

New programs put focus on youth crime prevention

(Penticton, BC – July 12, 2023) – A made-in-Penticton plan will see more than \$1-million invested in three projects to reduce the risk factors for vulnerable youth.

“An essential part of creating a safe and resilient community is having programs in place that support young people who might be at risk,” says Mayor Julius Bloomfield. “These projects are an important building block in filling in the cracks that some youth fall through. We need to show support and demonstrate in a practical way that the community cares.

“Council has set having Penticton be Safe and Resilient and Vibrant and Connected as priorities and this plan reflects those goals. The City’s Social Development Department has worked tirelessly, with community partners who support youth, and youth themselves, to create a plan that meets the on-the-ground challenges facing Penticton. It reflects what we need to do as we work towards a city where everyone feels safe and appreciated.”

The funding comes from the federal government’s Building Safer Communities Fund and is being distributed through the City’s Social Development department over the next three years. There are three programs that will work in collaboration to support connection to the land, school, peers and community.

The programs are:

- **K^wu Xast Program (land based supports)**
Operator: Ooqnakane Friendship Centre
- **YMCA Alternative Suspension (school based supports)**
Operator: YMCA of Southern Interior B.C.
- **Youth Crime Prevention Peer (peer based supports) and Youth Community Safety Officer (community based supports)**
Operators: Foundry Penticton and City of Penticton – Bylaw Services

The choice of programs was developed after the City’s Social Development department conducted extensive community-based research and local engagements, with both youth-serving organizations and youth themselves to understand the biggest needs facing young people.

“What makes this project unique is the collaborative and non-competitive approach taken by all the agencies involved,” says Jamie Lloyd-Smith, the City’s social development specialist. “Everyone focused on identifying the best use of the money and then committed to continue working in partnership moving forward. There are lead agencies for the program but partners like the Okanagan Nations, School District 67, Okanagan College, and many others will play a role going forward. They will help refer clients, support program evaluation and provide support to the operators and the youth. This type of co-operation and breaking down of silos, is essential to ensure that the youth are getting the help they need. This is a win-win for youth at-risk and for the community.”

More details on the start dates for the programs will be available soon.

-30-

Media Contact:

250-490-2339

communications@penticton.ca

Backgrounder:

Land-Based Learning:

This program will provide all youth, but particularly Indigenous youth, with opportunities to connect with their cultural heritage through land-based activities such as hunting, fishing and traditional crafts. By promoting a sense of belonging and cultural identity, this program aims to reduce the risk of substance abuse, criminal involvement and other negative behaviours. This program will prioritize Indigenous youth, but will be inclusive to youth of all cultures and backgrounds.

It will be operated by the OoKnakane Friendship Centre.

YMCA Alternative Suspension:

This program will provide an alternative to traditional school suspensions by offering structured activities and education opportunities for youth who have been suspended from school. By keeping youth engaged in positive activities and helping them stay on track with their education, this program aims to reduce the risk of academic failure and future delinquency. This program will also target youth who have not yet been suspended, but are at risk of suspension and have been identified by school counselors and teachers. The program was originally developed by The YMCAs of Quebec.

The program will be operated by the YMCA of Southern Interior B.C.

Youth Community Safety and Crime Prevention Initiative:

Peer Crime Prevention Worker. This program will train and employ youth to work as peer mentors and crime prevention workers in their communities. By providing positive role models and building relationships with at-risk youth, this program aims to reduce the risk of criminal involvement and promote positive decision-making. This role will work directly with the Youth Community Safety Staff to provide supports to youth directly in the community. This program aims to connect youth with other youth.

This program will be operated by Foundry Penticton.

Youth Community Safety Staff: This program will be a direct branch of the Community Safety Officers program residing within the Bylaw Services of the City of Penticton. This is a preventative program that aims to reach youth across the community, including “fringe youth” who may be becoming at-risk of being involved in crime, but have not been identified through traditional means. It will include components of outreach, engagement, advocacy and education. By providing an accessible positive and safe adult in the community, this program aims to create a connection between youth and their community, including increased and timely access to youth community supports. This role will work directly with the Peer Crime Prevention Worker to provide supports to youth directly in the community.

This program will be operated by the City of Penticton-Bylaw Services.