

Youth Action



Strategic Plan 2007 – 2010

Prepared by the CBT Youth Advisory Committee

THE COLUMBIA BASIN TRUST

Mission

The Columbia Basin Trust supports efforts by the people of the Basin to create a legacy of social, economic and environmental well-being and to achieve greater self-sufficiency for present and future generations.

Mandate

To manage the Columbia Basin Trust's assets for the ongoing economic, environmental and social benefit of the region.

Vision

The Columbia River Basin is a place where social, environmental, and economic well-being is fostered.

Collaborative relationships and partnerships are established.

A healthy environment is the basis for social and economic activities.

The economy is diverse, resilient and energized.

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Purpose

This document arose from a need to establish clear directions for CBT's Youth Initiatives for the future. It provides a blueprint for action, for budgeting and for subsequent Advisory Committee members to work from. It will also provide the Columbia Basin Trust Board and management with a plan for Youth Initiatives that can be 'nested' within a broad CBT strategic plan and, of course, the Columbia Basin Management Plan. As with any good plan, it will be re-visited and adjusted as time passes. It may be useful to anyone in the Basin and will be of particular interest to organizations and groups wishing to work with the Youth Initiatives, through funding requests or in partnership.

Background to CBT's Youth Initiative

CBT originally recognized, and continued to recognize that meaningful youth engagement is fundamentally important to fulfilling CBT's mission. CBT also identified that meaningful youth engagement requires appropriate strategies and structure.

In the public symposium held in Revelstoke in 1997, a special youth delegation was invited to identify concerns and issues specifically for youth living in the Basin. Following the symposium, a youth position was created on CBT's Public Advisory Committee in order to encourage ongoing representation for youth. In 1999, a Youth Task Force composed of Board and senior staff was created and began a process for the creation of a comprehensive strategy for youth involvement in CBT.

Many recommendations on how to involve young people came out of these early initiatives. However, like many other organizations, the challenge that CBT faced was in weaving these recommendations into a comprehensive plan for ongoing, *meaningful* youth participation throughout its organization. Creating "youth-friendly" structures which allow for youth participation often requires new ways of doing business. Responding to the complex issues young people face is a challenge for society as a whole, and of particular importance is finding ways to empower young people to be the "drivers" of this response.

In 1999, CBT took an active role in developing opportunities for youth by creating the *Columbia Basin Youth Links* program, an experiential learning program for local young people. A Youth Programs Consultant was hired to work with the Youth Task Force to support the creation of this program. This consultant's role was expanded to prepare a "Strategy for Youth Involvement" in 2000 which outlined a strategy for CBT to meaningfully engage youth in the Basin. The CBT Board endorsed the "Strategy for Youth Involvement" at their July 2000 meeting.

Part of the Board approved strategy was the formation of a separate Youth Advisory Committee (YAC) and an on-going Youth Coordinator position. This strategy paper also outlined CBT's dual mandate with the new YAC. The YAC assists the Board of Directors of the CBT in setting priorities in programming to delivery of benefits to the residents of the Basin – in this case, with a focus on youth. CBT also committed to incorporate a *Youth Leadership* program into the YAC in order to enhance their skills so they could more effectively implement their CBT duties. The YAC also serves as a CBT link to youth in the Basin and is able to engage Basin youth in providing input to CBT.

Guiding Principles for our work

When we plan and work to achieve our goals, we will keep these principles in mind. Our work:

- Will always align with the Mission of the CBT.
- Will meaningfully involve youth at all stages where possible.
- Will build youth capacity and leadership.
- Will support work that has a sustainable impact.
- Will promote connectedness between and among youth in Basin communities and we will promote a “Basin identity”.
- Will provide a wide range of benefits with a sense of geographic equity.
- Will foster productive mentoring relationships for youth.

The Youth Advisory Committee

The Youth Advisory Committee (YAC) was established by a resolution of the CBT Board in July 2000. CBT recognized that meaningful youth engagement required special structures and procedures. It requires a venue where the youth voice can be expressed freely and be treated respectfully. Youth engagement requires frequent interaction and consequently the YAC meets frequently (six times a year). Mentoring is an important aspect of effective youth engagement and CBT has provided staff support that assists and supports the YAC without directing it. To be meaningfully involved, youth need to feel they are trusted and empowered, and CBT has given the YAC the ability to make substantial program and budget decisions. The YAC itself is unique in that one of its expressed goals is to develop the skills and leadership ability within each member. Learning opportunities are provided at every meeting. The YAC consists of up to twelve youth between the ages of 15 and 29 selected to be representative of the geographic and demographic diversity in the Basin.

