

BOWEN ISLAND'S 2023 Vital Conversations

TENDING TO THE COMMUNITY WE LOVE—WHAT'S NEXT?

VITAL absolutely necessary or important; essential

CONVERSATIONS

a talk in which news and ideas are exchanged

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What we did

This is the third Vital Conversations event organized by the Bowen Island Community Foundation. The first two events were in 2014 and 2017. As with so many other things in our lives, COVID delayed the third Conversation, which we were pleased to finally convene in 2023.

The goals for this community event were to:

- Provide ideas and insights to create a clearer picture of our local needs;
- Identify priorities for individual and organizational action; and
- Guide the Foundation's work for community granting.

This year we wanted to expand the reach of our inquiry, so we began the process with an island-wide survey of five questions:

- I. Close your eyes for 30 seconds and picture a **strong community** that you have been a part of or know about; a community that would be a "gold standard" in your opinion. When you picture a strong community, what stands out in your mind? What does this community feel like?
- 2. Now tell us, what is our Bowen Island/Nexwlélexm **community doing well** ... what is working? Why is it working? What does doing well feel like?
- 3. Every community can be better. Where are **opportunities** within our community that can be addressed by concerned citizens? What do we need to do that is not being done now? What is being done now that we could do better?
- 4. Thinking about these opportunities, what would be your number one **priority**?
- 5. Now **imagine** it is spring 2033, ten years from now. You are telling your child, grandchild, friend about how the community came together to take on your priority. Write a story beginning with "once upon a time" about the opportunity and success.

Next, we wanted to do a "deep dive" on the island's priorities so we gathered a diverse group of thirty participants from our community to engage together in an ideation workshop. Over three hours on Saturday, June 3, we shared with the group the findings from the island-wide survey and generated and discussed possible solutions and actions for the identified opportunities and priorities.

To close the workshop, participants were invited to write a story about a "personal vision of success"—their vision of what Bowen Island would look like and feel like if some of the issues identified were addressed.

This document presents the findings from the island-wide survey and the discussions during the workshop. Whenever possible, participants' actual words, phrases, and stories are used to reflect the essence of participants' thoughts and feelings.

Summary

The Bowen Island Community Foundation organized the third Vital Conversations event in 2023, with the goal of gaining insights into local needs, identifying priorities for action, and guiding community granting. The event began with an island-wide survey, followed by an ideation workshop for potential actions with selected participants. The brief summary below provides the highlights of the survey findings and workshop discussions. These are fleshed out more in the report which follows.

Participants were asked to picture a strong community, which they described as having:

a strong sense of community and belonging

resilience and self-reliance

diversity and inclusivity

ethical and transparent leadership

a focus on quality of life

embodiment of small-town values

environmental preservation

The Bowen Island/Nexwlélexm community was recognized by participants for the areas in which it's doing well including:

its strong sense of community

varied grassroots gatherings

connection to nature

vibrant arts and culture scene

involvement in local affairs

provision of essential services

supportiveness

commitment to community safety.

Bowen's priorities identified by participants as opportunities for improvement included:

COMMUNITY BUILDING: We are all on the same boat

While some respondents expressed a division of opinions on the island right now, many also recognized that, living on an island, we have to rely on one another, look out for one another, and when bad times happen, be ready to pitch in to help in any way we can. We recognize that we are strongest when we work together, learn together, and grow together.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION: The birds and the bees need help

We know that we are privileged to live in the midst of a pristine natural environment, surrounded by the soothing sights and sounds of the Howe Sound Biosphere. With this privilege we recognize the immense responsibility to balance our community's growing needs with the resolve to safeguard it for future generations. Stewardship is no longer an option; it is our obligation.

• EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSIVITY: Different but the same

Respondents are clear: diversity is necessary for a vibrant and resilient Bowen Island. We value the fact that a symphony of diverse voices provides a wider range of opinions and values, expanding our vision and leading us to potentially better opportunities.

