

Community & Social Services Conversation Summary

Two conversations were held on November 17 at Summerland United Church. Invitations were sent to Summerland's churches, service clubs and social services organizations. The afternoon conversation drew 15 participants including 6 task force members and the evening conversation drew 6 participants including 3 task force members. 8 pages of notes were recorded.

Appreciation was expressed for including Community and Social Services into the cultural plan. A brief discussion as to the scope and definition of culture included the suggestion that there is a connection between social and community groups and culture and the following definition of culture: "How we do things around here; how we view ourselves; and how others view us".

Question 1 – What are Summerland's cultural strengths with regard to yourself and your organization?

In general participants viewed Summerland in a positive light. Attributes included friendly, welcoming, sense of connection, ability to be out in the environment all year etc. Community institutions (Churches, Service Clubs and the Legion) are strong with many sponsorships of sports teams, community help programs, extra-curricular school programs, the Shakespeare Festival, Blossom Pageant etc. Seniors' programs are also strong including Banjo, Recope, Tai Chi, Senior Centre Church programs etc. Summerland's community safety net is also noted including NeighbourLink, The Food Bank & Resource Centre, Quest Society, Penny Lane, the Hospital Auxiliary Thrift Store and others. Many Summerland entrepreneurs and business support local programs and so on. It was noted that sometimes it is hard to locate information on what is happening in the community with enough time to incorporate it into one's plans.

Question 2 – What ideas and dreams do you have for Summerland's culture that would encourage you and your organization?

Probably the most important item discussed was the need to connect the various cultural organizations and activities so as to reduce date conflicts and share resources but also provide a complete picture to residents & tourists of what is happening in Summerland. It was felt that youth need to be brought into the cultural picture so that there is a succession plan as older volunteers drop out. It was felt that lack of income should not be a barrier to participating in cultural activities and there was discussion about how to solicit sponsorships for low income individuals and families. There was particular interest in providing more shoulder season activities and lots of ideas about festivals of lights to expand on the already successful Light Up celebrations. Three specific ideas were a lantern festival (Luminara), a light parade and a festival of lighted artwork (Nuit Blanche). It was felt that we could make much more effective use of Memorial Park with decorative lighting, music and film events at the band shell – such events might also support a food concession. There should be more of a focus on intergenerational activities, youth workshops and local transportation between upper and lower town – particularly in the summer. Ideas for specific fundraising events included an Antiques Roadshow, a Human Endurance (Obstacle) track, BMX Course and mud bogging at the Rodeo Grounds and Kitchen Stove films. There was a suggestion to attract film crews to the area – invite CBC to do a production here. The Shakespeare Festival is a success story that could be enhanced with summer acting school or choral training to include all ages. As to heritage a phone app could be developed to guide tourists and locals to various heritage sights. Finally

the shortage of affordable housing was noted as an obstacle for both young people entering the housing market and seniors that are downsizing.

Question 3 – Given your responses to Question 2 what would be needed to bring your ideas and dreams to reality?

Ideas that came forward were to provide compelling messages on our highway signs (e.g. “we have four dress shops”). It was suggested we develop an innovation centre for young entrepreneurs, teach entrepreneurial skills and provide superior internet connectivity so as to help build a knowledge community. We need to develop leadership and creative ways of raising the funds we will need. We need a fundraising expert to pursue Provincial and Federal funding and a cultural coordinator working together to oversee our activities and events. We need affordable, income-adjusted housing to retain our residents. We need to encourage people with initiative and perseverance as well as anyone willing to volunteer their time. The old cannery building is an eyesore on the waterfront which could be redeveloped into a small village area with restaurants and specialty shops. There was a suggestion to “let go of some of the big ideas and focus on achieving community goals one step at a time through innovative land development”. A portion of local taxes should be set aside for cultural development. A central place to gather including a place specifically for youth to gather would be an asset to the community. Senior care and residences could offer more opportunities for youth to connect with seniors and all cultural events should consider how they might be made more intergenerational. Signage is important to let people know what is happening and where. The washrooms at Memorial Park need improvements.