an important indicator of equity in an economy, and has implications for other social outcomes such as crime and life satisfaction".<sup>18</sup>

**Figure 15** shows the Gini Index for each community in the LCR as well as BC. The community of Warfield is not included as the data available was not representative. Higher Gini Index values indicate higher inequality in a population's income. Perfect equality (where every member of a population has the same income) would be represented by a score of zero.



Rossland shows the largest disparity between high income earners and low income earners. Trail, Montrose, and Fruitvale show similar values of disparity for 2014. Montrose and Trail both experienced an increase in the levels of income disparity between 2011 and 2014; a 5% increase for Montrose, and a 2% increase for Trail. Of note is that BC and Canada have higher levels of income disparity than any of the communities in the LCR.

**Figure 15:** Gini Coefficient for 2011 and 2014 for communities in the Lower Columbia Region, BC, and Canada<sup>11</sup>

<sup>ii</sup>Note that the distortion with some data can be high for small communities.

## LIVING WAGE

The Living Wage is a national and international campaign to raise awareness of the costs of living, and is considered the minimum income necessary for a household to meet their basic needs. In Canada, the living wage for a community is commonly calculated based on the needs of a household consisting of two wage-earning adults and two children (aged four and seven). The needs taken into account include the costs of shelter and other expenses such as utilities, nutrition, clothing, transport, child care, and education. To the degree possible, it takes into account the costs specific to a particular community so, for instance, will include local housing, food, and other costs.

The Centre for Policy Alternatives provides the [Canadian Living Wage Framework](#) as a methodology for the living wage calculation, thus ensuring consistency in process from one community to the next. This calculation includes health related costs, including basic health insurance, assuming health insurance and sick leave benefits are not offered as part of one or both employment packages. The calculation also takes into account deductions and transfer payments for which a family of that size and income would be eligible, and the loss of two weeks of income, but otherwise does not include provision for savings or debt repayment.

The living wage for the Lower Columbia Region in 2016 has been calculated by the Skills Centre to be **\$18.21/hour**, assuming both adults work a 35-hour work week. This works out to an annual gross household income of \$66,284 (or \$33,142 per adult wage earner). While shelter costs in the LCR are lower than in the province's larger centres, nutrition and other household costs are higher, resulting in a figure that is only slightly less than the \$20.64 calculated for Metro Vancouver.

The living wage will vary from year to year, reflecting not only changes in the cost of local goods and services, but also changes in public policy at a senior level. The wage has increased by only 6 cents per hour since last calculated in 2013. While food and many other prices have increased, the Canada Child Benefit has resulted in more cash in the hands of households with children. In addition, to bring our calculation into alignment with other communities that are part of the Living Wage for Families network, we have decreased the average number of days per month for full time child care to just under 21 days per month.

Expense	Monthly	Yearly
Shelter	\$1,169	\$14,028
Nutrition	\$840	\$10,080
Child Care	\$1,410	\$16,920
Transportation	\$488	\$5,859
Clothing and Footwear	\$184	\$2,202
Incidentals	\$772	\$9,264
Health Insurance and Care	\$139	\$1,668
Education and/or recreation	\$96	\$1,147
2 weeks lost pay	\$212	\$2,544

**Table 4:** Expenses used to calculate living wage for LCR

The key local expense figures used to calculate the living wage are shown in **Table 4**. Minor discrepancies between the monthly and annual expenses are due to rounding of figures using the Living Wage calculator.

Of no great surprise, particularly given the difference in shelter costs, the Living Wage for the Lower Columbia Region is less than the \$20.64 recently calculated for Metro Vancouver.<sup>19</sup>

## MARKET BASKET MEASURE & LOW INCOME CUT-OFF

Additional measures for measuring low income include the Market Basket Measure (MBM) and the Low Income Cut-Off (LICO). The MBM is "used to represent a standard of living that is a compromise between subsistence and social inclusion that reflects differences in living costs across the country. The

thresholds are produced for a reference family of two adults and two children for all sizes of area of residence in each province and for several cities.<sup>20</sup> In BC in 2014, the MBM was calculated to be \$36,047 per year in rural areas of the province and \$36,062 per year in communities with a population less than 30,000 for a typical family of two adults and two children.<sup>21</sup> The MBM includes the costs of food, clothing, footwear, transportation, shelter, and other expenses for a reference family of two adults aged 25 to 49 and two children (aged nine and 13).<sup>22</sup>

The Low Income Cut-Off (LICO) is another measure produced by Statistics Canada, and is only available at a national level with no provincial differentiation, as is calculated with the MBM. The LICOs are income thresholds below which a family will likely devote a larger share of its income on the necessities of food, shelter, and clothing than the average family. For rural areas, the after-tax annual income LICO was \$13,188 for one person in 2014, and for census agglomeration areas with less than 30,000 inhabitants, the LICO was \$15,093 for one person in 2014.<sup>20</sup>

## UNEMPLOYMENT RATES &amp; WORK BC CLIENT NUMBERS

Unemployment rates for both males and females for communities in the LCR are shown in **Table 5**. Montrose and RDKB Area A show the highest unemployment rates in the LCR, while Fruitvale shows the lowest at 5.5%. Fruitvale, along with RDKB Area B, and Warfield show unemployment rates below the BC average of 7.8%.

Communities	Unemployment rate
RDKB Area A	9.4%
RDKB Area B	6.9%
Rossland	8.1%
Trail	8.4%
Warfield	6.9%
Fruitvale	5.5%
Montrose	9.5%
BC	7.8%

**Table 5:** Unemployment rates for LCR communities and BC<sup>iii</sup>

	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Total clients	607	600	689	571

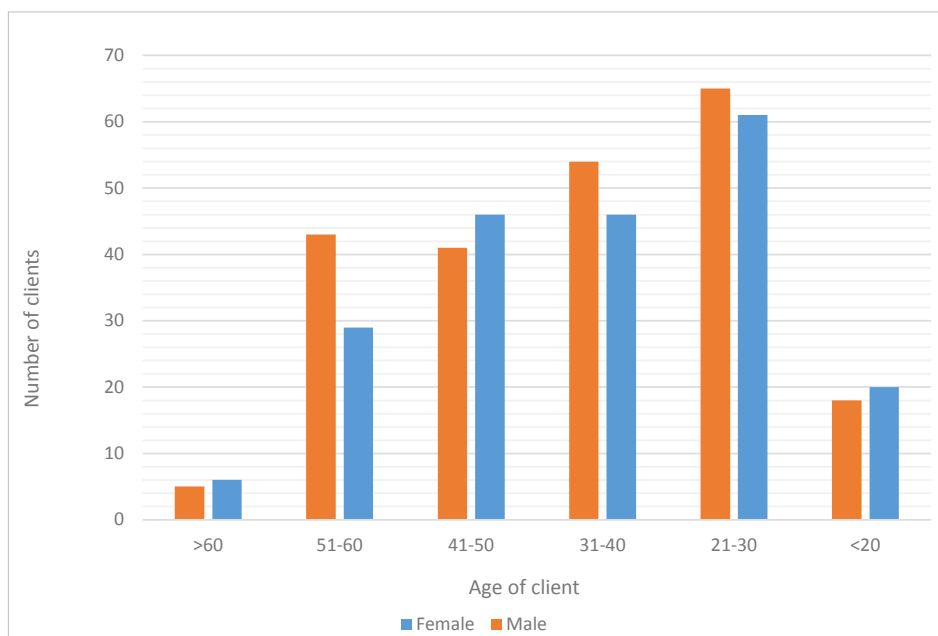
**Table 6:** Total Work BC clients for 2013/14 to 2016/17 fiscal years

Based on the last three fiscal years, the total Work BC client numbers has increased. Figures for the 2016/17 fiscal year show that this increase may be substantial, with already 571 clients with just over half the fiscal year complete.

**Figure 16** shows that the majority of individuals seeking assistance are of working age. Noticeably high is the age group of 21 to 30, with 61 females and 65 males. This group comprises 31.6% of the total number of individuals who received case-managed services from April to July, 2016.