HOUSING: A place to call home

Respondents reiterated a long-existing problem: housing is a Bowen crisis. Our service industry workers have no accommodations. Our seniors living on fixed incomes are forced to leave their homes. Young families are pressed by rising taxes and large mortgages. Housing availability and affordability affects the heart and soul of our community.

• TRANSPORTATION: Getting from Point A to Point B

We intentionally chose to live in a rural island community. But now, getting on, off, and around the island has major time and safety impacts on us. Ferries, biking, walking ... all modes of transportation are far less than ideal. And, government solutions are slow in coming. We want innovative ways to address this basic problem.

VISITOR MANAGEMENT: A balancing act

Although most of us understand the importance of visitors to Bowen's economic viability, we also feel the pressures it puts on community well-being. We understand that visitors will come to Bowen, but we want to see more proactive management of this economic sector and protection of our special quality of life.

VOLUNTEERISM: Raise your hand

Volunteers are the backbone of our community. Much of what makes living on Bowen special, exciting, and safe depends almost solely on our willingness to step up and do the work.

YOUTH AND SENIORS: The circle of life builds community cohesiveness

Our youth are our future. Our elders are our teachers. We understand how important it is to nurture and protect these groups and to make meaningful and strong connections between generations.

During the workshop, each opportunity area was assigned to a small group who then brainstormed potential actions to take to address the area. These are detailed in the following report.

In the table below, it is interesting to note the similarities and differences between the opportunities identified between 2017 and 2023. Healthcare and Gathering Places were not predominantly mentioned in this year's Vital Conversations. Likely due to the successful completion of our new Health Centre and the Community Centre. Visitor Management is new this year because of the significant increase in visitors to the island over the past five years. And Community Building is an important area for us now, likely due to the sometimes unpleasant discourse and divisiveness around major concerns impacting Bowen now including infrastructure and the Cape.

2017 Opportunities Identified	2023 Opportunities Identified
Develop housing for all	Housing
Bring healthcare close to home	
Support our youth	Youth and seniors
Celebrate diversity and inclusion	Equity, diversity, and inclusivity
Increase our volunteer pool	Volunteerism
Expand our transportation options	Transportation
Create gathering places for all	
Take responsibility for the stewardship of our environment	
	Visitor management
	Community building

These findings provide valuable insights for the Bowen Island Community Foundation to prioritize and guide their future work. The perspectives and suggestions shared by participants reflect the community's aspirations, concerns, and vision for a stronger, more inclusive, and sustainable Bowen Island community. The Foundation and other island organizations can use this information to inform decision-making, allocate resources, and collaborate with community members to address the identified priorities and build upon the community's strengths.

The Bowen Island we can be ... A story of dedication and commitment

The following is an imagined narrative of Bowen Island's possible future, if the priorities and actions defined during the 2023 Vital Conversations were to be implemented.

The island of Bowen was a tranquil haven, lush and vibrant with nature and embraced by the surrounding sea. Life was quieter here, yet it thrummed with an undercurrent of deep community spirit. It was a place where everyone knew each other, where individuals from diverse backgrounds and walks of life came together to celebrate their shared sense of belonging. This community was about to redefine its existence, bolstered by a vision to become a sustainable, connected, and inclusive island.

The Community Centre, Cates Hill Chapel, SKY community group, and the Legion transformed into social hubs where residents congregated for fellowship, enriching conversations, and community events. Regular community dinners at the Legion became a tradition, with food, laughter, and stories filling the space, fostering connections and a sense of belonging among attendees. Collaboration among these groups led to programs tailored for seniors and youths, filling the island with intergenerational vibrancy.

The island's main walking trail was renovated, becoming safer and more accessible for everyone. New signage guided walkers through the trail, pointing out the distinct flora and fauna. A transportation group was established, offering seniors transportation for off-island activities and bus services provided by volunteer drivers.

