



CRESTON AND AREA YOUTH ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY



KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW RESULTS

Submitted to: Town of Creston

Submitted by: BC Healthy Communities Society (BCHC)

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Introduction

In 2013, with the support of the Regional District of Central Kootenay (RDCK) Areas A, B, and C, the Lower Kootenay Band, youth stakeholders, and area youth, the Town of Creston successfully applied for Columbia Basin Trust's (CBT) "Community Directed Youth Funds", a \$100,000 grant to be awarded over 4 years at \$25,000 annually.

This process started with a CBT facilitated Youth Forum held on January 28th, 2013 at Creston's Prince Charles Secondary School (PCSS). This Forum helped identify 3 youth-driven priorities:

- 1) Investigating a possible youth space/center;
- 2) Hiring a teen coordinator; and,
- 3) Coordinating more activities and programs for Creston area youth.

The Forum was the best attended across the entire CBT region. Following the Forum, the Town of Creston was awarded the \$100,000 Community Directed Youth Fund (CDYF) grant. To fulfill the CBT guidelines, a committee of local youth (Teen Action Committee) and a separate committee of service providers (Community Advisory Committee) were established to oversee the funding and pursue the goals prioritized at the Youth Forum.

In April 2013, following the success of the CDYF application, the Town of Creston also applied for CBT's \$15,000 Community Youth Engagement Funding (CYEF), to be used to complete a more thorough community-wide "strategic plan" for youth engagement.

With the awarding of the funding in July 2013, the Town of Creston contracted BC Healthy Communities Society (BCHC) to develop a youth engagement strategy. Over the consultation period, BCHC assessed youth and service provider surveys, held youth asset mapping sessions, hosted key informant interviews, and conducted consultations with youth, service providers, and the community to collect data and information in order to analyze current youth engagement in the Creston area.

This report summarized the results of the key informant interviews which included community partners who have a role in youth programming in the community. For the purpose of this report and engagement strategy, 'youth' is defined as a young person between 13 and 19 years of age.



Acknowledgements

We wish to thank Bhar Sihota, Town of Creston Research and Legislative Analyst, and Jesse Willicome, Youth Liaison, for their important leadership role in connecting us to key community informants. Their efforts resulted in meaningful interviews with people passionate about youth in the community. We also appreciate the time and effort of the key informants and thank each of you for your valuable input and insights. You are true adult allies.

Overview

The second phase of the Creston and Area Youth Engagement Strategy involved a site visit and key informant interviews with community partners who had a role in youth programming or services. The interviews included seven local professionals who regularly engage with youth. A full list of interviewees and interview questions can be found in Appendix A and B. The Integral Map can be found in Appendix C.

As a part of this report, we explore the central themes identified, including opportunities, challenges and assets towards youth engagement in the community. Following that, we give a summary of more specific details of current youth engagement activities, ethics, and systems. Finally, we include a section on initial recommendations that informed the development of subsequent surveys and community consultation processes.



Barriers and Assets of Youth Engagement

Using the BC Healthy Communities Capacity Building Framework and model of engaging the whole person in the whole community, we used the four quadrant approach to understand all of the dimensions of youth engagement in the Creston area¹.

Many interviewees mentioned issues that fall into all of the integral quadrants, suggesting the importance of a model that can indeed account for and act upon these four dimensions of youth engagement. The model simply cannot be reduced to any one or only a few of these quadrants. For example, one interviewee insisted that there is really nothing wrong with the system as it is set up (Lower Right), but rather it comes down to individual perceptions of youth in the community (Upper Left). We can already see the need for a holistic set of recommendations for youth engagement. The question is, exactly which interventions are most important and how they might be delivered to have the greatest impact?

We have sorted the central themes from the key informant interviews into the four quadrants of the BCHC model. The full map is located in Appendix C. The four quadrants include:

<p style="text-align: center;">UPPER LEFT Psychological/Spiritual (Awareness) <i>This includes individual values, beliefs, and assumptions.</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">UPPER RIGHT Physical/Behavioral (Actions) <i>This includes our skills, action, abilities and behaviours.</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness, thought, feeling • Attitudes, values, beliefs, intentions • Inner health & well-being, self-esteem • Sense of safety, trust • Sense of connectedness, responsibility & caring – for others & the environment • Creativity, innovation, artistic expression • Motivation & experience of participation & contribution <p>(THE ME WE CANNOT SEE)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical health and well-being • Skills & abilities • Activities • Program participation • Consumer behaviours • Diet, fitness • Actions toward others and the environment • Skills and opportunities for participation & contribution <p>(THE ME WE CAN SEE)</p>

