

STRENGTHENING RURAL CANADA

COMMUNITY: SALMO, BRITISH COLUMBIA

Decoda
LITERACY SOLUTIONS


Columbia Basin Alliance for Literacy

STRENGTHENING RURAL CANADA  RENFORCER LES COMMUNAUTÉS RURALES DU CANADA
Our people. Our communities. Our future.

Strengthening Rural Canada: Salmo, British Columbia

INTRODUCTION

The Strengthening Rural Canada project for Salmo, developed through a multi-agency partnership, features a number of identified opportunities and challenges that aim to improve life for all members of the community. This document is the culmination of the thoughts, ideas, hopes and wishes of the community members who engaged in a planning and consultation process facilitated by Sonia Tavares, Community Literacy Coordinator for the Columbia Basin Alliance for Literacy for Salmo. The process was further supported by Decoda Literacy Solutions. While the funding's initial purpose was designed to identify the benefits, challenges and opportunities of living in a remote and rural setting, it became quickly evident that the group had concrete ideas to make action a reality. As you read through the document, you will see a number of actions and priorities that were identified by those involved in the process. It is their hope that this document creates a road map for change and makes Salmo, and inspires other rural communities across the country, to look within for change.

While this report is not focused solely on literacy skill development, a literacy theme is woven into the plan as we acknowledge the impact literacy has on a community's socio-economic advancement. We are optimistic about our community and know that literacy skills are linked to strong and resilient economies. Literacy skills are positively linked to health and well-being and people's ability to fully participate in society. It was with that in mind that we began the process.

THE PEOPLE AND THE PROCESS

A group of interested community members from various organizations was invited to move through a facilitated process of visioning, and identifying successes, key strengths, assets and challenges in the community. The following organizations and groups were represented throughout the process:

- Salmo Community Resource Society
- Salmo Valley Youth and Community Centre
- Salmo Children's Centre
- Columbia Basin Alliance for Literacy
- Selkirk College
- Circle of Indigenous Nations Society
- Senior Citizens
- Concerned Residents
- Community Volunteers

This opportunity allowed us to establish opportunities, identify challenges and develop actions, but more importantly to come together to have the conversation.

Many of the organizations and service providers in the community have a passion for the work they do, but more importantly, for the community they represent. This is evident in their commitment and desire to collaborate to enhance the delivery of services for the well-being of Salmo residents. The process identified a number of key assets for this community; most notably were clean air and water, access to nature, sense of community (from youth to seniors), and the spirit of the vast number of volunteers.

THE COMMUNITY

Salmo is a village municipality in the West Kootenay region of Southeastern British Columbia. It is located in the Salmo River Valley, nestled in the Selkirk Mountain range.

Known as the “Hub of the Kootenays”, Salmo is situated at the junction of the Crowsnest Highway and Highway 6, and is about a 30-minute drive from the communities of Castlegar, Nelson and Trail.

Originally known as Salmon Siding (the original name of the Salmo River was the Salmon River), the Village of Salmo was founded as a small mining town near the Nelson and Fort Sheppard Railway during the gold rush of 1896. The name of the town was changed to Salmo to avoid confusion with other places having similar names. When dams were created along the Columbia River in the 1960s and 1970s, Salmo’s fish stocks were depleted.

