

DATE OF MEETING May 1, 2023

AUTHORED BY CHRISTY WOOD, SOCIAL PLANNER

SUBJECT NANAIMO YOUTH RESILIENCE STRATEGY – BUILDING SAFER COMMUNITIES

OVERVIEW

Purpose of Report

To present the Nanaimo Youth Resilience Strategy for Council consideration of endorsement.

Recommendation

That Council endorse the Nanaimo Youth Resilience Strategy.

BACKGROUND

The City of Nanaimo has been allocated \$1.8 million from Public Safety Canada until March 2026 to develop and implement a strategic three-year plan to address gun and gang violence. At the 2022-JUL-04 Regular Council meeting, the following motion was passed by Council:

“That Council accept the funds from the Building Safer Communities Fund to address gun and gang violence, endorse Staff to use year one funds to build a 3 year strategic plan with pilot programs, and commit Staff to providing overall grant management.”

Since that time, the City has entered into a contribution agreement for Year One with Public Safety Canada, hired a project coordinator, engaged consultants to develop the Nanaimo Youth Resilience Strategy (the Strategy), conducted community consultations, and created a project steering committee to support the development and implementation of the Strategy.

Later this year, the City is implementing a public education and awareness campaign to support youth resiliency and share information about the root causes known to negatively influence a young person’s life. In addition, a referral system is being developed to identify and build relationships with youth at risk identified through public education sessions held in schools and within community, with the purpose of engaging them in programs and initiatives being implemented in the Strategy.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of the Strategy (Attachment A) is to have a plan of action for preventing youth from engaging in gun and gang violence in Nanaimo by addressing the root causes. The Strategy findings and focus areas are specific to the geographical boundaries of the City of Nanaimo and reserve lands governed by Snuneymuxw First Nation. The Strategy, however, recognizes that the impact and prevention of gun and gang violence does not happen in a vacuum and notes that the implementation of the Strategy may see programs and initiatives delivered in the general region of Nanaimo.

The development of the Strategy included the assessment of local risk and protective factors for youth living in Nanaimo. This included looking at root causes, safety concerns, and available services and resources for youth at the local level. Data collection included:

- **Quantitative Data** – a review of existing statistics and reports related to community safety and youth resilience was conducted. This included collecting and analysing data related to demographics, childhood development, community wellbeing and livability, crime and victimization, education, social challenges, housing, homelessness, labour force, health and substance use. The quantitative data is presented in Appendix 2 (Attachment B).
- **Qualitative Data** - qualitative data collected through community consultations provided a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges highlighted in the quantitative data. Community consultations also allowed for local knowledge and experiences to be captured. Community engagement sessions were held with several groups in the community and through one on one interviews. In addition, surveys were sent out to local organizations working with children, youth, and families (including organizations that work with individuals with lived experience, in crime, as well as gun and gang violence). A total of 229 individuals were engaged from February to March 2023. A summary of the community consultations can be found in Appendix 5 (Attachment B).

The collection of this data helped to inform the Strategy and understand community-specific challenges to ensure the Strategy is evidence informed and addresses local concerns.

The Strategy includes six focus areas to prevent youth from engaging in gun and gang violence and to address the significant youth related risk factors for Nanaimo. The focus areas are connected to evidence based outcomes and meet the required criteria under the Building Safer Communities (BSC) funding program. These focus areas provide a road map on how to reduce risk factors for youth, improve youth resiliency, and will provide guidance on how funds should be prioritized and distributed between 2023 and 2026. The focus areas identified may interconnect and, more than one focus area may be addressed through implementing one or more program(s) or initiative(s). The six focus areas are:

- **Safe Youth Gathering Spaces:** To establish safe, free youth gathering spaces, within existing facilities, with criteria that will establish accessibility and reach youth at risk.
- **Youth Outreach:** To expand street outreach and related programs for youth, along with service hours and locations to build relationships with youth at risk and to meet a wide range of their needs such as food, harm reduction, engagement in recreation, access to counselling, etc.
- **Connecting Youth to Land and Water through Snawaylth (Teachings):** Enhance existing and/or create new opportunities to connect youth to the land and water through Snawaylth (teachings) to strengthen their mental, emotional, spiritual, and cultural resilience.
- **Youth Mentoring Programs:** To connect youth, especially youth at risk, with diverse role models and significant/caring adults (e.g. tutors, trades or vocational role models, mentors, teachers, coaches, etc.).

- **Enhancing Existing Youth Programs** To improve existing programs by adding new components that fill gaps and build protective factors for children and youth at risk (e.g. sports, culture, education, health and wellness, life skills, socio-emotional learning, volunteering, etc.).
- **Media and Communications:** To build relationships with media and develop key, positive messaging to highlight successful youth programs and initiatives that counter repeated negative media attention that perpetuate discrimination and stigmatization against youth.

