

REVELSTOKE COMMUNITY PROFILE

What are the differences that have made a difference in Revelstoke, BC?



A shared understanding of evidence for the importance of the early years



Collecting, sharing, and using data to inform decision-making and monitor progress



Strong leadership, coordination, inter-sectoral collaboration, and leverage of funding



Focus on connectedness and equity

Introduction

HELP has worked closely with communities across British Columbia for more than two decades, collecting data through the Child Development Monitoring System (CDMS) and supporting collaborative cross-sector efforts to improve outcomes for children and their families. This profile aims to outline some of the intentional ways in which the community of Revelstoke has supported its children and families and use these reflections to map out what is possible for the future.

● Importance of the Early Years

Revelstoke has been an active HELP partner from the start. The relationship began in the early 2000s when Revelstoke education and early years professionals attended a research session led by HELP founder Clyde Hertzman. Dr. Hertzman's talk crystalized the need to focus on the early years with an **upstream approach**, noting the link between the early years, poverty reduction and equity.

During the first implementation of the EDI, data for Revelstoke indicated that 19% of kindergarten children were vulnerable in one or more areas of development important to their future success. These data were a significant catalyst to the 2003 formation of the Revelstoke Early Childhood Development Committee (RECDC) which took an intentional and dedicated approach to considering and responding to data across systems with a focus on supporting young children and their families. This **commitment to the early years** has been carried forward by the RECDC and its members and has resulted in the implementation of many novel supports and services that seek to promote universal access to positive early childhood experiences. For example, the Revelstoke Child Care Society was recently profiled by the Tamarack Institute for their efforts to improve the quality and sustainability of local child care services through early investment in educator training and recruitment.

An Examples of Data in Action: School District 19

The MDI and YDI questionnaires center student voice through the collection of self-reported data on child and youth well-being and experiences. School District 19 continues this prioritization of student voice by inviting students to reflect on district-level MDI and YDI data once collected and participate in action planning in response. Examples of actions that have resulted from these sessions include:

- Enhanced breakfast/lunch programs across the district
- Increased access to free, non-competitive social activities after school (e.g. floor hockey, art and drama)

● Strong Leadership, Coordination, Inter-sectoral Collaboration, and Leverage of Funding

There has been broad involvement in the RECDC including from early years services and professionals, education, health, municipality, parents and caregivers, resource programs, and social services. Key sector leaders are actively engaged in facilitating decisions about budgets, sharing resources, and creating plans and policies. The RECDC is grounded in a foundation of **sector and system connectedness** which, in turn, has facilitated an “Every door is the right door” approach, supporting families with children in their connection to programs and services and to one another.

A designated **early years coordination role** has been critical to facilitating the intersectoral activity of the RECDC as well as securing additional funding to support collective community development work.

With this funding and funding distributed to individual sectors and organizations, the RECDC has taken a communal approach, leveraging funds to maximize impact for the community. It is important to note that while historically the early years coordination role was largely made possible through funders such as Success by Six and Children First, as of 2019 there are no longer direct funds to support coordination. This change has substantially reduced RECDC’s capacity for planning and coordination.

● Collecting, Sharing and Using Data

School District 19 and Revelstoke early years leadership have consistently supported HELP’s CDMS data collection for the past 20 years with an openness to piloting new CDMS surveys as they are developed and a readiness to be involved in more in-depth research projects. **CDMS data have been shared across sectors and with the broader community**, serving as an impetus for bringing people together to reflect on ‘shared’ children and families, informing strategic planning and action, and monitoring progress over time.

Highlighting a Communal Approach to Funding:

Community funding to support children and youth is typically distributed to individual sectors and organizations, which can put groups in competition with one another. In contrast, RECDC members have opted to pool their resources and work together to maximize impact for children, youth, and families. Examples of projects made possible using this shared funding model include:

- Access Fund - shared flexible funding with low barriers to administer; built on collective trust across service providers to identify community needs
- New playgrounds built
- School and community hub
- Shared family programming

● Focus on Connectedness and Equity

Connectedness

A “One Community, One Team” approach has helped establish a **common vision and goals** across sectors, acknowledging ‘shared’ children and families versus individual sector/organization responses.