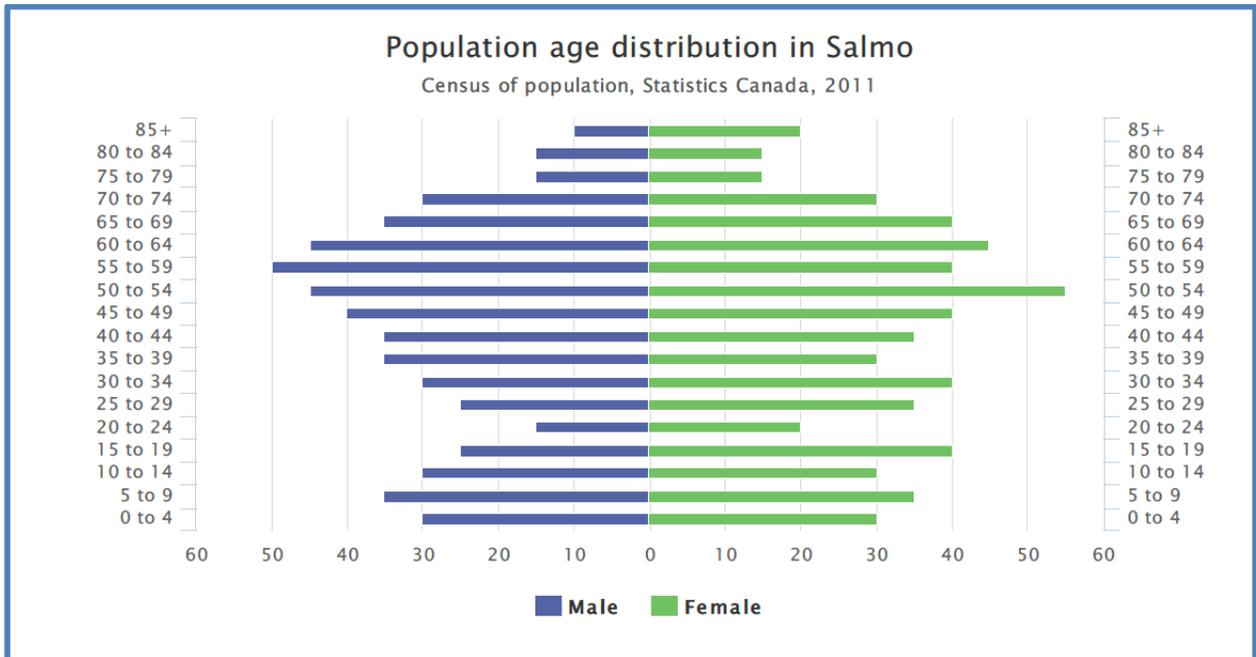
It is a quiet community with numerous outdoor activities including hiking, fishing, biking, golfing and skiing. There is also a local farmer’s market, numerous community events and music festivals.



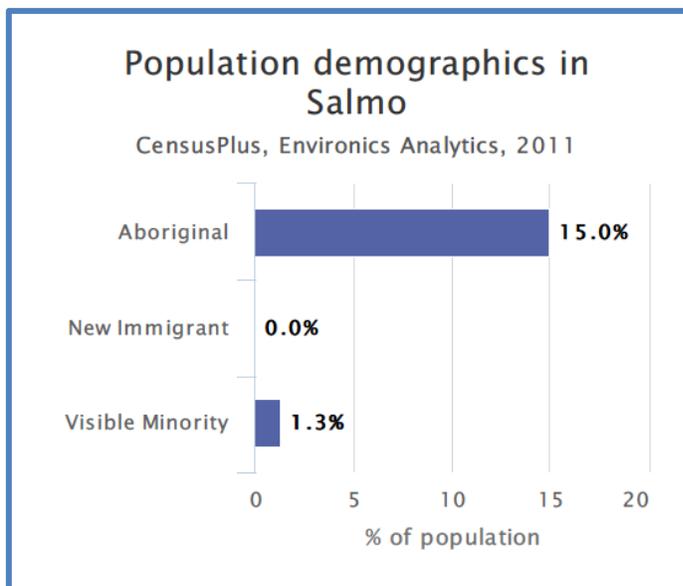
Source: ourbc.com



BC Stats has 2014 population estimates for Salmo at 1,187. The 2011 Census data reports the Village of Salmo's population to be 1,139. These numbers indicate a mainly stable population with nominal growth



Source: IHA Community Health Profiles using BC Stats



To serve a large number of Aboriginal residents, Circle of Indigenous Nations Society (COINS) offers Aboriginal Drum Circles, Aboriginal Family Time and other programs in the community.

Source: IHA Community Health Profiles using BC Stats

Mining and logging were the major industries in the early days of the community. Mines in the area were major producers of gold, silver, lead, zinc and tungsten. Though there are no active mines currently, geologic exploration continues. Logging has continued to flourish over the years and continues today as an economical mainstay of the area. Currently 93 businesses operate in Salmo with the hopes of continued growth for the community.

The Village of Salmo is seeking input from residents for their Official Community Plan and looking at ways to keep Salmo sustainable along a variety of themes including Social & Cultural well-being, Environment, Parks & Recreation, Land Use & Infrastructure and Economic Development.



SUCSESSES

There are numerous service providers in the community that work in collaboration to examine joint planning and professional development. Several tables exist where service providers gather and look at strengths and needs in the community. These include the Early Childhood Development Table, the Literacy Planning Committee, Salmo Seniors Working Group and Economic Development Working Group.

