FALL 2026

Newsletter

McCreary Centre Society

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The start of the new school year always feels like a time of renewal, and never has that been truer at McCreary than this year. In recent weeks we have seen the departure of several members of our core team who are moving on to new adventures outside of BC. We will miss Katie, Elena, and Lucie, and wish them all the very best in their next chapters.

Like schools welcoming new students each September, this fall feels like everything changes and everything stays the same. As we welcome new team members, Emal and Warren, we are also celebrating the official 20-year anniversary of Dr. Colleen Poon and Dr. Maya Peled as employees of McCreary. Both have been involved with the Society for longer than their official hire date, as they first joined McCreary as a student and post doc respectively, and their contributions and leadership have shaped the agency into what it is today.

We currently have a number of opportunities for youth aged 12 and older to get involved and work with McCreary. They might choose to join us for a single project that interests them or, as history has shown, they might form a bond that lasts much longer.

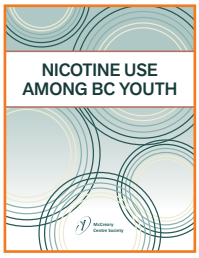
We hope you enjoy this newsletter and look forward to connecting again soon.

BC AHS—Share your thoughts!

This fall feels like it marks the transition in the BC Adolescent Health Survey (BC AHS) cycle, from a focus on the 2023 data to an increasing focus on the 2028 BC AHS. We are looking forward to connecting with education partners and other experts in youth health to learn what they think are the emerging and urgent youth health issues that should be included on the 2028 survey, as well as what is no longer relevant or useful to be asking young people.

Funding and other restrictions mean we will not be able to travel around the province to engage partners in the survey development as extensively as we have in previous survey cycles. However, we still plan to host online and in-person engagement sessions to learn about the issues impacting youth health in schools and communities across the province. For this survey cycle, we are also introducing a ***fillable online form*** that anyone with suggestions for 2028 BC AHS survey questions and topics is invited to complete.

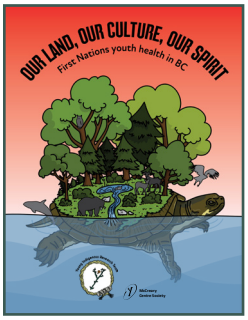
Fill out the form here!



While we are gearing up for 2028, we continue to produce reports and fact sheets from the 2023 BC AHS. Recent releases include fact sheets about ***food insecurity*** and ***young carers***, and a full-length report about ***nicotine use***. We are excited about the recent release of McCreary's first report focused on First Nations youth, ***Our land, our culture, our spirit*** developed by the Young Indigenous Research Team (YIRT; see ***page 2*** for more details). We also look forward to the upcoming release of our third full-length report about Métis youth health and well-being, which will be available this fall. Find all our recent releases at ***mcs.bc.ca***.

We have also been taking a close look at what worked well and what lessons we can learn from the things that went less smoothly during the last BC AHS. One of the challenges in 2023 was that we expected the survey to be administered predominantly online. However, technology challenges in a significant number of classrooms meant the administration ended up being almost 50% paper surveys and 50% online surveys. Although this was not ideal, particularly from a budget perspective, it did provide a perfect opportunity to consider the merits of both forms of administration and to see if students answered consistently across the different administration methods. Interestingly, students who completed the survey online were three times more likely to submit joking responses than those who completed the survey on paper.

YIRT release their first report on First Nations youth health



As members of McCreary's Young Indigenous Research Team (YIRT), we have just released ***Our land, our culture, our spirit: First Nations youth health in BC***. This report uses BC AHS data to look at the health and well-being of First Nations youth in BC, and is our first release since ***Raven's Children VI*** which came out last winter and considered the health of all Indigenous youth in BC. We are excited that there are now BC AHS reports which include all Indigenous youth, as well as those which focus specifically on the health of Métis youth and First Nations youth.

We are really proud that the first report to look in detail at First Nations youth health was produced by First Nations members of the YIRT. However, the release is bittersweet and we have dedicated the report to Nate who was one of the founding members of the YIRT and who sadly passed away suddenly this spring.

As we hold Nate in our thoughts, we look forward to sharing our work with the community. We are available to do presentations and workshops of the findings. To book a presentation or workshop, please email ***yirt@mcs.bc.ca***.