Schools have served as community hubs integrating early years, health, and community services physically into school buildings and combining early years through to secondary schooling in one area. Moreover, an established ECD website with a centralized event calendar and a directory of programs and services from multiple sectors has improved visibility and access of available resources, thus encouraging broader community knowledge and participation.

Creating Community Hubs:

- At the elementary school level, families with infants and preschoolers are brought into a shared space with school-aged children as early years services, a community gymnastics facility, and the elementary school operate out of the same building.
 - For youth, health and community engagement are made more accessible with the presence of a youth clinic and services and a community theatre built into the local high school.

Equity in Action:

Some examples of equity-based initiatives taking place in Revelstoke include:

- Annual children’s clothing & toy exchange event
- Free toy and book lending library
 - Annual parent surveys to understand barriers to service access
- Enhanced programming and extended evening and weekend hours
- Cross-sector training in child development (Ages & Stages Initiative)
- Supporting families to follow-up on referrals, access programs and services
- Municipal program to support access to community recreation opportunities
- School and community food programs

Equity

A [proportionately universal approach](#) has led to supporting universal programs and services where possible, while also prioritizing needs of low-income families and those with multiple barriers. The RECDC has used targeted funds to reduce barriers to accessing programs and services, particularly related to cost, transportation, hours, early child development resources and food security.



● All communities, big or small, rural or urban, have their own unique qualities. As a result, community development and action planning is not a ‘one-size-fits-all’ process. Some of the unique features of Revelstoke that help to facilitate the connectedness theme highlighted here include:

- Small enough and big enough (e.g. small enough that families and professionals know each other by name, but big enough to have decent representation of early years professionals and roles locally)
- City boundaries align with school district boundaries (vs. a combination of several communities/towns) making joint planning and decision-making more straightforward

Revelstoke Data Trends

One of the longstanding goals of HELP's Child Development Monitoring System is to inform action through the examination and analysis of child well-being trends and social and contextual community factors over time. With a wide breadth of CDMS data collected over time, HELP and Revelstoke have partnered to systematically examine whether the community's collective actions have had the intended consequences for families and children in their community.



Revelstoke was one of the pilot districts to participate in the CHEQ (starting in 2017 and ongoing) and TDi (in 2017 and 2019/2020 pilots), both of which are parent/caregiver questionnaires.

Responding to TDi/CHEQ data

As the TDi and CHEQ provided data on children and families' experiences, the RECDC gained insight to consider the impact of the presence or absence of programming for families in Revelstoke as well as what information and resources are available at programs. Data from both the TDi and CHEQ assisted in considerations around providing information to parent/caregivers about sleep, nutrition and screen time.



Revelstoke has participated in EDI data collection since 2002.

Responding to EDI data

In Wave 4 (2009-2011) of data collection of the EDI, there was an increase in the vulnerability rate for the Language & Cognitive Development domain. This increase prompted discussion across sectors, instigated the introduction of kindergarten literacy assessments, and led to the immediate action of increased literacy supports for the remainder of the year. The cohort was monitored closely in the subsequent school year and literacy supports commenced early the next year to continue building on the students' progress.