In an effort to foster a culture of civil discourse, the community embarked on grassroots initiatives. Workshops and seminars on productive conversation skills became a staple, encouraging respectful dialogue. Community events and social gatherings brought neighbors together, fostering a sense of unity and belonging. Islanders were encouraged to engage personally in their community, leading to stronger bonds, respect, and understanding among them. Environmental conservation initiatives saw residents volunteering to preserve the island's nature, watercourses, and walking trails.

The community was deeply engaged in decision-making processes that impacted the island, fostering a sense of ownership. Non-profit organizations and community initiatives were promoted, fostering a collective effort to solve the island's problems. With a focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion, public spaces and buildings were made more accessible, and an EDI advisory group was established, bringing together different perspectives for a more inclusive Bowen.

Environmental protection became a top priority. Youth were engaged in environmental initiatives, sparking a lifelong commitment to sustainability. Efforts to reduce waste, conserve water, and transition to sustainable practices were championed by both residents and businesses. Tourism on the island shifted to eco-tourism, with visitors educated about their responsibilities towards protecting the island's environment.

Housing transformed significantly. Bureaucracy was streamlined to allow greater housing diversity, and co-op housing options were explored and implemented. Housing styles diversified to include tiny homes and eco-villages, promoting a connection to nature and community. The focus was also placed on providing housing solutions for vulnerable populations and incorporating social aspects into housing projects.

By fostering sustainable mobility, the island became alive with the buzz of e-bikes, whirring through the serene, tree-lined paths. Schools organized campaigns encouraging their students to commute via these eco-friendly vehicles, and an e-bike club was born, fostering bonds among the residents. Charging stations sprang up across the island, and an e-bike share program provided access to everyone. The e-bike revolution was more than just a transportation shift; it was a movement uniting the community under the banner of sustainability.

Coordination became key to access services both on and off the island. Volunteer and fee-for-service programs facilitated pick-ups and drop-offs for seniors and commuters, while carpool and van services hummed merrily along the roads. Awareness of these innovative options was enhanced through concerted communication efforts, and the traffic on the ferry reduced significantly. The island seemed more connected than ever before, yet in a manner that preserved its peaceful charm.

Simultaneously, the ferry processes were reimagined. Signages sprouted, improving safety and pedestrian flow, while volunteers in bright vests directed traffic efficiently. Negotiations with BC Ferries led to the relocation of the ferry lineup into Crippen Park, allowing the main street to bloom with local businesses. Advocacy for locals' priority on the ferry was strengthened, with the community taking a proactive role in implementing a ferry reservation system, and the introduction of a visitor fee to support island infrastructure.

In parallel, alternatives to ferry travel were explored. Electric water taxis darted across the waves, and talks of re-establishing a combined bus and water taxi service gained momentum. Foot passenger ferries and water taxis emerged as practical alternatives, reducing reliance on car ferry travel. The island took a leadership role in passenger ferry advocacy, presenting a well-connected transportation system as a crucial part of supporting tourism and the local economy.

Managing visitors was refined with comprehensive information resources about the island developed and shared widely.

Collaboration with Bowen Tourism was enhanced, resulting in clear, responsible messaging. Wayfinding signage, information boards, and strong collaboration with accommodation providers ensured that visitors had a clear understanding of the island's expectations. Transportation and access management strategies were revamped, focusing on enhancing visitor experience and managing congestion effectively. In essence, the visitors to the island were transformed into responsible guests.

Volunteerism began to shape the island's community spirit. A comprehensive volunteer program was launched, providing administrative guidance and mentorship to organizations. A volunteer matchmaking platform was launched, and Volunteer Opportunity Fairs became the talk of the town. Recognition programs and community-wide celebrations acknowledged and appreciated the contributions of all volunteers on the island, building a strong, supportive volunteer culture.