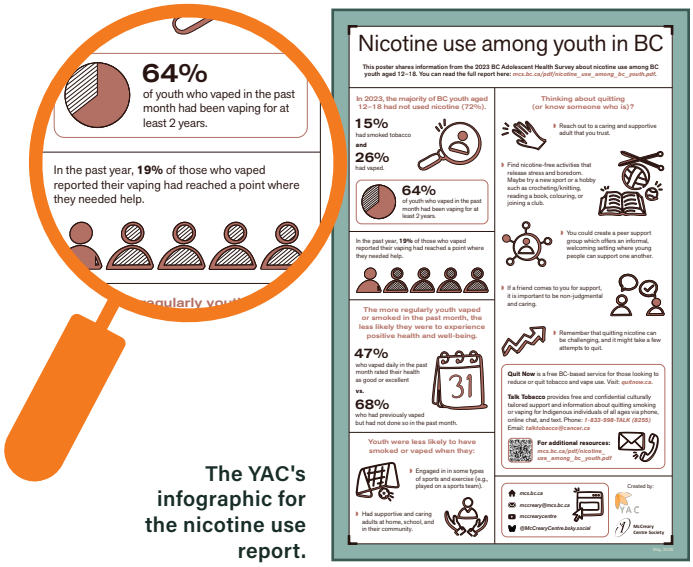
We have some interesting new projects on the horizon and are continuing to find new ways to support the health and well-being of Indigenous youth in BC. On that note … if any Indigenous youth groups with members aged 12–18 would be interested in talking to us about their experiences on social media, please drop us an email at ***yirt@mcs.bc.ca*** and we will see you soon!

To learn more about the YIRT, please visit *mcs.bc.ca/young_indigenous_research_team*.

YAC looking for new members in the Lower Mainland

McCreary's Youth Advisory and Action Council (YAC) is a group of young people aged 15–24 who facilitate the Youth Action Grants program and work on projects to improve youth health.

In recent months, we have continued to develop by-youth-for-youth resources to share McCreary's work, including our most recent poster sharing BC AHS data and resources for youth around nicotine use [***mcs.bc.ca/pdf/nicotine_use_by_youth_for_youth_poster.pdf***].



The YAC's infographic for the nicotine use report.

This summer, we have been working on a resource about financial literacy for Grade 12 students. The goal is to share information that could be useful for students trying to navigate applying for scholarships, getting their first credit card, and thinking about filing taxes for the first time. We hope to have something ready to share out with our peers soon. Stay tuned for more updates!

We are also starting to prepare to facilitate some youth-to-youth conversations about what students think should be included on the 2028 BC AHS, which we will be hosting this fall.

JOIN THE YAC!

As we head into the new school year, we are looking for new YAC members in the Lower Mainland. We are a volunteer group who meet every two weeks and alternate between in-person and online meetings.

Any youth aged 15–24 who are interested in joining the YAC can email *youth@mcs.bc.ca*.

Youth Action Grants

Youth Action Grants (YAGs) are facilitated by the YAC, and provide up to $750 for youth-led projects that address key findings from the BC AHS and aim to improve youth health and well-being. Several grant recipients successfully completed their projects and shared the final results at the end of the last school year. We have highlighted four of the projects we funded below:

Youth in Richmond School District hosted a 'chill and grill' event during BC Youth Week. The goal of the event was to improve mental and physical health and build connections through interactive activities. Activities included stress-ball making, field games, and a BBQ.

Youth in North Vancouver School District wanted to help their peers who were struggling with their mental health by organizing drop-in gym time during recess. They used their YAG to purchase volleyball nets and reported that the project helped students with social anxiety to connect with peers, improve confidence, and make new friends.



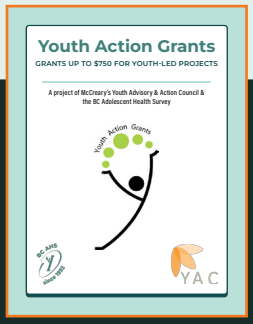
Youth at the Chill and Grill event in Richmond.



The refurbished children and youth section at the local library in Kootenay.

Youth in Kootenay School District used their YAG to refurbish the junior section of the library, and to plant flowers around the library entryway. The goal of the project was to increase youth engagement at the library, and provide a comfortable environment for youth using the facility.