Ongoing Activities of CBT's Youth Initiatives

Since the inception of youth programming through CBT, a number of initiatives have been implemented. Some have reached completion or been evaluated and are no longer a priority. Current activities in the Youth Initiatives include:

1. Youth Media Program

CBT's Youth Media Program consists of a 'zine - SCRATCH - for youth (aged 15 to 29 years) in the Columbia Basin and a web site www.scratchonline.ca . The goal of the 'zine and scratchonline.ca is to connect youth in the Columbia Basin and to exchange information about issues and ideas of interest to youth. The content for SCRATCH and scratchonline.ca comes primarily through submissions of writing and art, making these two media projects by and for youth. They contain original writing, art, photography, columns and cartoons that have not been published previously.

2. Columbia Basin Youth Grants

The granting programs 'Basin Youth in Communities' and 'Columbia Basin Youth Grants' have been in place for five years. The current goals of the grants program are to:

- Support the development of youth leadership;
- Ensure projects are initiated by youth (even when supported by older adults) throughout development, implementation and evaluation; and
- Ensure projects have a strong focus on youth-driven, youth-supported, youth-involved activities that directly benefit youth.

CBYG has a small grants stream for projects under \$2500 and a large grants stream for projects over \$2500. Applications are adjudicated by the YAC on a continuous basis (no deadline) at meetings that occur every two months. CBT mentors and supports youth applicants in developing their work plans, budgets and final applications for review.

Moving to Youth Action

MANDATE:

The Columbia Basin Trust is committed to working with Basin youth to ensure they are actively engaged in addressing economic, social and environmental issues in the Columbia Basin region.

GOALS

Progress on activities will be reviewed by CBT on an annual basis. Goals, objectives and activities may be modified as progress is monitored and possible new strategic initiatives are identified.

The following are the goals and objectives of the CBT three-year Youth Strategy with FY08 Activities.

To encourage youth engagement by:

1. Supporting Basin youth in identifying their assets and needs and in developing strategies and programs to address them.

Objectives

- Work with Basin youth to develop a variety of means to identify Basin youth issues;
- Create and support forums for discussion of Basin youth issues; and
- Create and support a funding stream for Basin projects that involve youth at all stages of their development and implementation.

FY08 Activities

- Organize and hold a CBT Youth Forum;
- Support the formation of a coalition of Basin Youth Centres to enhance their effectiveness in their role as an information conduit between CBT and Basin youth;
- Implement the recommendations of the May 2006 evaluation of CBT's Youth Media to enhance its role as a Basin-wide forum for youth issues and concerns.
- Support Basin youth and Basin organizations involved in youth issues through the Columbia Basin Youth Grants Program; and
- Identify and develop relationships with youth support organizations beyond the Columbia Basin which have similar mandates and goals.

2. Supporting youth skill development, leadership and capacity-building

Objectives

- Assist existing Basin organizations that support youth skill development, leadership and capacity-building; and
- Ensure that all CBT Youth initiatives – YAC, CBYG and Youth Media – include significant opportunities for youth skill development, leadership and capacity building components.

FY08 Activities

- Support the formation of a coalition of Basin Youth Centres to enhance their effectiveness in fostering youth skills and leadership;
- Develop the capacity of YAC members and facilitate skill transfer to youth in their home communities;
- Provide proponent support to youth applicants to the CBYG program;
- Develop a strategy to reach out to underserved areas of the Basin;
- Complete and distribute the Best Practices Guide based on CBT's Youth Grants;
- Support the expansion of 'Peers R Here', a youth peer support program originally developed in Nelson, to additional Basin communities;
- Identify and develop relationships with youth support organizations beyond the Columbia Basin which have similar mandates and goals
- Develop and distribute brochures on Mentorship, Youth Engagement and Evaluation; and
- Provide ongoing CBT support to the Youth Advisory Committee.

3. Enhancing the ability of Basin youth to be engaged community members with a strong sense of Basin identity and a commitment to the continued well-being of the Columbia Basin.

Objectives

- Support the development of youth engagement initiatives in the Basin; and
- Support the interconnectedness of youth issues to other communities of interest within CBT and the Basin.

FY08 Activities

- Explore the development of a youth Trans-Boundary Water Forum;
- Develop and implement a strategy to reach out to older youth (24-29 years);
- Develop and implement a strategy to reach out to hard to reach and hard to engage youth;
- Support the formation of a coalition of Basin Youth Centres to be a voice for youth issues;
- Support the expansion of 'Peers R Here', a youth peer support program originally developed in Nelson, to additional Basin communities;
- Develop, promote and offer Youth Engagement workshops to Basin organizations and groups; and
- Develop and offer workshops on Youth Volunteerism.