The Skills Centre is the lead contractor for the Work BC program in the LCR, making it the primary hub for employment services in the region. Although some of the Work BC services are contracted to other agencies, the client data that is collected is compiled for the contract region as a whole.

The majority of individuals accessing services are unemployed or underemployed (i.e., work less than 20 hours/week) and have access to case-managed support. Individuals who are employed 20 hours or more per week (a group which includes those who would be considered the “working poor”) are able to access self-directed services provided by the Skills Centre but cannot benefit from the more intensive interventions such as training, self-employment, and wage subsidy that help individuals secure employment and improve their career options. **Table 6** provides the number of clients who received case-managed services for the previous three fiscal years (ending March 31) and for the period of April to October for the 2016/17 fiscal year. This number excludes those who only access self-serve support.



**Figure 16:** Percentage of Work BC clients by gender and age group for April to July 2016

<sup>iii</sup> Sourced from BC Community Health Profiles, Provincial Health Services Authority, 2014

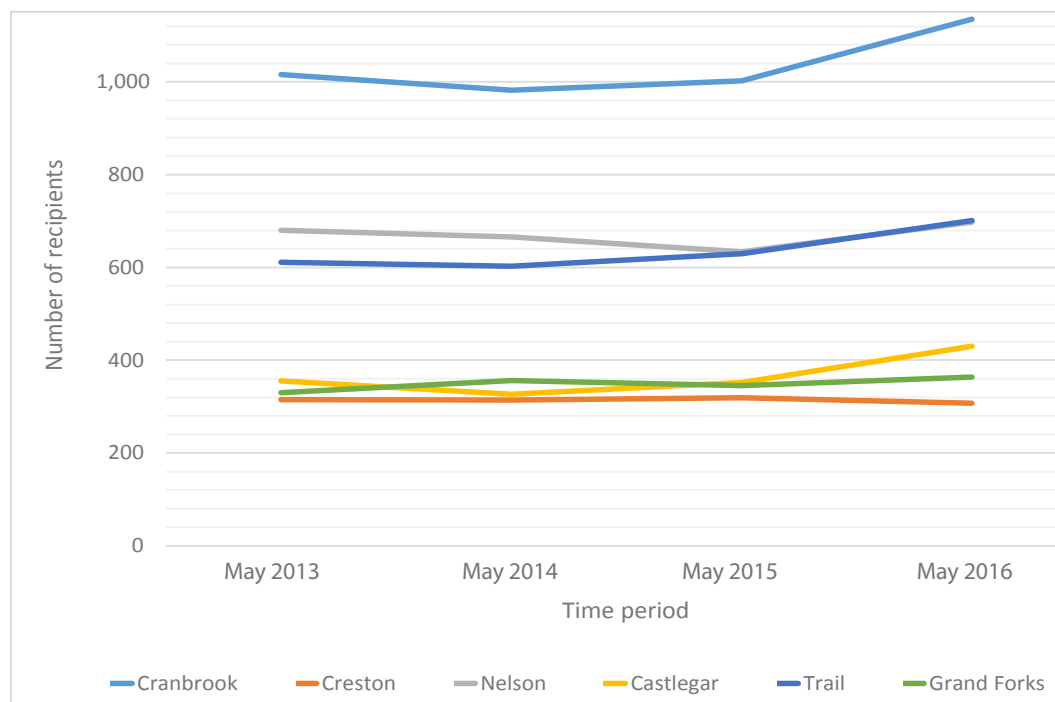
### EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE & EMPLOYMENT & ASSISTANCE RECIPIENTS

An examination of the number of recipients<sup>iv</sup> of Employment Insurance (federal) and Employment and Income Assistance (provincial) can illustrate differing economic opportunities in a region. These two programs provide income to different client groups, but both share the common purpose of providing income support to those in need. Apart from economic opportunity, there can be many other reasons why a person may access either the provincial or federal programs, therefore this indicator should not be viewed in isolation, but rather in consideration of other labour, economic, and social indicators.

The indicator measuring Employment Insurance (EI) recipients is available at the regional district level and the number of Employment and Income Assistance recipients is available for six communities in the Columbia Basin-Boundary region. Of the six communities in the region, the only LCR community captured in this data was Trail. Below is a graphic that provides data on how Trail compares to other municipalities outside the LCR.

Data for both indicators was taken for the month of May for the years 2013 to 2016. The month of May was chosen as it was outside the winter and summer seasons when there may be variations in employment. Further detailed analysis of month over month or year over year data is possible.

As shown in **Figure 17**, Castlegar experienced the largest increase of 21% between 2013 and 2016, followed by Trail with a 15% increase over that same period. Nelson saw just a 3% change from the number of recipients in 2013; however, there were two consecutive years of reduced numbers, followed by an increase of 10% between 2015 and 2016.

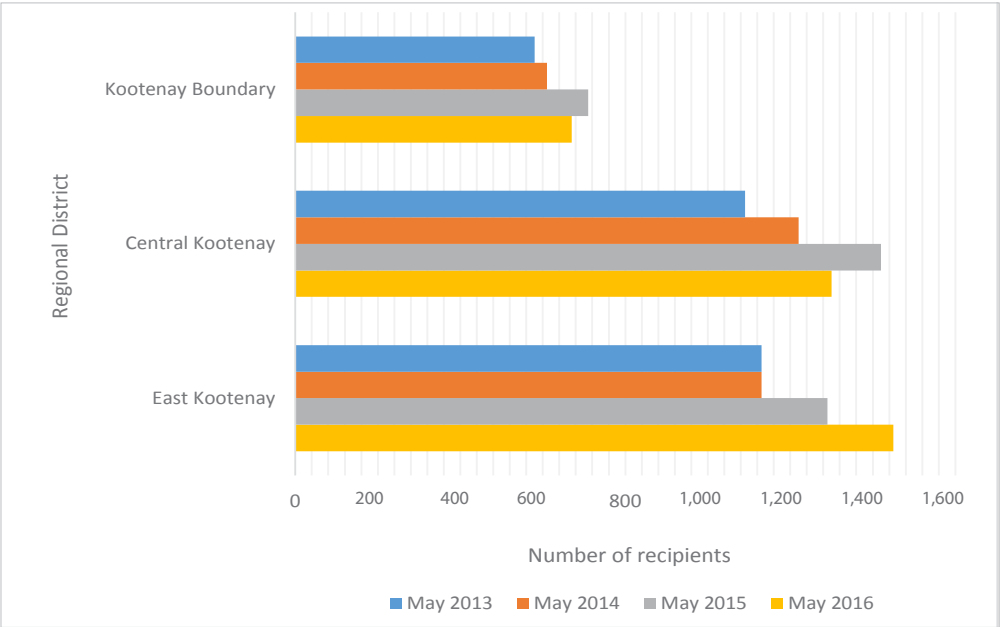


**Figure 17:** Number of recipients of provincial Employment and Income Assistance, May 2013 to 2016<sup>23</sup>

<sup>iv</sup> Recipients include both sexes and persons between 15 and 64 years of age



The general trend in the number of recipients<sup>iv</sup> of federal Employment Insurance (EI) across all regional districts is an overall increase from 2013 to 2016. As shown in **Figure 18**, the East Kootenay experienced the largest increase of 28% between 2013 and 2016, while the Central Kootenay experienced a 19% increase from 2013, and the Kootenay Boundary experienced a 16% increase. These are all much higher than the provincial level which indicates a 0% increase between 2013 and 2016.



**Figure 18:** Number of recipients of federal Employment Insurance for May 2013 to 2016<sup>24</sup>

FOOD SECURITY

Food security is a key issue often addressed in poverty reduction efforts. This section provides data and discussion regarding the current trends in the use of food banks and community gardens in the LCR.

FOOD BANKS

There are four food banks serving the LCR: two in Trail, one in Fruitvale, and one in Rossland. Food banks collect data differently from each other, which will be a major issue if usage rates are selected as a tool to measure impact of poverty reduction efforts over time. The data in this report was provided by each of the food banks in the summer of 2016. For the purpose of consistency and comparability, the figures reflect the

number of visits to each food bank per month, regardless of the size of the household for which the food was collected. Further data is available in the [Gender-Based Analysis of Economic Opportunity](#) report, which indicates that, generally, food bank usage in the region is increasing.