Youth in qathet School District hosted a Wellness Conference to promote mental health awareness and provide resources for Grade 7 students. The event focused on mental and physical wellness, healthy relationships, substance use and support information, transitioning to high school, community resources to support mental health, and coping strategies. The students reported that the event was very successful, with most Grade 7 students participating.



YAGs are available to BC youth aged 12–19 for youth-led health and well-being projects. Application forms are available in *English* and *French*.

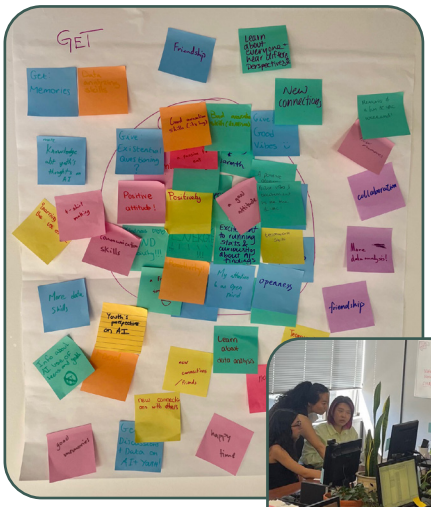
Learn more at *mcs.bc.ca/youth_action_grants* or by emailing *youth@mcs.bc.ca*.

The Minister of Health's Youth Advisory Council on Health and Wellness (BC YAC)

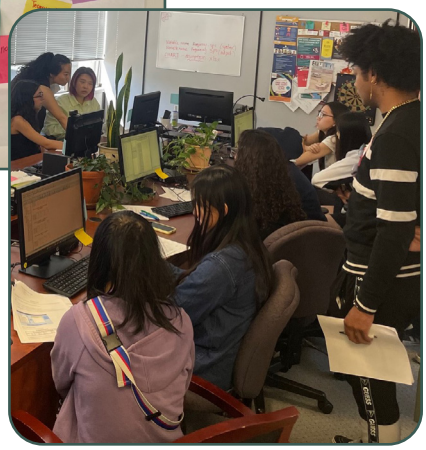
The BC YAC is a group of youth from across the province who offer youth perspectives on current health issues, including vaping. The group is facilitated by McCreary for the BC Ministry of Health and the BC Ministry of Education and Child Care.

Some of our recent projects have included meeting with a team from BC Children's Hospital to discuss the impact of screen use on youth mental health. We gave the team feedback on the role that screen time has in our lives, where we are on screens the most, and some of the impact we see it having on ourselves and our peers. Two of our members also got to present at CIHR's Best Brains Exchange on the topic this spring. It was a great opportunity to share our perspectives about the impact of screens on youth health with policy-makers and other adults, as well as a good opportunity to practice presentation skills!

We kicked off the summer with our annual in-person working weekend! As with past years, it took place at the SFU Burnaby campus and the McCreary office. This year we focused on AI and its role in student mental health and substance use. In the spring, we co-created a survey on the topic which we shared among our peers. Then, for the working weekend we worked with members of McCreary's Youth Research Academy (YRA) to analyze the survey results.



BC YAC members captured their *Give, Get, Got's* at the working weekend.



BC YAC doing analyses with help from YRA members.



BC YAC members making DIY shirts at SFU.

It was fun to be able to meet members of the YRA and learn a bit about their work at McCreary, as well as collaborate on a topic of interest to all of us. We analyzed the data, pulled out key findings, and shared some reflections on the data we had collected. The weather that weekend was hot, hot, hot and after our work was finished we enjoyed a trip to the Glenburn Soda Shop for some ice cream floats and sundaes! As always, it was great to meet together in person and get to know each other better.

This was the last in-person meeting for our Grade 12 students who are graduating and was a bit sad because some have been involved since they were in Grade 8. We wish them all the best and are looking forward to new members joining soon.

This fall, we will be focusing on developing resources to share the data from our AI survey, as well as from a vaping and nicotine pouch survey we did, and will be releasing a 'friends helping friends—vaping edition' poster. We are also excited that the Honourable Josie Osborne, the BC Minister of Health, will be joining our October meeting to get our opinions on emerging youth health issues. It was great to meet with her this spring and we are excited to be meeting with her again in the fall.