¹ A detailed description of the BC Healthy Communities Integral Capacity Building approach can be found on their website <http://bchealthycommunities.ca/res/download.php?id=400>



LOWER LEFT Cultural (Social Discourse)	LOWER RIGHT Social/Ecological (Systems)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical health and well-being • Skills & abilities • Activities • Program participation • Consumer behaviours • Diet, fitness • Actions toward others and the environment • Skills and opportunities for participation & contribution <p>(THE WE YOU CANNOT SEE)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural environment, ecological systems • Built environment, human systems • Community institutions (schools, health authority) • Justice system, religious institutions, etc. • Programs and services • Laws, policies, protocols • Organizational systems & structures • Community infrastructure (transportation, housing, social planning council, etc.) <p>(THE WE YOU CAN SEE)</p>

This analysis helped us identify what methods we may need to use to engage youth in the future. For example, an adjustment to perceptions about youth and understanding what “youth engagement” means is central to building greater awareness about youth engagement practices. This also helped determine the local community assets and opportunities for generating a more effective and holistic approach to youth engagement.

Youth Culture and Barriers/Challenges to Youth Engagement

All of the comments that appear in this section are direct quotes from the key informants.

UPPER LEFT Psychological/Spiritual (Awareness)	UPPER RIGHT Physical/Behavioral (Actions)
<p>There is a party culture in Creston, that's the popular group.</p> <p>There is a strong counter culture amongst youth as well that is mostly accepting of differences.</p> <p>Large group of parents are disengaged, maybe had their own bad experiences.</p> <p>There is a stigma attached to the reserve and identifying as First Nations.</p> <p>The youth may segregate themselves; there are deeper issues there.</p> <p>Youth don't feel like what they do is often appreciated as meaningful. Provide opportunities for teens to feel useful, learn new skills.</p> <p>The Creston Valley needs to be inclusive so that kids from Bountiful, Kitchener, Yahk and surrounding areas don't feel excluded.</p>	<p>Different service providers could bring all the youth together, providing meaningful opportunities to enhance youth facilities and experiences and the Town needs to be in the leadership role with that.</p> <p>Youth have too few opportunities for involvement.</p> <p>Of those who don't get involved, there are those who are still young and don't have a place and then those who are more involved in social groups out of school.</p> <p>Develop activities and events that target high-risk times for youth.</p> <p>Not enough to do, too much hanging out and driving around. Drinking and driving is prevalent.</p> <p>Mentoring between older youth and younger youth is missing.</p> <p>Focus on "reaching out", being proactive about where the kids are going, rather than mandating kids to come to school.</p> <p>Better laid out roles and responsibilities amongst the adults.</p>



LOWER LEFT Cultural (Social Discourse)	LOWER RIGHT Social/Ecological (Systems)
<p>There is kind of a split; the kids from Mormon Hills and the Lower Kootenay Band are not included in Town activities.</p> <p>The greater community is absolutely not open, it is very closed.</p> <p>The adult community is very transitional and not accepting of differences of race, culture and sexuality.</p> <p>If you want to involve the unengaged community you have to go to them.</p> <p>I think another barrier is very much an attitude, small town attitude, guarding your own real estate and I don't want to share, working together means we lose, but actually the more we share the more we have.</p> <p>A few kids define themselves as LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual and Trans-gendered), but high school is still a tough place to come out.</p> <p>Overall attitude that Creston is a retirement community. Kids are just a side issue.</p> <p>Need to evaluate the focus on being "senior" focused, looking at being more inclusive to all ages.</p> <p>Fear of engagement overall, historical issues.</p>	<p>Geographic isolation</p> <p>Transportation is the main barrier for kids from Bountiful and Kitchener participating in things like the TAC, etc.</p> <p>We need effective public transportation. Creston could use walking trails, it's broken up and there is no sidewalk or trail and the lighting is poor. All the linking, sidewalks are few and far between, the highway and not enough sidewalks and no trail system, crosswalks.</p> <p>There is nothing open at night.</p> <p>Town providing scholarships linked to community services, contributing to services, accessing services and having positive outcomes (Grade 10, 11, 12).</p> <p>There is no central structure or leadership for collaboration.</p> <p>Economic pressures - youth leave and don't come back.</p> <p>Poverty is an issue for kids.</p> <p>Limited youth specific programming at the College.</p> <p>Still a lot of groups working in silos.</p> <p>Town could do more to highlight successes of youth.</p>