The bond between youth and seniors was strengthened, fostering a cohesive community. Intergenerational connections flourished through shared discussions, reflection sessions, and mentorship programs. Housing challenges were tackled innovatively, encouraging shared living arrangements between seniors and youth. Daycare options were expanded and training for volunteers and interns ensured their effective contribution to the community.

The transformation of Bowen Island was nothing short of magical. It was a journey towards a better future, embodying the values of sustainability, collaboration, inclusivity, and shared responsibility. It was a testament to the power of community-driven change and a beacon of hope for communities around the world. Through these initiatives, Bowen Island became more than just a home to its residents; it evolved into a model for the world, demonstrating how a community could thrive by uniting under shared values and aspirations.

Characteristics of a strong community

Community is critical to our overall wellbeing. Building communities is a crucial process that fosters connections among people and creates infrastructure for these connections to happen.

First on the island-wide survey, participants were asked to "picture a strong community that you have been a part of or know about; a community that would be a 'gold standard' in your opinion. When you picture a strong community, what stands out in your mind? What does this community feel like?"

Characteristics mentioned (with supporting quotes from survey participants) included:

"This community has a diverse collection of citizens—young, old, varying levels of wealth and education." "Respectful of alternative opinions and ways of life —open-minded, inclusive and forward-thinking."

"Embrace a broad spectrum of perspectives and seek common ground that is in the best interest of the whole community."

"A strong sense of caring and belonging where people reach out to support others in need."

"A community of people who do not hesitate to help out one another."

Strong sense of community and belonging

A strong community is characterized by a sense of belonging and togetherness, where people know and respect each other, and support each other during good and hard times. There is a feeling of safety, trust, and collaboration.

Diversity and inclusivity

A strong community is diverse, with people of all ages, backgrounds, and economic levels, and it values and honors this diversity. It is welcoming, inclusive, and respectful, and it celebrates different perspectives and cultures.

"Elderly people have company and are not isolated."

"This gold standard community allows citizens to live together in a rich local culture that supports neighbourhood connection, healthy environments and safeguards that quality of life for future generations."

Qu

Quality of life

A strong community values the quality of life of its citizens, and it invests in healthy neighbourhoods, infrastructure, and environment. It provides easy access to healthcare, quality food, and a variety of activities for citizens.

"Can navigate change to stay connected to these values, growing as a community without losing sight of them."

"Resourceful and resilient ... discovering the value of working together." "It's about putting the needs of the collective above individual interests, having each other's backs and spending lots of time gathering and feasting."

"People have real conversations with each other."

> "Shared goals and caring for each other."

"Knowing your neighbours/recognizing the faces in your neighbourhood."



Resilience and self-reliance

A strong community is resilient, self-reliant, and committed to social connectedness, communication, and collaboration.

"A place where we preserve our greenspace and limit development."

"Has a good understanding of how individual and community needs are inter-connected."

"Has civil discourse about goals."

"Where the air is clean and nature is left untouched as much as is possible."

> "It is a model of environmental standards and protection."

Environmental preservation

A strong community cares deeply about the environment and lives closely with it, balancing community needs with generational preservation. It preserves its greenspace and natural resources and limits development.

Small town values

A strong community is characterized by small-town values, where day-to-day interactions outweigh social media commentary. It is a small, semi-rural community where the members care about each other and assume that other members want essentially the same things.



Ethical and transparent leadership

A strong community has ethical and transparent leadership that engages with citizens and puts their needs first.

What Bowen does well

After identifying the characteristics of a strong community, on the island-wide survey, participants were asked to describe "what is our Bowen Island/Nexwlélexm community doing well ... what is working? Why is it working? What does doing well feel like?"

The common responses about what Bowen Island's community is doing well (with supporting quotes from survey participants) include:

"We have a strong sense of belonging and look after each other in many ways."

"We also have an active Nature Conservancy, Trails Society and many other organizations caring for and actively involved with our natural environment."