JOIN THE BC YAC!

We are looking for any Grade 8–11 students with experience of vaping and/or other substance use to join the BC YAC! We meet monthly online (and in-person once a year), get paid $20 an hour, and can get involved in projects in between meetings.

Please contact *youth@mcs.bc.ca* for more information.

Youth Research Academy graduation



In May, the tenth cohort of the YRA successfully graduated. They concluded their 10 months by sharing updated findings from the ***Youth Transitioning Out of Care Study*** with the Youth Futures Education Fund committee. It was a strong ending to a really busy and productive cohort, and their absence has already been felt in the office. The cohort members have now officially been inducted into the YRA alumni group and three members have already been employed doing extra work for McCreary.

Two of the members were hired as summer students and one member was hired to catalogue the McCreary library. Along with other projects, the two summer students were able to conduct analyses and write the Metro Vancouver specific report from the ***Youth Transitioning Out of Care Study*** for TRRUST.

Stay tuned for news of what is coming next for the YRA.

Youth Transitioning Out of Care Study needs participants

The YRA (and YRA alumni) continue to conduct the Youth Transitioning Out of Care longitudinal study. Developed in 2019 by a previous cohort of the YRA, the longitudinal study aims to understand what is working well and what could be improved for young people transitioning out of government care or alternatives to care in BC. The results are used to inform priorities that can improve outcomes for youth in and from care.

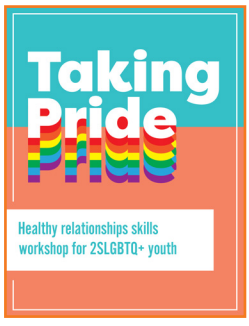
As the number of study participants continues to grow, the YRA are able to do more with the longitudinal data that come from the survey. This year they were able to look at supportive adults and helpful services that youth might access while still in care, and the long-term impacts of these supports on youth's positive health and well-being once they have transitioned out of care.

JOIN THE STUDY!

The YRA are continuing to invite youth aged 18–20, who are in or have recently transitioned out of government care, to participate in the youth transitioning out of care study. If you are a teacher, school counsellor, youth worker, or another adult who supports youth in and from care, please share information about the study with them. If youth are interested in participating, they are invited to contact *yicstudy@mcs.bc.ca* to get the survey link.

For more information about the study, please visit *mcs.bc.ca/youth_transitioning_out_of_ care_study* or email *yicstudy@mcs.bc.ca*.

Taking Pride 2.0 is ready to go



Back for the 2026–2027 school year, Taking Pride is a workshop for 2SLGBTQ+ youth to learn healthy relationship skills, including respectful communication, boundaries, consent, and conflict resolution.

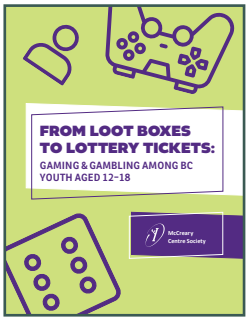
Taking Pride was co-developed with 2SLGBTQ+ young people in 2019, in partnership with UBC's Stigma and Resilience Among Vulnerable Youth Centre (SARAVYC). It was initially a series of peer-to-peer workshops, where young people received training to co-facilitate the program with an adult support. While this can be an effective way to engage youth, it also requires a lot of time and capacity. To make it easier to bring Taking Pride to schools and community organizations, we more recently worked with a group of 2SLGBTQ+ young people to condense the program into a single workshop that can be facilitated by McCreary staff in a day or two half days.

Evaluation of the first round of Taking Pride showed positive results in helping youth build skills to foster healthier relationships. The updated workshop covers the same range of topics and delivers the same level of learning to help youth build lifelong skills, but in a more streamlined way and with reduced burden on local youth and adult supports.

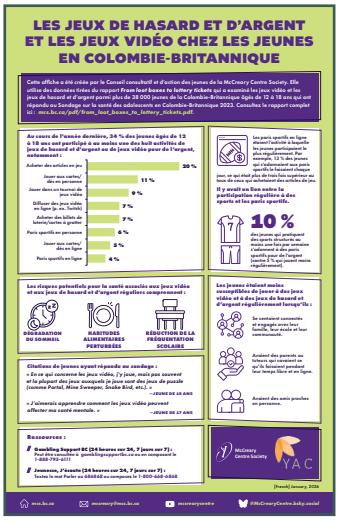
We are now ready to bring the updated Taking Pride to schools and community youth groups across the province! This free workshop is designed to be facilitated with 2SLGBTQ+ youth aged 12–19, such as through school GSA clubs or community-based programs. The workshop can be facilitated in person or online with groups across BC.