<p>More opportunities to dialogue about differences.</p> <p>Youth that have been left disadvantaged by socio-economic realities become kids-at-risk and have historically been left out.</p> <p>Fragmented. Youth culture is under-valued.</p>	<p>The area directors can offer grants in aid.</p> <p>The Town should have one councilor who is focused on youth portfolios.</p> <p>“Meaningful” involvement between teens and local businesses is missing.</p> <p>Regional District of Central Kootenay (RDCK) representatives and Creston Town Council could work toward enhanced collaboration.</p>
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Current Context of Youth Engagement

Seven participants were asked to use a scoring index of 1 to 5 (1 meaning ideal and 5 meaning far from ideal) to grade the following comments.

a. Youth are viewed as critical members of society.	
4, 3, 5, 4, 3, 3, 3	Average Score: 3.57
b. Youth are included in the decisions that affect them.	
4.5, 4, 5, 3, 4, 4, 3	Average Score: 3.93
c. Youth are respected within Creston by decision makers.	
3, 3, 4, 4, 3, 3, 3	Average Score: 3.29
d. Youth have positive relationships with adults in Creston.	
3, 2, 3, 2, 3, 3	Average Score: 2:29
e. Youth from marginalized backgrounds are able to easily access new opportunities.	
5, 4, 5, 5, 3, 5	Average Score: 3.86
f. Youth are seen as positive community contributors.	
4, 3, 4, 5, 4, 5, 4	Average Score: 4.14
g. Youth from all walks of life have programs and opportunities that speak to their diverse interests.	
5, 4, 5, 5, 4, 4, 5	Average Score: 4.57
h. Youth are involved at decision making tables in the community's economic, recreational, educational and social systems.	
5, 4, 4, 5, 5, 4, 5	Average Score: 4.57
i. Youth are seen as leaders today in Creston.	
5, 3, 4, 2, 4, 3, 5	Average Score: 3.71

There is an optimistic sense that youth are involved in the community and seen as critical members of society. There is some concern that youth may not have positive relationships with adults and also concern that decision-makers do not always respect youth.



Opportunities and Assets

All of the comments that appear in this section are direct quotes from the key informants.

UPPER LEFT Psychological/Spiritual (Awareness)	UPPER RIGHT Physical/Behavioral (Actions)
<p>Maybe understanding you don't have to like each other and what are the benefits of being different, address collaboration openly.</p> <p>Energy amongst youth.</p> <p>Youth need to have a voice.</p> <p>Kids have energy, but talking continues (we need action). This comment was focused on creating an action plan versus having more consultation.</p> <p>Everything changes so much with an attitude change.</p> <p>Youth and families need to be seen as an investment.</p> <p>The youth themselves are ready, willing and energetic.</p>	<p>TAC does some volunteer work or provides a service.</p> <p>There could be more mentoring between teens.</p> <p>Creativeness of youth (plays, arts, etc.)</p> <p>Advertising, outreach to the community to let people know what's going on for youth.</p> <p>Start youth programming earlier, at age 10, because this tween group often doesn't fit the mold for kids programming.</p> <p>New ideas and leadership.</p> <p>Find pragmatic reasons to work together.</p> <p>Support what youth are taking on by themselves Two avid teachers were interested in biking, so doing trail building for school volunteers.</p> <p>Volunteer days in the community have led to more volunteer</p>



	<p>opportunities for youth. Small group of parents support all the school involvement.</p> <p>Open more opportunities for one-to-one learning.</p>
<p>LOWER LEFT Cultural (Social Discourse)</p>	<p>LOWER RIGHT Social/Ecological (Systems)</p>
<p>Kids can be engaged with the right incentives.</p> <p>There have been pockets of enthusiasm for engaging youth.</p> <p>More community conversations would help.</p> <p>So little infrastructure is an asset. More room for freedom and creativity.</p> <p>Opportunities for input and consultation.</p> <p>Intergenerational collaboration options.</p> <p>Support of the CBT process and funding opportunities.</p> <p>Lots of opportunity for involvement.</p> <p>There is tremendous opportunity for growth and inclusion; there is interest and drive to do so and create change.</p> <p>There is a lot of positive interest and intention.</p> <p>Providing a safe space for marginalized individuals.</p>	<p>Recreation Centre.</p> <p>Therapeutic Riding Program.</p> <p>To see assets in a more visible way in the community.</p> <p>Teen Advocate /Teen Advisory Committee.</p> <p>First time partners coming together from different sectors.</p> <p>Abundance of natural resources – bike park.</p> <p>Scholarships for the community, what would make Creston a place you would come back to – there could be a tie in with scholarships and sponsor a good portion of the tuition to serve your community, different services. That’s an engagement model that seems to make good sense.</p>