TRAIL UNITED CHURCH FOOD BANK

Community volunteers operate a donor funded program in the Trail United Church basement. The food bank serves a diverse group of people, including singles, families, disabled, and unemployed people who need assistance. Food is distributed to an average of 125 people each Tuesday morning, except on the second Tuesday of the month. In addition, the Trail United Church offers a free dinner every third Sunday of the month, with numbers occasionally reaching over 100 people. The majority of diners are elderly people, which differs from the younger demographic of food bank users.

Operating on a cash budget of approximately \$2,000 per month, coming from donations from the church and the community, the food bank manages to keep its costs down by buying in bulk and purchasing food on sale. The food bank also benefits from having no administrative or other overhead costs, given those services are provided by the volunteers and the Trail United Church. Every dollar donated goes directly to food.

<sup>iv</sup> Recipients include both sexes and persons between 15 and 64 years of age.

**Table 7** shows the breakdown of the number of visits to the Trail United Church Food Bank for the past three years. The highest number of visits in 2015 were in March, June, and September. Yearly totals have risen each year.

	2013	2014	2015
January	381	285	291
February	328	337	328
March	362	307	544
April	476	377	329
May	288	411	364
June	291	322	456
July	339	382	358
August	339	319	378
September	228	318	453
October	268	407	329
November	333	298	354
December	277	322	436
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,910</b>	<b>4,085</b>	<b>4,620</b>

**Table 7:** Trail United Church Food Bank usage for 2013 to 2015

due primarily to an increase in the number of families who are new or returning to the community, many of them coming from Alberta with loss of jobs in the oil industry.

- Christmas Assistance includes food and toy hampers that are distributed to families, couples, and singles. In 2015, 284 hampers were distributed, providing assistance to 400 adults, 132 children, and 54 teens.
- Kate's Kitchen offers an average of 30 lunches per day, four days per week, and a weekly dinner serves 40 to 80 people.

	2013	2014	2015
January	23	28	35
February	31	37	30
March	26	28	29
April	27	45	25
May	23	40	27
June	32	26	34
July	44	31	24
August	32	28	30
September	30	29	37
October	30	35	26
November	44	29	31
December	43	31	36
<b>Total</b>	<b>385</b>	<b>387</b>	<b>364</b>

**Table 8:** Rossland Food Bank usage for 2013 to 2015

### SALVATION ARMY

The Salvation Army in Trail offers a number of mechanisms for providing food to low income individuals and families, including:

- The School Hamper Program, which in the past year, has been provided bi-weekly to 26 families (41 school-aged children). Hampers include enough bread, meat, fruit, granola bars, and juice boxes for two weeks of lunches per child. In the first six months of 2016, Salvation Army provided 3,370 school lunches. The number of families involved in this program has increased by over 50% since September 1, 2016.

- Food Hampers are available to individuals or households once a month with an average of 125 to 150 hampers per month for an annual value of approximately \$250,000. During the period of January through August, 2016, those assisted by access to the hampers included 1,259 adults, 119 teens, and 365 children. Between September and December 2016, the demand for food hampers increased by approximately 50%

### BEAVER VALLEY UNITED CHURCH FOOD BANK

The Beaver Valley United Church Food Bank serves the Village of Fruitvale, Montrose, and RDKB Area A. Operated by a small number of dedicated volunteers, every 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of the month, the church reports a range of 17 to 28 visits per month since January 2016.

### ROSSLAND FOOD BANK

The Rossland Food Bank is open once a week on Tuesdays. The number of visits fluctuates throughout the year (see **Table 8**). New registrations recorded for 2013, 2014, and 2015 are 54, 51, and 46 respectively. There is more data collected and available from this food bank, including numbers of adults and children served, but for the purpose of comparability, this information has not been included in this report. Additional information could be gleaned from food banks if food security is identified as a priority area for action in the planning process.



## COMMUNITY GARDENS

Awareness of the need to address local food security is increasing, particularly through the efforts of the [IncrEDIBLE Trail](#) initiative and the Sustainable Agriculture Committee of the [Lower Columbia Community Development Team Society](#).

IncrEDIBLE Trail was an initiative created jointly by Communities in Bloom and the Lower Columbia Community Development Team Society. This group of volunteers started with the Trail's IncrEDIBLE Green Route, resulting in 75 local businesses and organizations creating "edible" planters outside their buildings. These planters are open to the public, with the idea that anyone can come and help themselves to these vegetables.

The second initiative of this team is a community garden based in Gulch. In 2016, its second year of operation, the garden has expanded to include 30 big planters, which are all harvested and maintained by volunteers. The produce goes to local food banks and the Salvation Army Kate's Kitchen. In addition to the garden in Trail, there are other community gardens in Rossland, Fruitvale, and Montrose.

The third initiative which started this year is a series of farmer's markets located in downtown Trail. Rossland also hosts its own farmer's market every Thursday during the spring and summer months.

## HOUSING

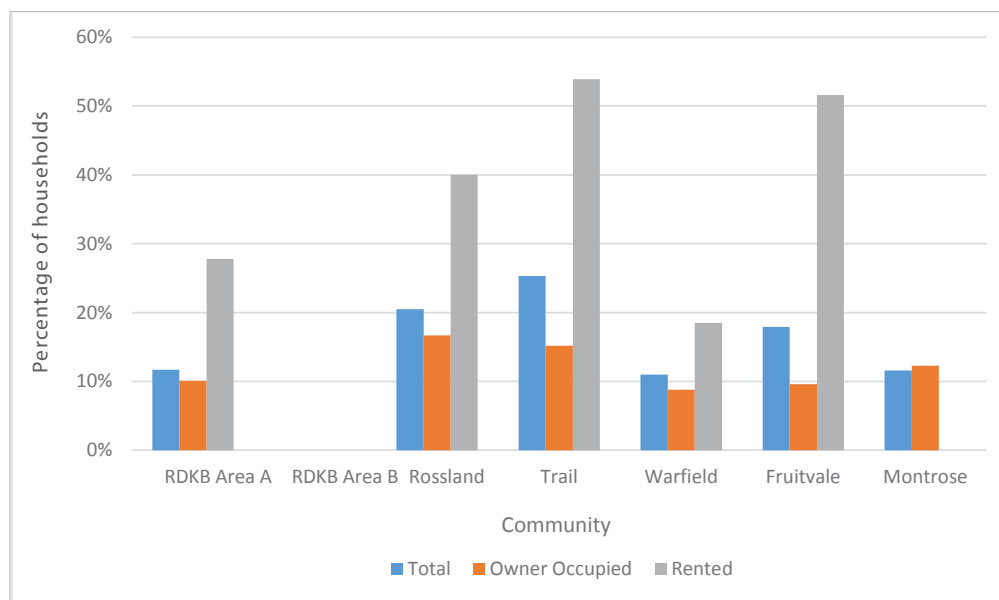
Content in this section is mostly drawn from the [Lower Columbia Region Housing Need and Demand Assessment Update](#).<sup>25</sup>

This comprehensive report provides data on the quantity and quality of housing stock, subsidized housing, and an assessment of housing need in the region.

## HOUSEHOLDS IN HOUSING NEED

An important indicator of housing affordability is whether a household pays more than 30% of its gross income on shelter (excluding utility costs if charged separately from rent).<sup>v</sup> In the LCR, nearly 1,600 households in 2011 were in housing need, representing more than 20% of all households in the region, compared to 17% in 2006. Nearly 60% of these households are located in Trail; 20% in Rossland; about 10% in Fruitvale; and about 13% in Warfield, RDKB Area A, and Montrose combined. More than one-quarter of Trail households and 20% of Rossland households are currently in housing need. About 18% of Fruitvale households are in housing need, while Warfield, RDKB Area A, and Montrose each have around 12% of households in housing need.

In the LCR, nearly 45% of households in housing need are renters, while about 55% are owners. In Fruitvale and Trail more than half of households in housing need are renters as shown in **Figure 19**.