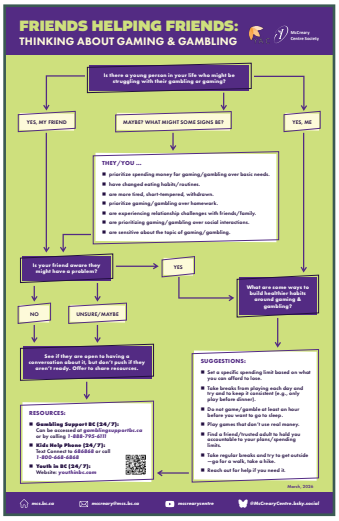
To learn more and to bring Taking Pride to your school or community, please email *youth@mcs.bc.ca*.

‘Loot boxes and lottery tickets’ in the classroom



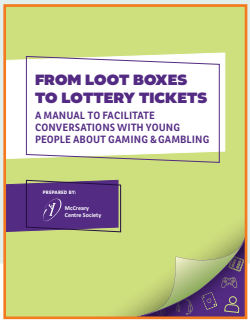
In 2025, McCreary’s report ***From loot boxes to lottery tickets***, showed that 34% of BC youth aged 12–18 had engaged in at least one of eight gaming or gambling activities for money in the past year, and that some forms of gambling were increasing. For example, online sports betting doubled between 2018 and 2023, and playing cards or dice online for money more than doubled. The findings from the report—combined with concerns about the availability of online sports betting, the pervasive advertising of gambling sites, and the growing number of apps and games that use gambling-style features—have led to the development of our latest workshop curriculum.





Designed with input from BC youth, the interactive 90-minute workshop shares findings from the report and engages youth in non-judgmental conversations about their beliefs and assumptions about gaming and gambling, signs that gaming and gambling might be problematic, and strategies to maintain a healthier relationship with these activities. Additional activities to continue the discussion beyond the 90-minute workshop are also available.

We are now booking *From loot boxes to lottery tickets* workshops for the 2026–2027 school year.



If you are interested in bringing this free gaming and gambling workshop to your school or youth group, and/or receiving training to facilitate the curriculum, contact *youth@mcs.bc.ca*.

To compliment the report and curriculum, McCreary’s YAC have created two posters. The first shares the findings from the report which they felt were most important for youth to know (available in ***English*** and ***French***). The second offers support for young people who think they or someone they know might be struggling with their gaming or gambling (also available in ***English*** and ***French***). Find both posters at ***mcs.bc.ca/yac***.

YHA host conversations about mental health

McCreary Centre Society
YOUTH HEALTH AMBASSADORS

The Youth Health Ambassadors (YHA) are a group of diverse Grade 7–12 students from across BC who are trained to lead conversations with their peers to gather their perspectives on important youth health issues. The group has just wrapped up a project which saw them host conversations with their peers about the barriers and supports they have experienced to leading and engaging in mental health initiatives. Stay tuned for the release of a resource from these conversations this fall.

After taking the summer off, the YHA will be ramping up again this fall as they assist in the development of the 2028 BC AHS. They will be talking with their peers about the topics that are most important to young people across the province, and what should (and should not) be included on the next survey.

JOIN THE YHA!

YHA are paid $20 per hour, and receive all the training, support, and materials they need to host conversations in their school or community. Each YHA works approximately 4 to 6 hours per month, which includes independent work and a monthly online team meeting.

Any youth in Grade 7–12 in BC who is interested in joining the YHA can contact *youth@mcs.bc.ca*.

MCS.BC.CA gets a new look

For almost 50 years, McCreary has been committed to high quality community-based research, evaluations, and meaningful youth engagement. As our work has grown, so has the need for a website that showcases our range of projects and publications, and allows visitors to find what they are looking for as easily as possible. After months of planning and coding, we are excited to announce that McCreary's refreshed website will be launched at the start of the new school year.



What you will find ...