Main Interview themes

UPPER LEFT Psychological/Spiritual (Awareness)	UPPER RIGHT Physical/Behavioral (Actions)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance the understanding of youth voice and engagement. • See youth and families as an investment. • Adults needs to work together to address fragmentation and mistrust. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intergenerational collaboration. • Support youth leadership. • More access to youth spaces at night.
LOWER LEFT Cultural (Social Discourse)	LOWER RIGHT Social/Ecological (Systems)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a culture of collaboration (beginning with pragmatic opportunities). • Continue to support the TAC. • Start when youth are younger. • Local government and RDCK are encouraged to increase their leadership role. • Embracing diversity, perhaps through youth-to-youth/mentoring opportunities. • Create spaces to talk about diversity and differences. • Enhance trust and safety. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address the transportation system (including crosswalks, lights and trails). • Link youth to volunteer and job opportunities. • Scholarship opportunities.



Recommendations

Kania and Kramer (2011) note, “Large scale social change requires broad cross-sector coordination, yet the social sector remains focused on the isolated intervention of individual organizations” (p.1).²

Collective impact initiatives are a type of collaboration that differ from typical collaboration processes, as they require long-term commitments by people from different sectors to solve a specific social problem, in this case youth engagement. Their actions ideally should be supported by five key developmental activities that contribute to this outcome. These include:

1. A desire to create collective impact –this requires all partners to have a shared vision for change through agreed upon actions;
2. Development of a shared and common measurement system;
3. Agreement on mutually reinforcing activities (each stakeholder focuses on activities they excel at in a way that supports and coordinates with the other partners);
4. Development of deep levels of trust and a desire to uncover common motivations; and,
5. Resources to coordinate the time and attention needed to make the collaboration successful (this is where the RDCK and Town of Creston could consider allocating resources).

The following diagram³ is helpful in thinking about how this type of collaboration requires higher capacities, enhanced skills and relationship development in the community. In a time of shrinking resources and increased competition, we need innovative solutions for impactful collaboration that can eventually serve to provide more integrated youth engagement frameworks and service delivery in our communities.

² Kania, J and Kramer, M. (2011). *Collective Impact*. Stanford Social Innovation.
http://www.ssireview.org/articles/entry/collective_impact

³ Adapted from *Integrated Health Promotion resource kit: A practice guide for service providers* by the State Government of Victoria (2003),p. 4
<http://www.health.vic.gov.au/healthpromotion/integrated/kit.htm>



Integration	Process	Purpose
Low	Networking	The exchange of information for mutual benefit. This requires little time and trust between partners. Clearing house for information.
	Coordination	Exchanging information and altering activities for a common purpose. Match and coordinate needs and activities. Limit duplication of services.
	Cooperation	Networking and coordination plus sharing resources. It requires a significant amount of time and high level of trust between partners.
	Collaboration	In addition to the other activities described, collaboration includes enhancing the capacity of the other partners for mutual benefit and a common purpose. Building interdependent systems to address issues and opportunities. Sharing resources and making equal commitment.
High	Integration	Fully integrated activities with single budget, management and accountability processes.

Integration of services to youth is needed in order to enhance trust and create a more welcoming climate for youth in the Creston area:

- a) **Address both the most isolated, at-risk youth and the most engaged youth as priorities.** As this report has highlighted, the needs for low income, socially and geographically isolated youth are high. There are also numerous opportunities to consider inter-generational programming with seniors.
- b) **A need to address the geographic realities of Creston, Bountiful, Yahk, and other nearby areas that have specialized geographical needs.** Unless youth are