**Figure 19:** Percentage of households in housing need, 2011<sup>26</sup>

**Table 9** shows the number and percentage of households in housing need for communities in the LCR and a comparison to BC based on the National Household Survey from 2011.

Since 2006, the LCR has seen an increase of 290 households in housing need. This represents a change from 17% to 20.3% of households in housing need. These households are concentrated largely in Trail, which now has over one-quarter of its households in housing need. However, Rossland and Fruitvale have also seen a rise in the number and percent of households in need. RDKB Area A and Warfield saw a decline in the proportion of these households, while Montrose stayed relatively stable.

	Total		Owner occupied		Rented	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
RDKB Area A	80	11.7%	55	10.1%	25	27.8%
RDKB Area B	no data	no data	no data	no data	no data	no data
Rossland	300	20.5%	200	16.7%	100	40.0%
Trail	930	25.3%	445	15.2%	485	53.9%
Warfield	85	11.0%	55	8.8%	25	18.5%
Fruitvale	150	17.9%	65	9.6%	80	51.6%
Montrose	50	11.6%	50	12.3%	0	0.0%
LCR	1,595	20.3%	870	17.0%	715	47.7%
BC	519,470	30.3%	286,075	23.8%	235,495	45.3%

**Table 9:** Number and percentage of households in housing need for LCR and BC, 2011<sup>26</sup>

<sup>v</sup> Statistics Canada defines shelter costs for renters as rent, cost of electricity, heat, water and other municipal services. Shelter costs for owners include mortgage payments, the costs of electricity, heat, water and other municipal services, property taxes and condominium fees.



Further data provided in the *Lower Columbia Region Housing Need and Demand Assessment Update* shows that more than one-fifth of all households in the LCR were in housing need in 2011. This is as high as 25% in Trail and as low as 11.6% in Montrose. More than 12% of all families in the region are in housing need, while nearly 36% of non-family households are in housing need. The highest rates of families in need are seen in Rossland and Trail (15.5% and 16.6% respectively), while Montrose has no families in need. Non-family households are consistently more likely to be in housing need. In Warfield 25% of non-family households are in housing need, while in all other jurisdictions more than one-third of these households are in housing need (33% in Rossland to about 56% in Fruitvale).

### AGE & CONDITION OF HOUSING STOCK

Age and condition of housing stock is another important indicator. It can be considered in addition to housing costs as a proportion of household income because lower income households often find themselves living in older sub-standard housing units because that is what they can afford.

**Table 10** shows that the majority of the region's housing stock is older than BC as a whole, with more than half (52.2%) of the dwellings in the LCR built in 1960 or before. Age of housing stock is likely a contributor to the percentage of dwellings that require major repair, which is 12% for the region, and higher percentages for some communities, such as Trail and Fruitvale, as shown in **Table 11**.

	> 1960	1961-1980	1981-1990	1991-2000	2001-2005	2006-2011
RDKB Area A	22.1%	55.2%	9.7%	6.9%	2.8%	2.8%
RDKB Area B	no data	no data	no data	no data	no data	no data
Rossland	51.4%	32.2%	5.8%	4.8%	2.1%	3.4%
Trail	63.8%	21.1%	5.6%	4.6%	1.2%	3.5%
Warfield	70.6%	18.3%	6.5%	0.0%	0.0%	1.3%
Fruitvale	23.4%	62.3%	7.8%	2.4%	0.0%	3.0%
Montrose	29.1%	52.3%	8.1%	9.3%	0.0%	0.0%
LCR	52.2%	32.1%	6.5%	4.4%	1.2%	3.0%
BC	16.0%	31.3%	17.5%	18.9%	7.6%	9.0%

**Table 10:** Percentage of dwellings by age for communities in the LCR as of 2011<sup>4</sup>

	Regular maintenance or minor repairs	Major repairs	Total
RDKB Area A	93.1%	6.9%	720
RDKB Area B	no data	no data	no data
Rossland	90.4%	9.6%	1,455
Trail	86.5%	13.3%	3,675
Warfield	88.2%	12.4%	765
Fruitvale	85.1%	14.9%	840
Montrose	97.7%	2.3%	430
LCR	88.0%	12.0%	7,165
BC	92.8%	7.2%	1,764,630

**Table 11:** Condition of housing stock by jurisdictions in the LCR as of 2011<sup>4</sup>



AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN THE COMMUNITY

SUBSIDIZED INDEPENDENT SOCIAL HOUSING

Data acquired from [BC Housing](#) provides a snapshot of the number of independent social housing units<sup>vi</sup> found in communities across the province. The independent social housing units counted here include housing for low income families and low income seniors. Independent social housing is an important part of the housing continuum as it assists those who would not otherwise be able to access stable, safe, and affordable housing.<sup>27</sup> The provincial government, through BC Housing, provides programs and supports along the housing continuum that include emergency shelter and housing for the homeless, transitional supported and assisted living, independent social housing, rent assistance in the private market, private market rental, and homeownership.<sup>27</sup> Data on some of these other supports are detailed below.

As of March 31, 2016, there are 40 independent social housing units in Fruitvale, 36 in Trail, 24 in Rossland, and none in Warfield. These numbers have not changed since 2014 for Fruitvale, while Trail has seen a 3% increase (from 34 to 36 units). Rossland experienced a 44% decrease (loss of 19 units) in independent social housing since 2014, due primarily to the restructuring of the financing of one multi-unit property in the community.

	Frail Seniors	Special Needs	Women and Children Fleeing Violence
Fruitvale	9	0	0
Rossland	0	0	0
Trail	135	20	16
Warfield	0	0	0
Total Units	144	20	16

**Table 12:** Transitional supported and assisted living units provided by BC Housing as of 2014

TRANSITIONAL SUPPORTED & ASSISTED LIVING

BC Housing provides support for a total of 180 units of transitional supported and assisted living units in the LCR. These include 135 units for frail seniors, 20 units for individuals with special needs, and 16 units for women and children fleeing violence. See **Table 12**. These units are all located in Trail, except nine units for frail seniors in Fruitvale.

In addition to BC Housing units, Interior Health operates Poplar Ridge Pavilion, a 50-bed residential care facility for seniors. Interior Health has also contracted 15 complex care beds to the Rosewood Village, operated by Golden Life Management.

<sup>vi</sup> This is long-term housing with rent geared to income (30% of household total gross income, subject to minimum rent based on # of people) for people who permanently reside in British Columbia when applying, with gross household income below a certain limit. Client groups include: families, seniors, people with disabilities, and singles and couples.

Two other buildings provide seniors housing in Trail: Trail Seniors Villa (23 units) and Chateau Manor (16 units). Furthermore, there are six units of affordable housing that were purchased in 2015 by the Lower Columbia Affordable Housing Society with funding from BC Housing and the Columbia Basin Trust. Over the coming two years, this society is hoping to purchase an additional four units which it will make available to low income households at affordable rental rates.

There are currently 14 housing units available for people with mental health issues, including Harbour House, which is operated by Interior Health, and McBeth Manor, which is operated by the Canadian Mental Health Association Kootenays Branch. There are a further two SHIP “beds” in Trail, operated by Interior Health, which are housing units with accompanying supports for individuals with severe mental health issues. McBride Manor previously provided eight beds of supportive mental health housing.

The Trail Association for Community Living (TACL) operates three group homes in the LCR: Fruitvale House (five beds) and Forrest House (five beds), which are both funded through Community Living BC (CLBC), and Alpha House (six beds), funded by CLBC and BC Housing.

	Rental Assistance Program (RAP)	Shelter Aid for Elderly Renters (SAFER)
Fruitvale	6	9
Rossland	5	4
Trail	18	34
Warfield	1	4
Total Units	30	51

**Table 13:** Number of households accessing rental assistance from BC Housing in private market, 2014

### RENT ASSISTANCE IN THE PRIVATE MARKET

BC Housing also provides two rental subsidies. These are the Rental Assistance Program (RAP) subsidies for working families earning less than \$35,000 annually, and the Shelter Aid for Elderly Renters (SAFER) subsidy. Most of these subsidies are directed toward households in Trail, with some usage in Fruitvale, Rossland, and Warfield. Usage of the RAP subsidy has grown since 2011, when 21 households received the RAP subsidy. Similarly, more households used the SAFER subsidy (51 households) in 2014 than in 2011, when 45 seniors’ households received it. See **Table 13**.