A list of the successful initiatives, programs, collaborations, volunteerism, services, infrastructures and natural resources that currently exist in the community was generated at the sessions. Some of them are:

- Family Programs
- Newly renovated Library
- Age Friendly Program
- Clean water and air
- Salmo Valley Youth and Community Centre
- Youth Programs
- Many committed volunteers
- Parks & Recreation
- Mining
- Stone Murals
- Food Bank
- Mining
- Salmo Children's Centre
- Affordable housing
- Access to Nature
- Lifestyle
- Ski hill, golf course, BMX track,
- Arts Council
- Salmo Children's Centre (newly opened Infant/Toddler care space)

CHALLENGES

Along with successes, challenges have surfaced in the community of Salmo. In particular, two areas were identified pertaining to employment. These are lack of opportunities for skill development and accessible employment training and support. Supports that would be helpful in improving skills and increasing employability are health and safety in the workplace, digital literacy and job search and interview skills. Development of digital literacy skills has emerged as an area of skill that would assist the seniors who wish to modernize their abilities.

There are many well trained individuals who require job experience, but the limited opportunities in the town has led to the relocation of some people to larger communities. There are satellite employment services offered in the community, but the time is limited to visiting only 1.5 days a month. Upgrading or college programs are not offered in the community, so those interested in post secondary training need to travel to neighbouring communities. It can be frustrating for individuals to access labour market services. There have been pilot employability programs in the past which included offering a stipend for individuals to attend and other incentives; however, at times these programs were cancelled due to low enrolment. The lack of employment services, coupled with the unavailability of college or other training courses and low number of employment opportunities, has created a tenuous situation.

Another challenge that was identified was the predicament of aging volunteers. In a community like Salmo, volunteers are heavily involved in local events and festivals, but in the absence of succession planning, the age of volunteerism is rapidly dissipating. The feedback from the group showed a clear desire for support in recruiting and training a new generation of volunteers. There was a genuine concern for the service groups and committees that rely on volunteers.

Within a small community, it is a common misconception that information is easy to attain. The community does offer a number of distribution points with a variety of mediums to communicate with community members. The challenge that is noted is the lack of coordination between various groups to use streamlined means to support and promote one another's programs, services and events.

The final challenge, which could be one of the most inspiring, is the challenge to shift the public's perception of Salmo being a struggling socio-economic community, with high poverty rates, to be known as a beautiful, thriving place to live - the best kept secret in the Kootenays!

Lastly, in order to ensure that there is wide representation on this committee, the group members commit to engaging with the Seniors Centre, Youth, Advocacy Centre, Interior Health Authority, School District, Recreation, Employment services, Aboriginal Services and other key stakeholders as they are identified.

Objectives	Actions	Partnerships
<p>Increase, support and promote volunteerism within the community.</p>	<p>Organize an event with service providers that has a focus on volunteerism to attract and recruit new volunteers.</p> <p>Showcase volunteers in the community in newspaper, bulletins.</p> <p>Host a volunteer recognition event.</p> <p>Develop a mentorship program matching new volunteers with experienced volunteers.</p> <p>Organize trainings for volunteers to attend.</p> <p>Partner with School District to get youth engaged</p>	<p>Salmo Valley Youth & Community Centre Society (SVYCCS)</p> <p>Columbia Basin Alliance for Literacy (CBAL)</p> <p>School District 8</p>
<p>Provide ongoing professional development opportunities and coordinate training between organizations</p>	<p>Hold training and workshops on such themes as board development, Robert's rules, how to have a meeting.</p> <p>Incorporate educational components in the service providers' networking luncheons.</p> <p>Conduct succession planning.</p> <p>Explore what it means to be a volunteer.</p>	<p>CBAL</p> <p>Age Friendly Program</p> <p>Salmo Community Resource Society</p> <p>Salmo Children's Centre</p> <p>Salmo Public Library</p> <p>SVYCCS</p> <p>Circle of Indigenous Nations Society</p> <p>Selkirk College</p>