- transported by parents or school buses, it may be difficult for them to link to local activities. There are numerous opportunities to look at how to address the transportation system in a collaborative manner. These will be explored further in the Youth Strategy and Action Plan Final Report recommendations.
- c) **Access and supports for diverse youth groups.** Currently there is no effective means for supporting diverse youth, including those that are diverse by nature of their heritage or backgrounds, and those that may be diverse because of sexuality or simply see themselves as different. All youth must see a place for themselves in their community.
 - d) **Leading a change in community perceptions about youth.** Creston can be seen as more welcoming and engaging to youth simply by changing the conversation from ‘youth are not valued’ to ‘youth are valued’ and are an important part of our future.
 - e) **Development of a volunteer/job bureau.** Creston does not currently have a volunteer/job bureau for young people less than 16 years of age. The Town of Creston or Kootenay Employment Services could support enhanced volunteerism through the use of [VolWeb](#)⁴ and other existing Creston-based services and volunteers.
 - f) **Collaboration between non-profit and private service providers/businesses.** The conversation about collaboration needs to include businesses, local farms and other community professionals, if we hope to engage youth with work and volunteer opportunities throughout the community.
 - g) **Address essential systemic needs.** Streetlights, crosswalks, trails and sidewalks are an essential part of young people’s lives as they tend to walk, longboard and cycle more than the typical adult. Addressing these areas enhances youth safety and their sense of wellbeing. This is a critical systemic issue that needs to be addressed.
 - h) **Develop a long-term narrative about youth.** Addressing complex issues in our communities requires an articulated “story” in the minds of the people. Such a story addresses the interconnected pieces they believe are necessary, in order to bring about the change they are working for, and the processes by which that change might happen. Sometimes a theory of change is clearly articulated; sometimes it is embedded in the structure and assumptions of the plan. We take the view that a clearly articulated theory of change allows all those involved in a project to grapple with the complexity of what is required to bring about meaningful change, and to work with each other most effectively.

⁴ VolWeb website <http://bchealthycommunities.ca/res/download.php?id=400>



The Tamarack Institute for Community Engagement notes that complex responses tend to:

- “Develop and expand a shared understanding of the issue in its full complexity;
- Work across domains and at multiple levels;
- Be collaborative in nature;
- Embrace an action-learning approach;
- Develop customized, local responses; and,
- Aim to make progress over the long term rather than seeking “quick fixes.”⁵

Conclusion

All in all, this phase of the project has provided important information that has been very interesting, and provides a solid foundation for our next phase of youth surveys and youth consultations.

⁵ Cabaj, Mark (2010) <http://tamarackcommunity.ca/g3.php>



Appendix A - List of Interviewees

The following people formally or informally participated in the key informant interviews. We thank them for their valuable insights and reflections that were critical in the development of this report and the surveys completed by youth service providers.

Jackie Hula-Creston Library
Sharon Popoff-Principal, Prince Charles Secondary School
Laura Hannant-College of the Rockies
Doreen Cardwell-Kootenay Employment Services
Dina Bambrick – Kootenai Community Centre Society
Charlotte Joa – Royal Canadian Mounted Police
Mary Jayne Blackmore – VP, Mormon Hills School
Jesse Willicome- Project Liaison
Bhar Sihota- Town of Creston



Appendix B - Key Informant Interview Questions

Organizational Context

1. Tell me about the youth programs you provide.
2. How do you define youth in the program(s) you provide?
3. Do you have a youth decision-making body and if so, please describe how that works.
4. Describe how youth are currently involved in the programs/projects you run.
5. From your perspective, how do you define youth participation?

Youth Culture

6. How would you describe youth culture in Creston and area?
7. How welcoming and inclusive is Creston to different types of youth? (E.g. cultural groups, GLBT youth etc.)
8. What would help others become more aware of the assets youth possess in Creston?
9. Have you any thoughts about how to effectively engage diverse groups of youth?

Culture in the Community

10. Describe some effective examples of youth service provider collaboration.
11. What would enhance collaboration between the Town of Creston and youth service providers?
Please describe some specific examples.
12. What are the main barriers to collaboration?

Systems and Structures

13. What are the top three youth assets in the community?
14. What are the top three challenges for youth and how can these be addressed?
15. What role should local government play to enhance youth participation?