### HOMELESSNESS

Data on housing rarely captures the group of people who are homeless or vulnerably housed because they typically do not show up on census or similar counts. The best indicator of homelessness in the LCR is to look at the data from the [Getting to Home](#) program operated by Career Development Services with support from the Skills Centre.

Individuals and families who are either shelter-less or are living in highly insecure circumstances are able to access support from Getting to Home. The primary role of the outreach staff assigned to this program is to help eligible individuals find secure housing. In the process of providing that assistance, the outreach worker often needs to help the person sort out personal finances and income issues, to appease issues with current or former landlords, and to access supports to address mental health, addictions or other issues that led to housing insecurity in the first place. The program is guided by the philosophy of [Housing First](#), which is an evidence-based model that recognizes that once an individual or family has the security of a “roof overhead” and door to lock, there is greater likelihood that other issues that are contributing to homelessness or housing instability will be addressed.

Over the course of 2015, Getting to Home staff worked with 137 clients; 37 of whom they had served in previous years. In addition, 46 dependent children benefitted from the housing found for their parent or caregiver. Of the 137 adult clients, 75 were housed during the course of the year.

Supports provided to clients included: finding rental accommodation; assistance with rental applications; providing funds for the first month’s rent, security deposit and/or utilities hook-up; assisting clients to deal with an eviction notice and trouble-shooting with landlords; assistance with moving; and securing furniture and other basic household items. As clients were supported to address other life complications, clients were either referred or otherwise helped to access counselling and mental health services, provincial income support, alcohol and drug addictions supports, Community Living supports, medical and dental services, and employment services.





## EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

As noted by Craig Alexander, Chief Economist for the TD Bank, “studies show that the benefits of early childhood education far outweigh the costs. Ultimately, investment in early education can help to address core economic and social challenges facing Canada. It can help reduce poverty, address skills shortages, improve productivity and innovation, and a host of other national priorities”.<sup>28</sup> In the Lower Columbia Region (LCR), the [Family Action Network](#) (FAN) has been working on initiatives to strengthen early childhood development. Patricia Cecchini, Mayor of Fruitvale and FAN board member, has expressed, that, “as Mayor, I see a strong link between supporting and investing in the Early Years and economic development. There is a strong body of evidence that suggests that investing as early as possible in early childhood development directly influences economic, health and social outcomes for individuals and for society.” Cecchini also quotes Dr. James Heckman, an economist based out of Chicago, who states that “the highest rate of return in early childhood development comes from investing as early as possible, from birth through to age five. Data show that one of the most effective strategies for economic growth is investing in the development of young children”.<sup>29</sup>

## EARLY CHILDHOOD SCREENING

### EARLY DEVELOPMENT INSTRUMENT

The Early Development Instrument (EDI) is a Canadian-made research tool, developed at the Oxford Centre for Child Studies at McMaster University. It is used to measure developmental readiness and change in populations of children, including identifying any vulnerabilities. Kindergarten teachers complete a questionnaire with 104 questions under five important themes:

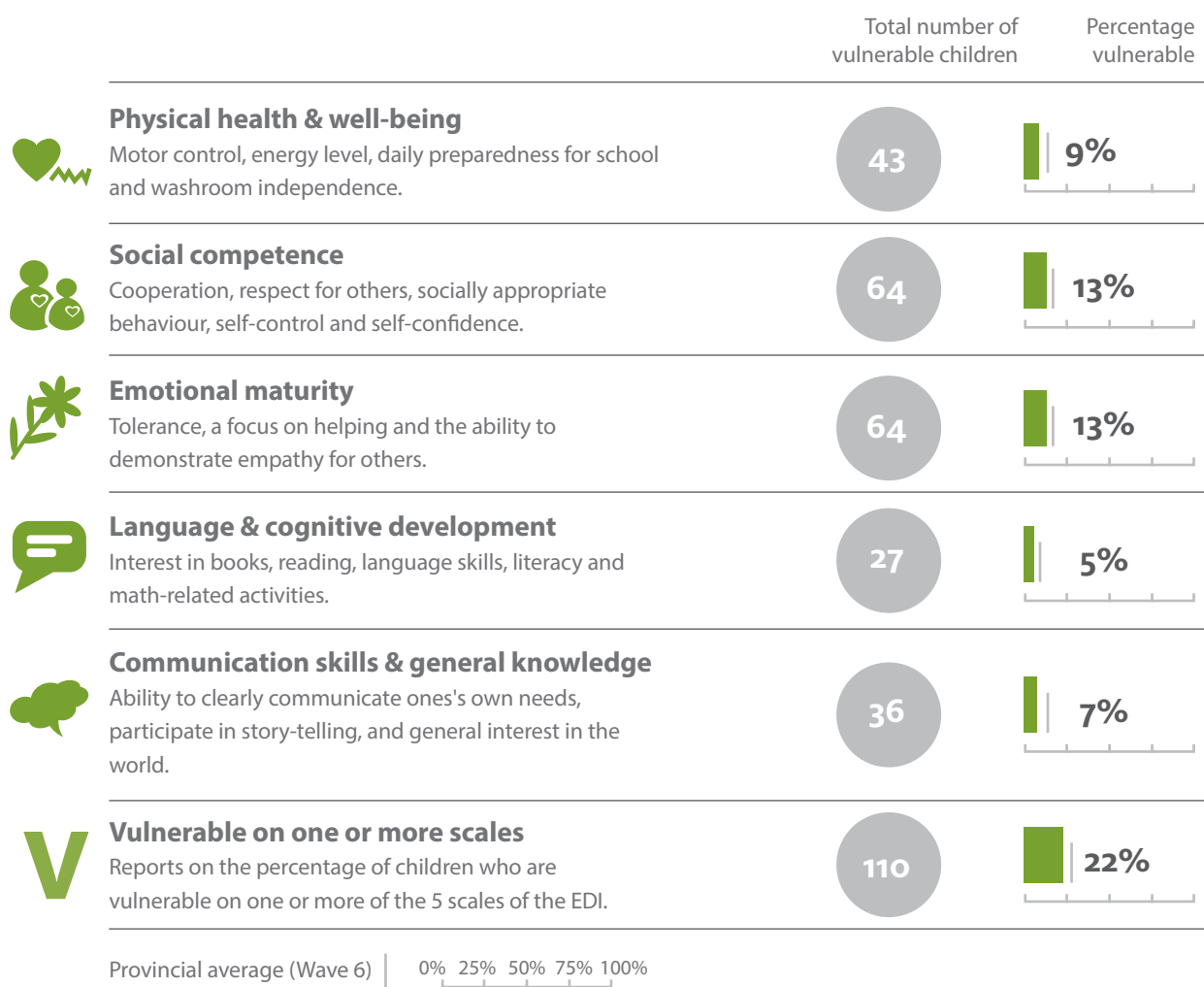
- **Physical Health and Well-being** – Can the child hold a pencil? Is the child able to manipulate objects?
- **Social Competence** – Is the child able to follow class routines? Is the child self-confident?
- **Emotional Maturity** – Does the child comfort a child who is crying or upset?
- **Language and Cognitive** – Is the child interested in reading and writing? Can the child count and recognize numbers?
- **Communication Skills** – Can the child tell a story? Can the child communicate with adults and children?



In BC, the research team at the University of British Columbia has established the [Human Early Learning Partnership](#) to help track and report EDI data. Data is collected in groups called waves, where each wave is comprised of data collected from several consecutive school years. In order for data analysts to accurately measure statistically significant changes over time, school districts with smaller numbers of kindergarten students participate annually, while medium and larger school districts participate less frequently.

Population-based vulnerability rates by geographical area are measured by evaluating data gathered from the EDI questionnaire. HELP's definition of vulnerable children is "children who, without additional support and care, may experience future challenges in school and society."<sup>30</sup> Examining EDI scores over time allows us to assess trends in the percentage of kindergarten children who are vulnerable on one or more scales, or particular scales, depending on the interest and geography.