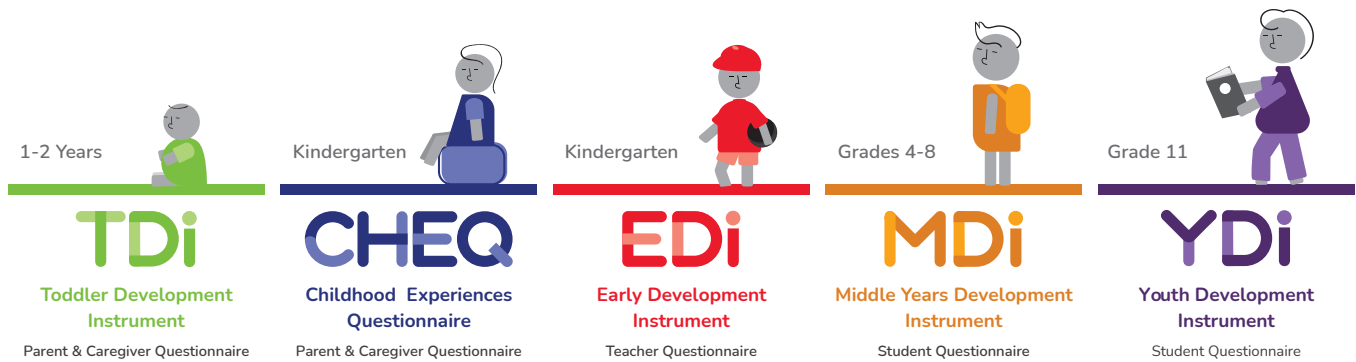
Revelstoke began collecting MDI data in 2010 and has participated in the YDI since it began piloting in 2020/2021.

Responding to MDI/YDI data

In identifying strong themes of connectedness in MDI and YDI data, School District 19 has taken a strengths-based approach to build upon these assets with a culture of curiosity. Action steps have included providing consistent messaging and focus over time in district planning and parent communications and setting clear goals and expectations for teachers and school leadership. Further, the district has created a feedback loop for centering student voice by bringing data back to students for unpacking, seeking to move beyond simply identifying themes to understanding how the themes play out on the ground for students.

Embedding HELP Data Among Multiple Sources of Information

The RECDC and School District 19 have consistently prioritized the collection of CDMS data, and they have held annual meetings to review the data alongside other information sources (e.g. community knowledge and expertise, community-collected parent surveys, student learning surveys, etc.) seeking to unpack the "why" behind the numbers. Bringing together these sources of information has generated rich conversations, contributed toward strategic planning, and ultimately allowed a more nuanced understanding of the experiences of children, youth, and families in Revelstoke.



Data Over Time and Across the Early Life Course

A benefit of collecting data over time and across the early life course is that they allow the exploration of emerging patterns and trends. While building connectedness, especially at a community level for families with children, is a longstanding priority in the community of Revelstoke, two recent grants from the UBC Community-University Engagement Support and Michael Smith Health Research Reach Program have supported a deeper look into Revelstoke’s CDMS data to determine whether there is evidence of a clear impact related to themes of connectedness.

As is evident in the summary of findings below, Revelstoke’s focus on connectedness is clearly reflected in the experiences of parents, children and youth in community:

Summary of Findings

- **TDi** (toddlers) – Parents/caregivers in Revelstoke reported significantly greater access to community resources and a greater number of neighbours they can count on compared to the other BC communities where the TDI was collected in 2019/20.
- **CHEQ** (children starting kindergarten) - Parents/caregivers in Revelstoke reported significantly greater use of multiple community resources and a greater number of neighbours they can count on compared to the other BC communities where the CHEQ was collected in 2021.
- **MDi** (Grade 4 & 7)* – Youth reported significantly greater connectedness to adults (at school, in the neighbourhood, and at home) compared to youth in surrounding school districts.
- **EDi** (kindergarten) - **MDi** (Grade 4) linked data* – Children vulnerable on one or more scales of the EDi in kindergarten were more likely to report greater connectedness to adults at school in Grade 4 compared to children in surrounding school districts.

**The MDi and EDi-MDi linked data results are based on MDi data collections from 2010/11 through to 2019/20. The comparison group includes a total of six school districts in the surrounding region. Please note that as the YDI was still in pilot phase during the time of this project, it was not included in the above analyses.*

Conclusion

Like many other communities, recent events and trends such as the COVID-19 pandemic, wild fires, rising housing costs, and diminishing early years sector funding have impacted Revelstoke, challenging the resiliency they have experienced. However, with a strong history of community connectedness and effective inter-sectoral [action](#), the community continues to rally, coordinating their efforts to work towards a shared vision of supporting children and families.

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