Nanaimo Youth Resilience Strategy Steering Committee

The Strategy relies heavily on the capacity to engage overall community and its key partners to commit to addressing risk factors for youth upstream while taking action here and now. A steering committee was formed to support the development and implementation of the Strategy. The steering committee has met monthly since January 2023 and will continue to meet regularly over the next three years.

The steering committee fulfills the following roles:

- Partners with the City to provide leadership and oversight for Strategy implementation
- Informs the community on the status of priority projects recommended in the Strategy
- Helps ensure the foundational commitments are adhered to
- Reviews the evaluation and monitoring results as they emerge to provide advice on changes to the Strategy as needed
- Takes leadership in the implementation of the sustainability plan
- Engages additional stakeholders as new needs arise
- Communicates the plan priorities within their own spheres of influence
- Seeks out new or existing resources to support Strategy implementation and thereby advancing sustainability
- Facilitates connections to existing efforts that align with Strategy priorities
- Provides supports and oversight to any action teams
- Stays informed and shares knowledge regarding developments to the Strategy within Nanaimo and beyond
- Guides the distribution of the BSC funds by developing grant criteria and making recommendations to the City for fund disbursement

The steering committee is a multi-disciplinary body comprised of representatives from the following sectors:

- Business
- Child Welfare
- City of Nanaimo
- Community Policing
- Education
- General Health Care
- Indigenous Welfare
- Policing
- Snuneymuxw First Nation
- Urban Indigenous Community
- Youth
- Youth Advocates
- Youth Employment
- Youth Services

- Justice
- People with Living / Lived Experience
- Youth Shelter Services
- Youth Substance Use/Addiction

Strategy Implementation Guide for the Nanaimo Youth Resilience Strategy

The Strategy Implementation Guide (Attachment C) provides a step-by-step guide on how the steering committee, along with support from City Staff, can best implement the Strategy. The guide also provides evaluation and sustainability frameworks on how to evaluate and monitor the impact of the Strategy, and how to maintain the momentum of the Strategy after the funding from Public Safety Canada has ended.

Next Steps

If Council endorses the Strategy, Staff will work with the steering committee to draft a work plan, funding criteria, and a budget for the distribution of BSC funds over the next three years at the Finance and Audit Committee meeting on 2023-MAY-17. Once endorsed by Council, the work plan and budget will be submitted to Public Safety Canada to inform a Contribution Agreement. Implementation of the work plan and budget is expected to begin in summer 2023. |

OPTIONS

1. That Council endorse the Nanaimo Youth Resilience Strategy.
 - The advantages of this option: Council endorsement of the Strategy will ensure that the City is meeting its funding obligations to the Federal Government of Canada and will allow the City to receive funding from the BSC fund for programs and initiatives over the next three years.
 - The disadvantages of this option: Staff time will be used towards overall grant management to coordinate activities over the next three years.
 - Financial Implications: The BSC fund will fund the projects related to the priority areas identified in the Nanaimo Youth Resilience Strategy over the next three years.
2. That Council not endorse the Nanaimo Youth Resilience Strategy.
 - The advantages of this option: Staff time will not be used towards overall grant management and Strategy implementation.
 - The disadvantages of this option: Funds allocated for the City of Nanaimo by Public Safety Canada through the BSC Fund will not be accessible through a Contribution Agreement for activities over the next three years. The issue of gun and gang violence for youth may not be proactively or strategically addressed citywide.
 - Financial Implications: The City will not receive further funding to address youth gun and gang violence prevention.
3. That Council provide alternative direction. |

SUMMARY POINTS

- The City of Nanaimo has been allocated \$1.8 million from Public Safety Canada until March 2026 to develop and implement a strategic plan to address gun and gang violence.
- Risk factors for Youth in Nanaimo have been identified through data collection and community consultation and have informed the Nanaimo Youth Resilience Strategy.
- The Nanaimo Youth Resilience Strategy identifies six focus areas that will address local risk factors for youth, that are connected to evidence based outcomes and will meet the Public Safety Canada funding requirements under the Building Safer Communities Fund program.
- The Nanaimo Youth Resilience Strategy will guide the distribution of funding over three years for activities to be implemented between 2023 to 2026.

ATTACHMENTS:

ATTACHMENT A: Nanaimo Youth Resilience Strategy

ATTACHMENT B: Link to Nanaimo Youth Resilience Strategy Appendices

ATTACHMENT C: Link to Strategy Implementation Guide for the Nanaimo Youth Resilience Strategy |

Submitted by:

Lisa Brinkman
Manager, Community Planning

Damon Johnston
Manager, Recreation Services |

Concurrence by:

Lisa Bhopalsingh
Director, Community Development

Darcie Osborne
Director, Recreation & Culture

Laura Mercer
Director, Finance

Supt. Lisa Fletcher
Officer in Charge, Nanaimo RCMP

Richard Harding
General Manager, Parks, Recreation and Culture

Dale Lindsay
General Manager, Development Services /
Deputy CAO |