The latest EDI data, wave 6 (2013 to 2016), for the LCR is summarized in the EDI results for School District 20 (Kootenay-Columbia). The data can be split into the North and South neighbourhoods, with the South having boundaries equivalent to the LCR. Overall, the South neighbourhood had a vulnerability rate of 22% compared to the average provincial vulnerability rate of 32.2%. The highest rate of vulnerability for this neighbourhood is on *Social Competence and Emotional Maturity* scales, at 13%. Child vulnerability was lowest on the *Language & Cognitive Development Scale*, at 5%. See **Figure 20**.



**Figure 20:** Total number and percentage of children vulnerable for Kootenay-Columbia South neighborhood<sup>31</sup>

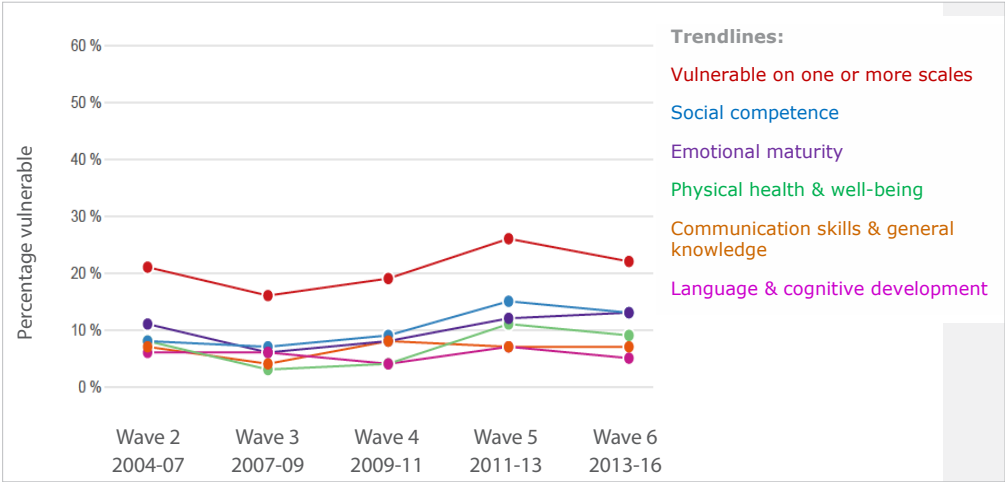


Figure 21: Trends for percentage of children vulnerable on five scales and vulnerable on one or more scales for Kootenay-Columbia for Wave 2 to Wave 6 of EDI data<sup>32</sup>

The trends for each of the five scales and the vulnerability percentage on one or more scale for the last five waves of EDI data collected are shown in **Figure 21**.

Historically, it has been useful to compare Early Development Institute (EDI) results with that of Revelstoke because the Revelstoke wave 5 overall vulnerability rate was well below the provincial average, at 11%. **Figure 22** illustrates Revelstoke’s vulnerability rates by scale for wave 5 compared to results from other school districts in the province.

Revelstoke’s amazing results have likely

been achieved through investing strongly in early child development. HELP Community Trainer, Tracy Spanner, reported in the EDI Community Summary for Revelstoke, that “the Revelstoke Early Learning, Literacy & Health Centre opened in September 2012. This Neighbourhood Centre is the result of community collaboration and the Revelstoke Board of Education’s commitment to early learning.”<sup>33</sup> Everything about the centre was designed with families and children in mind, and includes a large number of services from infant care to literacy and learning spaces, to co-location of kindergarten classes and early childhood development coordinators.

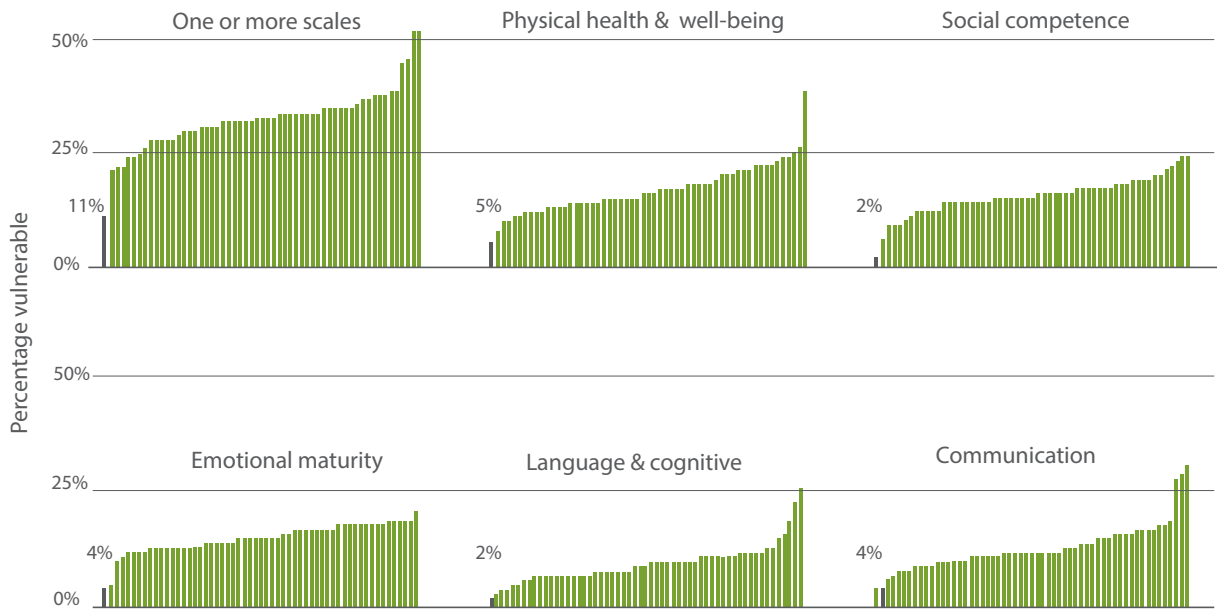
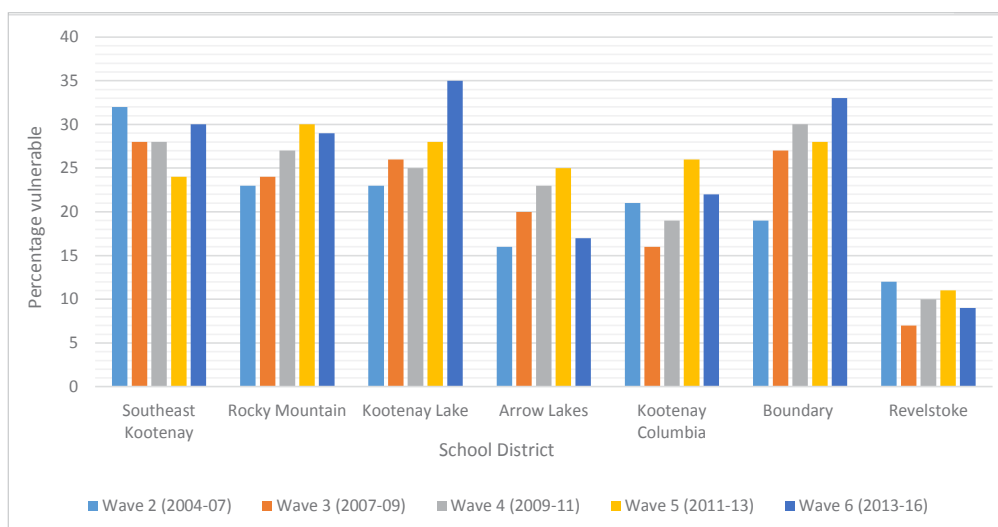


Figure 22: Wave 5 vulnerability rates for Revelstoke compared to other school districts in BC<sup>32</sup>

All seven school districts in the Columbia Basin-Boundary region have a lower percentage of vulnerable kindergarten students than the provincial average. Between 2004 and 2016, the percentage of kindergarten students who are vulnerable on at least one aspect of their development decreased in two of the seven school districts in the region: Revelstoke and Southeast Kootenay (see **Figure 23**). These two school districts countered the provincial upward trend in vulnerability.