Part II: Current Context of Youth Engagement

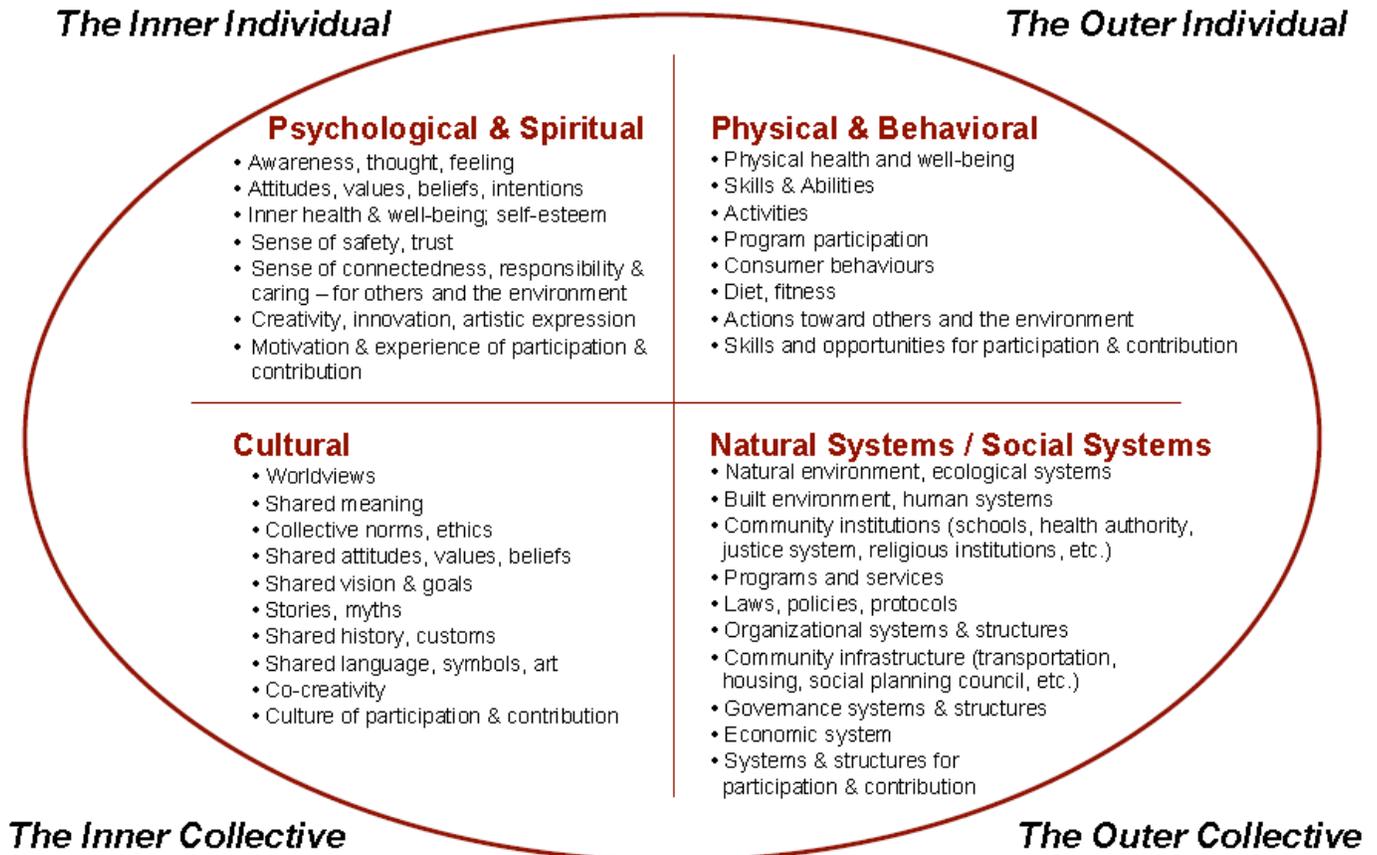
1. Using a scoring index of 1-5 (1 meaning ideal and 5 meaning far from ideal) grade the following comments. Feel free to comment if you would like to.
 - a. Youth are viewed as critical members of society
 - b. Youth are included in the decisions that affect them
 - c. Youth are respected within Creston by decision makers
 - d. Youth have positive relationships with adults in Creston



- e. Youth from marginalized backgrounds are able to easily access new opportunities
- f. Youth are seen as positive community contributors
- g. Youth from all walks of life have programs and opportunities that speak to their diverse interests
- h. Youth are involved at decision making tables in the community's economic, recreational, educational and social systems
- i. Youth are seen as leaders today in Creston



Appendix C - Integral Map



An Integral* Map of Community

* *integral* means "comprehensive, inclusive, balanced ... not leaving anything out"