<p>Support adults and seniors in upgrading their literacy skills with a focus on digital literacy and skill development.</p>	<p>Enhance access to digital literacy programs and expand service diversity (i.e. iPads for Seniors).</p> <p>Create a scan and a needs assessment of current programs being offered to adults to support their literacy and numeracy skills.</p> <p>Offer digital literacy classes/drop ins for seniors</p>	<p>CBAL</p> <p>Age Friendly Program</p> <p>Salmo Public Library</p> <p>Selkirk College</p>
<p>Improve effective communication between traditional and non-traditional partners.</p>	<p>Re-establish service providers network.</p> <p>Host a luncheon three times a year. Offer opportunity to learn about other organizations.</p> <p>Encourage board members and staff to attend the luncheons.</p> <p>During luncheons incorporate opportunities for skill development.</p> <p>Invite business owners and staff to relevant skill building opportunities for service providers.</p>	<p>CBAL</p> <p>Age Friendly Program</p> <p>Salmo Public Library</p> <p>Salmo Community Resource Society</p> <p>Salmo Children's Centre</p> <p>SVYCCS</p> <p>Circle of Indigenous Nations Society</p> <p>Selkirk College</p>

<p>Increase and improve access to information regarding programs/services.</p>	<p>Develop a communication strategy for all services in the community.</p> <p>Ensure that website links of community partners are available and accurate.</p> <p>Utilize social media to promote programs/services.</p> <p>Ensure that information about programs and services is being distributed in a variety of tradition and non-traditional locations throughout the community.</p> <p>Re-establish service providers network.</p> <p>Luncheon three times a year. Opportunity to learn about other organizations.</p> <p>Community groups to do joint planning for the community. Incorporate opportunities into the Official Community Plan with Sustainable Salmo and the Village.</p> <p>Offer employment services in partnership with other organizations (i.e. CBAL drop-in learning centre, to offer one on one support).</p>	<p>Columbia Basin Alliance for Literacy (CBAL)</p> <p>Salmo Community Resource Society (SCRS)</p> <p>Salmo Public Library (SPL)</p> <p>Salmo Children's Centre (SCC)</p> <p>SVYCCS</p> <p>Age Friendly Program</p> <p>Village of Salmo</p> <p>Circle of Indigenous Nations Society</p>
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As we moved into identifying the opportunities that exist, there was a mutual desire to jointly seek and apply for grants from local funders, such as the Learning Initiatives for Rural and Northern Communities Funding and the Columbia Basin Trust. Some of the potential ideas to utilize secured funds is to create signage that will provide residents and visitors with information about the community. For instance, directional signage, rock murals, and other mediums could be used to highlight the many services and events in the Village.

The group also identified the need to offer joint workshops, professional development opportunities, and coordinated training in Salmo in order to eliminate the access issue. Potential ideas that are percolating among the group are to offer training and support on board development, recruiting and retaining volunteers, and to involve more youth in community activities and planning committees.

One noted opportunity is to reach out to employment services and begin a conversation on bringing enhanced services to Salmo. Is there a way to support employment services in partnership with other organizations (i.e. CBAL drop-in learning centre as a venue to offer one on one support).

INDICATIONS OF SUCCESS

The planning process has been a welcome collaboration. By engaging individuals to discuss a broad spectrum of issues to build and strengthen on we can begin to start a path of change. As well, helping each person and their respective organization understand how they can be a part of this change will only strengthen the meaning of this plan. It has already brought up many discussions in community regarding joint planning around skill development and how it can support job opportunities and increase community capacity.

Short term indications are:

- Learning Initiatives for rural and Northern Communities Funding grant applied for to support training and development
- Discussion with Columbia Basin Trust
- Improved connectivity and collaboration with community organizations
- Supports and training for boards
- Village Council engaged with services providers working towards a healthier community
- Integrated activities for multi-generational connections
- Stronger connection to the college for support of training opportunities
- Annual planning for strategic development activity in the community
- Opportunities are available for adults in Salmo to support their learning - not just formal skills but also life skills (ie. Canning, wills and estate planning etc..)
- Increased awareness of skill development

Long Term indicators are:

- Zest and enthusiasm for life in Salmo
- Increased job opportunities and business development
- Vibrant community where people can live and work

A strong indication of success has been in the planning process itself. It has been beneficial to see where each person and each organization can contribute to being a part of building a strong and resilient community. It has brought up many discussions in community around joint planning and skill development and how that can support job opportunities and increase the community's capacity.

NEXT STEPS

From this point forward, the actions that have been identified in this plan will be incorporated into the Community Literacy Plan. Salmo's Community Literacy Planning Committee will further develop the goals and actions and use the plan as a place to hold the thoughts, ideas and wishes of the community. We will strive to continue to reach out to various stakeholders who were not a part of the initial planning process and seek to engage the broader community. This community has an unwavering sense of commitment and passion for making Salmo a place for all and it is in this spirit that we submit this report.

Submitted by:

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Columba Basin Alliance for Literacy