> "New people are bringing an increased awareness of our environment and issues surrounding its protection."

"A friendly wave at the General Store, helping out a lost hiker, child minding, village mindedness when it comes to raising children, meal trains for a new baby or an ill community member etc."

"When someone is in trouble, we do something about it (e.g., helping hand fund, youth at risk fund, food bank, churches, caring circle.)"

"Bowen's most important feature though is 'chatting.' A quick hello while out on the trails or talking about the salmon berry blossoms with an acquaintance of 20 years."

"Involvement in non-profits and community initiatives are done well on the island, and help to foster the sense of connectedness to those beyond your immediate circle."

Connection to nature

Locals have a deep relationship with nature and the environment. There is a commitment to preserving nature, watercourses, walking trails, and public beach access.

> "We converse ... we challenge ... we approve ... and CHANGE!"

Supportive community

Bowen Island provides support for those undergoing hard times. It supports community members at all stages of life and values differences.

"Bowen Island has passionate locals who are engaged in what is happening in the community."

"With no help from any government, we have built a strong community that cares for others, supports the arts, encourages individuality."



Strong sense of community

Bowen Island residents care deeply about their community, trust each other, and hold each other accountable. They donate their resources, time, and money to better the community.



Involvement in local affairs

There is a high involvement rate of citizens in local issues. Citizens are informed of municipal changes and meetings, and they are involved in decisions that affect the island.

"Being an island of artists brings a wonderful vibrancy and openness to our community."

"Our arts community is active and seems to be thriving." "Arts, culture, sports—all very important to a healthy community." "Bowen Island is doing a great job at keeping neighbours and the community in contact with each other and maintaining close, island-wide connections. I feel that my family is safe here."

"The safety of our kids wandering around the cove unsupervised."

> "We are making the island more inclusive for people of all ages and all abilities. Creating more safe spaces that connect us."

Arts and culture



"An active, inclusive community with a variety of events supporting and encouraging all sectors of the community; Bowen seems to be thriving with a wide range of community events/projects that are bringing people together after some incredibly challenging times."

"Library and library staff are amazing. Building the Health Centre is fantastic. Pharmacy and pharmacy staff are extremely helpful and knowledgeable."

Community safety

Bowen Island provides a safe space for children to grow up. People watch out for one another, and it feels safe and healthy.

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"We thrive at creating community events and knowing how to come together. It's nothing big, but rather the small unrecognizable acts of being known to each other."

"Developing community resources—cross-island trail, building a community centre, building a health centre, creating and constructing the mural that one sees as they get on and off the ferry."



Bowen Island has a library, health care centre, and pharmacy, and the municipality does a great job with community recreation.



What Bowen can do better

Bridging the gaps between the ideal community and what Bowen is currently doing, requires the identification of our opportunities for improvement.

Next on the survey, participants were asked to describe and prioritize the "opportunities within our community that can be addressed by concerned citizens (i.e., not a government responsibility)? What do we need to do that is not being done now? What is being done now that we could do better?"

Priority opportunities for improvement (with supporting quotes from survey participants) include:

"We have an opportunity to encourage and support an island-wide, grassroots focus on civil discourse. Rather than fighting change, we need to recognize that change is inevitable and proactively plan for the island community we want."

"More social gatherings, drawing people together from their private homes to share what they have to offer."

"We are good at helping each other, but we are often limited to helping those we already know; we need to find ways to reach and help those who may be more isolated."

Community Building:

We are all on the same boat

While some respondents expressed a division of opinions on the island right now, many also recognized that, living on an island, we have to rely on one another, look out for one another, and when bad times happen, be ready to pitch in to help in any way we can. We recognize that we are strongest when we work together, learn together, and grow together.

"Perhaps some more opportunities for community gatherings that revolve around discussion, communication and cross-pollination of ideas between demographic groups. The old timers and the newcomers, the seniors and the youth, young families learning from someone other than just other young families."