- **Improved accessibility:** Simplified organization of the website to make it easier to navigate, including on mobile devices.
- **Easy access to reports and resources:** An improved library of McCreary's reports, fact sheets, infographics, and other resources.
- **Clear path to youth projects and opportunities:** Young people can find the things that interest them (and skip the things that don't!).
- **Easier to connect with McCreary:** Visitors will be able to sign up for our newsletter and connect with us directly through the website.

We invite you to visit the new *mcs.bc.ca* when it is launched and let us know what you think to help us continue to improve it. If you have any feedback, encounter any issues, or would like to see something added, please email *mccreary@mcs.bc.ca*.

TRRUST'S new curriculum for post-secondary students

TRRUST Collective Impact aims to bring partners from different sectors together to tackle the complex needs of young people transitioning out of care in Metro Vancouver. The pets passion project is one way the collective is bringing cross-sector partners together around a specific issue. Through the project, animal welfare agencies, youth service providers, and post-secondary partners are working together to develop curriculum for post-secondary students aiming to enter professions such as nursing, child and youth care, recreation, and youth justice.

Together, the group has created curriculum which can increase awareness of the human-animal bond, get students thinking about how services can better support youth with pets, and ensure students are aware of locally available resources to support low-income pet owners. The group has also worked with filmmaker Jaeger Mah to create a film about the challenges youth leaving care can face when they have a pet. The film will be available as part of the curriculum from this September.



TRRUST's guide for youth about owning and caring for a pet is available at: *mcs.bc.ca/pdf/trrust_youth_pet_guide.pdf*.

The guide for service providers can be found at: *mcs.bc.ca/pdf/trrust_pets_guide_service_providers.pdf*.



A still from the video made by the TRRUST Collective Young Leaders and other members of the TRRUST pets passion project.

Recap of fall 2026 opportunities

If you work with youth …

Have a say on the questions for the 2028 BC AHS: *Complete this form*.

Bring a free *From loot boxes to lottery tickets* workshop to your school or community: Contact *youth@mcs.bc.ca*.

Schedule a presentation of the First Nations or Métis youth health reports, or any of McCreary's recent releases: Contact *youth@mcs.bc.ca*.

Sign up for a 'train the trainer' session to learn to facilitate workshops about gaming and gambling: Contact *mccreary@mcs.bc.ca*.

Book a free Taking Pride workshop for 2SLGBTQ+ youth aged 12–19: Contact *youth@mcs.bc.ca*.

Please tell young people about the opportunities listed below.

Opportunities for youth

Apply for a Youth Action Grant (youth aged 12–19): *mcs.bc.ca/youth_action_grants*.

Join the study for youth transitioning out of care (youth with care experience): *mcs.bc.ca/youth_transitioning_out_of_care_study*.

Tell us about your social media experiences (Indigenous youth): *youth@mcs.bc.ca*.

Recruitment

Youth Advisory and Action Council (YAC): The YAC is a volunteer group that meets every other week, alternating meeting online and in person at the McCreary office in Vancouver. If you are aged 15–24; living in the Lower Mainland and able to attend a monthly meeting in Vancouver; and are interested in leading projects, reviewing grants, meeting new people, and improving youth health in BC, please email ***youth@mcs.bc.ca***.

Minister of Health's Youth Advisory Council on Health and Wellness (BC YAC): The BC YAC is a province-wide group of youth who provide their perspectives on a range of youth health and wellness topics. If you are in Grades 8–11 in BC, have experience vaping or using other substances, and want to play an important role in guiding government decisions about vaping and other youth health and well-being topics, email ***youth@mcs.bc.ca***.

Youth Health Ambassadors (YHA): The YHA are a group of diverse students from across BC who are trained to lead conversations with their peers to gather their perspectives on important youth health issues. If you are in Grades 7–12 in BC, are interested in facilitating conversations with your peers, and are available to work around 4–6 hours per month, including attending a monthly online team meeting, please complete ***this form*** and email it to ***youth@mcs.bc.ca***.

If you want to learn more about any of these opportunities, have any questions, or want to join our mailing list, please email *mccreary@mcs.bc.ca*.

Founded in 1977, McCreary Centre Society is a non-government not-for-profit committed to improving the health of BC youth through research, evaluation, and community engagement projects.

McCreary Centre Society

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