**Figure 23:** Percentage of children vulnerable in one or more domain for EDI wave 2 to 6 by school district<sup>34</sup>

According to the HELP, “the EDI data provide communities and policy makers with the information they need to monitor children’s development, and to develop effective program and policy responses that will help BC’s children and families thrive”.<sup>30</sup> Collecting and improving EDI results will help reduce children in poverty, which can have a positive influence on economic and health outcomes in the region. Child poverty and early years’ development is indeed one of the potential significant areas of focus in a poverty reduction strategy for the Lower Columbia Region.

## AGES & STAGES

In addition to the Early Development Institute (EDI) screening and data, the the Family Action Network (FAN) organizes and promotes community screening events throughout the region. These events are free for families with children between birth and age six. During the event, families meet with an early years’ professional who administers the “Ages and Stages” questionnaire to provide a snapshot of that child’s development and provide information to the parent/caregiver about their child’s developmental indicators and further, to connect that family to community supports, if needed. FAN is a local organization made of representatives of a variety of stakeholders concerned with early childhood development and the impact of that development on community vitality and prosperity. Since 2013, 202 children have participated in early screening events, with 45 of those children flagged for further surveillance.

## TODDLER DEVELOPMENT INSTRUMENT

Given the tremendous on-going and emerging work of FAN to support the early years in the region, the LCR has been selected by the University of BC’s Human Early Learning Partnership to be one of eight pilot sites in BC for the Toddler Development Instrument (TDI). Accompanying the Ages and Stages screening of toddlers at the age of 18 months, the TDI provides deeper contextual data that gives the in-the-moment snapshot of the Ages and Stages information richer meaning. Roll out of this pilot is anticipated for early 2017.

Taken together, the data available through the EDI, TDI, and Ages and Stages screening has the potential to provide rich insight into what initiatives or services are most needed to support early childhood development in the region. Cross referenced with household income and other data by neighbourhood, the early childhood data is a source of information for guiding poverty reduction planning and priority setting, as well as long-term tracking to assess impact of poverty reduction initiatives.



## LOW BIRTH WEIGHT BABIES & INFANT MORTALITY RATES

Low Birth Weight (LBW), defined by a weight of less than 2,500 grams, is an important determinant of mortality, morbidity, and disability in infancy and childhood, and can have long-term impacts on health outcomes in adult life.<sup>35</sup> While there are a variety of factors contributing to low birth weight among infants, there is a correlation between poverty and low birth weight infants, possibly due to a lack of access to prenatal and infant health care, as well as poor nutrition.

According to the BC Provincial Health Services Authority [Community Health Profile for the Trail Local Health Area](#) (HLA), the LBW rate for Trail LHA is 58 per 1,000 live births. This is slightly higher than the BC rate of 56 per 1,000 live births. The Infant Mortality Rate (children less than one-year-old) for Trail LHA is one per 1,000 live births, which is lower than the BC rate of four per 1,000 live births.

## CHILD CARE

Child care costs in the region are a challenge for many low-income families. As indicated in the [Gender-Based Analysis of Economic Opportunity](#) report, child care is simply not affordable for parents who earn low incomes. The cost of child care in the LCR ranges from \$40 to \$47 per day. Even if the family is eligible for a child care subsidy, which varies from \$17.70 to \$27.50 per day, parents still need to contribute \$12.50 to \$22.30 (or \$250 to \$446 per month per child). This is a considerable hardship for many parents, but especially so for those earning at or close to the minimum wage. The report further states that child care for pre-school children, especially those in the infant-toddler range is difficult to access in some communities in the LCR. In addition, child care for parents with a sick child, or for those who work shifts or during the weekend, is not readily available.

Recognizing the importance of early years' development, apart from registered child care, there are a number of programs in the region that are designed to assist families and support children. These include Skool-Aid, the Sanctuary Pre-Teen Centre, and the Student Nutrition Program.

### SKOOL-AID

Skool-Aid is a project of Holy Trinity Parish in Trail. This unique local program provides new school supplies for children in need at the start of each school year. The non-denominational program runs throughout the Greater Trail area, encompassing schools in Rossland, Warfield, Trail, and Fruitvale, and serves students from kindergarten through grade 12. The program runs strictly on donations from individuals and local service clubs. Skool-Aid also receives donations from Teck Trail Operations and a grant from the Columbia Basin Trust Community Initiatives Program. The program receives referrals for assistance from school principals and/or the school child care worker, Sanctuary, Salvation Army, Family and Individual Resources Society, and the Rossland Food Bank. **Table 14** shows the number of student referrals by year according to the Volunteer Chair of Skool-Aid. The number has increased each year, from 67 students in 2010 to 196 in 2016.

Year	Number of Students Referred
2010	67
2011	110
2012	140
2013	153
2014	169
2015	179
2016	196

**Table 14:** Number of student referrals by year for Skool-Aid program

### SANCTUARY PRE-TEEN CENTRE

All children between the ages of eight and 12 are welcome to the [Sanctuary](#), which is located in downtown Trail. Many children attending are considered to be “latchkey kids” because their parents work long hours, often in multiple jobs, or otherwise are not home after school. First established in September 1998, the Sanctuary currently has, on average, 60 children visiting on an ongoing basis with roughly 20 to 25 coming each day, and approximately 12 to 20 who stay for supper. The program is located in a building owned by the Generation to Generation Society which also operates six apartments in the upper floors; four of which are operated as long-term affordable rental housing units and two of which are available for short-term affordable accommodation for people accessing medical services at the Kootenay Boundary Regional Hospital.

### SCHOOL NUTRITION PROGRAM

A Student Nutrition Program (SNP) is a program that offers a healthy breakfast, morning meal, snack and/or lunch to students before, during, or after each school day. The Kootenay-Columbia School District offers a “universal” Student Nutrition Program which means that all children and youth have the opportunity to participate. “Universal” means that no child is turned away based on their family’s ability to pay, fundraise, or volunteer with the program. While there is a likelihood that children in poverty will access the meals offered, there may be other individual or parental reasons a child accesses the program, so care should be taken not to consider this data as a reliable indicator of poverty. Schools with SNPs in the southern part of the district report a range of 15 to 60 students accessing the program per school, with an average of 20. Not all of those schools offer a breakfast program, although that may change in the coming year.

### YOUTH AT RISK

The Composite Index of Youth at Risk is an index formed by the weighted averages of four indicators: (1) percentage of youth (aged 15 to 24) on income assistance for one year or more (weight of 0.40), (2) percentage of youth (aged 15 to 24) on income assistance for less than one year (weight of 0.20), (3) percentage of 18 year olds who did not graduate (weight of 0.20), and offences per 1,000 population for total serious crime (weight of 0.20). Data for 2012 was available from BC Stats’ [Socio-Economic Indices](#), which summarizes social and economic conditions over a wide variety of indicators into a single composite index for each Local Health Area (LHA) within the province. The purpose of the Composite Index of Youth at Risk is to provide an indicator that reports on the relative well-being of youth at the regional level.<sup>36</sup>



The Composite Index of Youth at Risk provides a numeric value for each LHA in the province. Positive numbers mean that a particular LHA is worse than the median; negative numbers mean the LHA is better than the median. The index value is used to rank the 78 LHAs in the province as a way to compare areas. **Table 15** shows the LHAs within the Columbia Basin-Boundary region, including the index value and provincial ranking.

While a provincial average is not available, the provincial ranking is numbered from 1 to 77. Kimberley, Creston, and Nelson are all closely grouped with the worst index ratings in the Columbia Basin-Boundary region, while Fernie, Golden, and Revelstoke are all closely grouped with the best index ratings in the region, as well as in the province. None of the LHAs identified in the Columbia Basin-Boundary region are in the bottom (worst) third of the provincial ranking, while nine of the LHAs are within the top (best) third provincially. Grand Forks has a ranking of zero, which indicates that its ranking equals the median value. Trail is ranked 57 out of the 78 LHAs, which puts it on the better end of the scale, in the top third provincially.