"Prioritize equity, diversity, and inclusion as the key to supporting a strong and vibrant community."

"We must commit ourselves
to reflecting and supporting the views
and needs of the full diversity of our
population; this requires willingness to
accept change and support the ongoing
evolution of our community; especially
understanding and supporting newcomers,
as the people who are newer to our island
are also likely to be those with more diverse
backgrounds and experiences."

"Protection of vast areas for ecological preservation and wild corridors. Secondly for preservation of our own human-used watersheds"

"Use of resources—we obviously have limited water and land. We need to be proactive about climate change and resource shortages."



Equity, Diversity and Inclusivity:

Different but the same

Respondents are clear: diversity is necessary for a vibrant and resilient Bowen Island. We value the fact that a symphony of diverse voices provides a wider range of opinions and values, expanding our vision and leading us to potentially better opportunities.

Environmental Protection:

The birds and the bees need help

We know that we are privileged to live in the midst of a pristine natural environment, surrounded by the soothing sights and sounds of the Howe Sound Biosphere. With this privilege we recognize the immense responsibility to balance our community's growing needs with the resolve to safeguard it for future generations. Stewardship is no longer an option; it is our obligation.

"We're walkers and would love to see the main walking trail across the island improved. There are many areas that it's still necessary to walk on the road where there are sharp corners and little visibility."

"More senior transportation off island with Peter King or another driver offering a bus to take members to West Van Community Centre."

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"Provide affordable and creative housing options."

"This is also an issue for seniors which needs to be addressed."

"We need to be able to house workers and the less financially fortunate. Value long-term tenants over short-term gain."

Housing:

A place to call home

Respondents reiterated a long-existing problem: housing is a Bowen crisis. Our service industry workers have no accommodations. Our seniors living on fixed incomes are forced to leave their homes. Young families are pressed by rising taxes and large mortgages. Housing availability and affordability affects the heart and soul of our community.



Getting from Point A to Point B

We intentionally chose to live in a rural island community. But now, getting on, off, and around the island has major time and safety impacts on us. Ferries, biking, walking ... all modes of transportation are far less than ideal. And, government solutions are slow in coming. We want innovative ways to address this basic problem.

"Reduce/manage tourism. Safeguard community living and the Bowen environment."

> "Consider regenerative tourism to help find balance and support a healthy community."

Visitor Management:

A balancing act

Although most of us understand the importance of visitors to Bowen's economic viability, we also feel the pressures it puts on community well-being. We understand that visitors will come to Bowen, but we want to see more proactive management of this economic sector and protection of our special quality of life.



"Encourage volunteering for all ages as a way of community life which brings richness, opportunities, meaning and wellbeing to volunteers and the wider community."

"We all need to get more involved. While there are many incredible volunteers on Bowen, it seems to be the same people who show up to make sure that events are planned and that things happen."

"I believe with COVID we have a lot of children with mental health issues and we need more counselling at BICS to support the children requiring additional support to overcome their issues and trauma."

"It would be good to provide opportunity for cross generational connection. I think we are good at providing at least some support (we can always do more) to all stages of the life cycle but often they are siloed. If you have family on Bowen, this cross generational contact happens naturally but is not easy to do otherwise. It would increase a sense of cohesiveness in the community."



Raise your hand

Volunteers are the backbone of our community. Much of what makes living on Bowen special, exciting, and safe depends almost solely on our willingness to step up and do the work.

Youth and Seniors:

The circle of life builds community cohesiveness

Our youth are our future. Our elders are our teachers. We understand how important it is to nurture and protect these groups and to make meaningful and strong connections between generations.

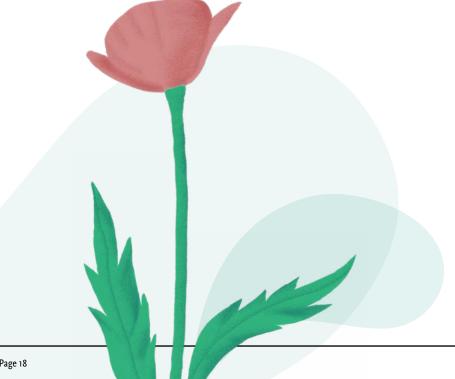


Brainstorming solutions

At the June 3 workshop, after the results of the island-wide survey were presented, participants discussed the findings and then moved to table groups to consider possible solutions and actions for the eight priorities identified in the survey that might result in improvements for the community.

A critical realization that emerged from these Vital Conversations is that these priorities cannot be tackled solely on their own, independently from one another. A solution for one can impact another. Opportunities and solutions should be approached strategically with an eye to both the short-term and the long-term, and with careful consideration of all intended and unintended consequences.

The following pages present a synopsis of participants' understanding of each problem and opportunity, and suggestions on what to do and how to do it. Excerpts from the personal stories illustrate what participants imagined success for each priority might look and feel like—often with deep, heart-felt emotions.





Community building:

We are all on the same boat

This table group concluded that "community building is actually the core of all the eight priorities; only community can help solve any of these." The truth in this comment is evident in the themes and ideas around community building that were mentioned by respondents to the island-wide survey, including:

STRENGTHEN EXISTING COMMUNITY GROUPS

- Support and promote Cates Hill Chapel, SKY community group, and the Legion as primary options for meeting people.
- Encourage regular community dinners and events at the Legion.
- Explore opportunities for collaboration and expansion of existing community groups to better serve seniors and other age-related groups.
- Ensure suggested donations for group events remain affordable and inclusive.

2. ENHANCE WALKING TRAILS

- Advocate for improvements to the main walking trail across the island to ensure safety and accessibility.
- Work with local authorities to address areas where walkers need to walk on the road, improving visibility and reducing risks.

3. SENIOR TRANSPORTATION AND OFF-ISLAND EXPERIENCES

- Establish a stand-alone transportation group dedicated to providing seniors with transportation to off-island activities, such as swimming and exercises at the West Van Community Centre.
- Collaborate with experienced drivers, like Peter King or other volunteers, to offer regular bus services for seniors.

4. ENCOURAGE CIVIL DISCOURSE AND CONSENSUS BUILDING

- Promote island-wide grassroots initiatives that focus on civil discourse, encouraging respectful conversations and discouraging personal attacks.
- Organize workshops, seminars, or online platforms dedicated to teaching and practicing productive civil conversation skills.
- Explore the potential for a national initiative that emphasizes the importance of civil conversation in communities.

5. ADDRESS HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICE NEEDS

- Celebrate the opening of the Health Centre and promote the availability of a full spectrum of health and social services.
- Identify and address gaps in support for fragile seniors and teens, such as providing more resources at Snug Cove House and developing programs for teenagers at the Community Centre.
- Advocate for increased counseling resources at BICS to support children with mental health issues and trauma.

6. FOSTER COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

- Organize community events and social gatherings to bring neighbors together and foster a sense of belonging.
- Encourage personal responsibility towards the community by promoting connection and engagement in person rather than relying solely on social media.
- Support initiatives that strengthen the bonds between islanders, emphasizing respect and understanding even when opinions differ.
- Explore ways to increase diversity, inclusivity, and intergenerational interactions on the island.

7. PRESERVE NATURE AND LIVABILITY

- Volunteer and support initiatives like the United Church food bank, BIRD recycling depot, and Knick Knack Nook.
- Advocate for preserving nature, watercourses, and walking trails on the island.
- Encourage responsible decision-making that prioritizes the long-term costs and benefits of projects like the Community Centre.

8. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND DECISION-MAKING

- Promote community involvement in decision-making processes that affect the island.
- Encourage participation in non-profits and community initiatives to foster a sense of connectedness beyond immediate circles.
- Support grass-roots groups and non-profits that work together for important causes that impact the Bowen community.