Local Health Area (LHA)	Composite Index of Youth At Risk	
	Index Value	Ranking*
Kimberley	0.15	28
Creston	0.11	31
Nelson	0.09	32
Grand Forks	0.00	39
Castlegar	-0.18	53
Cranbrook	-0.24	55
Trail	-0.28	57
Windermere	-0.42	62
Kootenay Lake	-0.51	66
Arrow Lakes	-0.58	69
Revelstoke	-0.62	71
Golden	-0.63	72
Fernie	-0.71	75

**Table 15:** Index value and ranking by LHA for Composite Index of Youth at Risk.<sup>37</sup>

\*Ranked from worst to best

## TRANSPORTATION

Access to transportation is closely linked to the ability of individuals to get to and from work, thereby potentially becoming a barrier to even being able to join the workforce. The most common form of transportation in the region is by private vehicle, but for some, the only option is public transportation.

A region's public transit system is important in determining where the available labour supply and employment opportunities exist. The regional transit system has recently expanded its service, ensuring that most neighbourhoods in the LCR have access to bussing. There are, however, sections of RDKB Area A (the outskirts of Fruitvale and Montrose, and along the Waneta Highway towards Waneta Dam) and RDKB Area B (the outskirts of Rossland) that do not have access to bus services. Moreover, there are times when service is not available and a few situations when the elapsed travel time between some points is excessive. Individuals who work on shift or late evening and weekend shifts in some of the retail outlets are most challenged because buses typically do not operate when they need to get to or return from work.

## BUS TICKETS ISSUED

In order to make public transit more affordable for low income individuals, especially those who are seeking employment, the Skills Centre as the lead Work BC contractor for the LCR issues bus tickets to eligible clients. Career Development Services (CDS) also gives out bus tickets both to clients accessing the Work BC services it delivers, as well as other services it operates, such as the Getting to Home program.

Bus tickets are provided to eligible Work BC clients for active job search (including those taking training that will support future success gaining employment). The value of the majority of the tickets issued are \$2 each, plus a few who receive multi-zone (\$3.75) tickets. Based on the employment services data for the Trail catchment area, and using the average of \$2/ticket, the number of tickets issued for the last two fiscal years were:

- 2014/15 \$360/\$2 = 180 tickets issued
- 2015/16 \$937/\$2 = 468 tickets issued

While there has been some increase in the number Work BC clients in the region, the primary reason for the significant increase in bus tickets issued is that many more clients are accessing training supports, which may include assistance to get to and from the training program they are enrolled in. In addition to the figures provided above, in the 2015/16 fiscal year, CDS issued approximately 100 bus tickets.

### ACCESS TO TRANSIT IN OTHER COMMUNITIES

It would be worthy of those working on a poverty reduction plan to look at ways in which other communities across the country address access to public transit. Recognizing that buses in rural communities rarely operate at full capacity, there is a sound argument to be made to provide bus passes free-of-charge to those who fall below an established low income threshold. In Cranbrook, for instance, free bus passes that are issued to low income individuals and families not only provide access to public transit, but also free access to public recreation facilities. There are many other examples across the country of innovative programs that provide low or no cost access to public transit for low income households.

### RECREATION

This section discusses approaches used in the LCR to improve access to recreation for low-income families and children. There are several bursaries or funding programs available to low income families to which the various municipal recreation departments refer.

[Jumpstart](#), for example, is a program of Canadian Tire and provides funds for children to register and participate in local recreation. Funding for Jumpstart is up to \$300 per year, per child. Financial requirements are that the family makes less than \$40,000 per year (this is very approximate and left to the discretion of the Recreation Department who applies for the funds on behalf of the child). [KidSport](#) is another program for families, and is valued at approximately \$250, once per year. This program is administered locally by the City of Trail, in which all applications are forwarded to an oversight committee. They make sure the applications are for appropriate clubs and activities.

Detailed below are some other community specific programs available. **The information provided was gained through verbal and written communication with staff of the various recreation departments or organizations.**

### ROSSLAND

The City of Rossland has a bursary that was created after the Senior Warriors Hockey team folded and donated funds to the city to be used for children's recreation. The funds received were over \$7,000, although that has now dwindled to slightly under \$2,000. This fund allows families to apply for up to \$100 per year for any recreation-based activity that the city offers. Application requirements are similar to those for subsidy programs (with an approximate \$40,000 income bracket, and with submission of a paystub or T4 slip).

In Rossland, there are approximately 12 to 15 families per year who use one or all of the above mentioned options for registering their children in sports and recreation. A few are single parents, some are two-parent households with only one parent working, and a few are two-parent households with both parents working. At least three of those families have special needs children.

Once the family submits their application, the Recreation Department works to obtain the funds on their behalf. When the funds come in, they are applied to the family's account. If there is an outstanding balance, the family pays the difference. Robin Hethey from Rossland Recreation Department commented that, "we do our best to make the entire process as painless as possible. We try to ensure that people know their applications are completed in house and are confidential. I completely understand why a family would need some assistance if they are anywhere in the \$40,000 bracket".

### BEAVER VALLEY

The Beaver Valley (BV) Recreation Program Office handles recreation programming for Montrose, Fruitvale, and Regional District Area A (Beaver Falls, Columbia Gardens, and the area around Fruitvale). The primary source of support for low income households used by BV Recreation is JumpStart and KidSport. The registration staff at BV Recreation will take the information and process the approvals locally, and the cheque follows from the Jumpstart or KidSport head offices. Kelly Walker, the BV Recreation Programmer indicated that the Chapter consisting of Rossland, Trail, Fruitvale, and Salmo approved 125 KidSport requests in 2015 and 106 in 2014. She indicated that families may apply for up to \$150 twice a year for an annual total of \$300.



## TRAIL

There are three programs available in Trail to support low-income families gaining access to recreation:

1. Leisure Access Program (LAP) where people are able to apply for a Leisure Access Pass which grants them a 50% discount on general admission to the Trail Aquatic Centre and public skating, a 50% discount on 10 passes to the Aquatic Centre, and a 50% discount on two recreation programs per year (once other funding sources have been utilized). The LAP pass is valid for one year.
2. The re-introduction of “toonie” swims, and seeking sponsorship for free swims where possible.
3. Having a set number of courtesy passes available that could be issued to agencies who deal with people in crisis situations.<sup>38</sup>

Eligibility for a recreation subsidy is based on Statistics Canada low-income cut-offs. For example, a single person's after-tax income needs to be less than \$14,803. For a family of two, the maximum income cannot exceed \$18,018, and for a family of three, \$22,434, and so on. Trisha Davison, Director of Trail Parks and Recreation noted that, “a small group of agencies would be identified as adjudicators for [the Leisure Access Program]. These same agencies would sit on an advisory committee with myself that would meet a couple of times a year to review the program and help with reporting back to Council”.

Linked to comments made in the Transportation section related to bus passes for low-income households, consideration could be given to a universal pass for recreation programs for households below an income threshold, thus reducing both the bureaucracy and potential embarrassment each time a person needs to provide evidence of their eligibility for low-income benefits.

## NEXT STEPS

In preparing this report, the Skills Centre intends to use the information to help engage community stakeholders to gain an increased understanding of poverty in our region and a commitment to the development of a poverty reduction plan and related strategies. A planning process is slated to begin in spring 2017, and will involve not only people who are living in poverty and agencies delivering services to individuals and families in poverty, but also local government, businesses, and other interested stakeholders.

The intent of the planning process will be to select key areas or pillars on which action will be focussed. It will be at this time that relevant data from this report or other sources will be selected to help track impact of poverty reduction efforts over time.

A poverty reduction process requires openness, courage, and commitment from many sectors of the community, as well as a willingness to work across both agency and sector boundaries. A firm understanding between the correlation of efforts and outcomes will help guide and fuel commitment for long term action.

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*The Columbia Basin Rural Development Institute, at Selkirk College, is a regional research centre with a mandate to support informed decision-making by Columbia Basin-Boundary communities through the provision of information, applied research, and related outreach and extension support. Visit [www.cbrdi.ca](http://www.cbrdi.ca) for more information.*