9. TRANSPORTATION, HOUSING, AND HEALTHCARE

- Advocate for improved transportation options, including bus routes serving new developments and traffic calming measures on Bowen roads.
- Seek solutions for on-island medical services to better serve all residents.
- Explore preferential ferry loading systems for full-time residents to prioritize their needs.
- Review the Official Community Plan (OCP) to address housing, employment, and transportation challenges and create a sustainable future for the island.

10. ACCOUNTABILITY, RESOURCE MANAGEMENT, AND CLIMATE ACTION

- Encourage proactive measures to address climate change and resource shortages.
- Ensure municipal statistics are accessible to citizens, showcasing improvements in transportation, resource use, and carbon footprint reduction

Numerous survey and workshop participants envisioned in their personal "once upon a time stories" what improvements in community building for Bowen would look and feel like:

"Everyone on Bowen felt that they belonged ... The people grew to share connections with the Bowen Island culture. People cared for one another: newcomers, lifers, everyone in between ... Everyone understood that they could influence the culture of connection."

"Our community rallied and we were back to the old ways of helping each other."

"In the end the only thing that really mattered was the power of unconditional love; that was and always will be the heart of Bowen ... the memory of our collective experience made us all realize that 'we are all one'."

"Then one year, there came great changes to the island that meant that everyone had to rely upon their neighbours and their community. The ferries cut back and ran less frequently. The power went out more often than before, due to storms and falling trees at all times of the year. The divergent groups of Bowen had to ask their neighbours for help. They had to give help to those who needed it. Newcomers had to learn how to manage without all the ease of the city from old timers. Old timers had to learn new technology and ways of communicating from the newcomers. All groups learned that every person choosing to live on Bowen (which is all of us) came for a reason, chose inconvenience over immediate gratification, wanted peace and quiet and greenery, and accepted that the many amenities of city life would never all be here on a tiny island with limited resources, funding and space."



Diversity, equity and inclusion:

Different but the same

A plan for diversity, equity, and inclusion on Bowen Island should aim to create a community that values and supports individuals of all backgrounds, abilities, and ages. By addressing accessibility, providing resources and support, promoting EDI awareness, and establishing safe spaces for conversation and collaboration, the goal is to foster an inclusive environment where everyone feels welcome and can participate fully.

Here are some of the ideas the group discussed:

I. ACCESSIBILITY FOR ALL

- Improve accessibility in public spaces, streets, sidewalks, community lands, and buildings.
 Implement measures such as braille signage, ramps, and audible signals at crosswalks to ensure mobility for individuals with visual or physical impairments.
- Foster community dialogue and education to identify additional opportunities for enhancing
 accessibility on the island. Establish a welcoming committee to actively involve diverse
 perspectives and gather input on effective accessibility measures.

2. ADVISE ON EDI AND INTERCONNECTING RESOURCES

- Establish an EDI advisory group or infrastructure that brings together community members, including those focused on barriers for the deaf and blind, to collaboratively work towards inclusivity in various areas. Expand the scope of the advisory group to include seniors and other underrepresented groups.
- Create a physical location, such as at the health centre, where information and resources related
 to EDI can be centralized and easily accessible to community members. Collaborate with offisland resources to enhance knowledge and access to support services.

3. PROVIDE RESOURCES AND SUPPORT

- Improve communication and awareness of existing resources, such as transportation grants (e.g., TAP form), to support individuals with specific needs, including transportation for medical appointments or assistance for families with children requiring special healthcare and education.
- Address gaps in support and resources for underrepresented people, including members of Indigenous communities and those marginalized for reasons of socio-economic status, gender expression, and ethnicity (among others). Collaborate with individuals, organizations, and communities to identify and bridge these gaps.

4. CREATE SAFE SPACES FOR CONVERSATION

- Establish safe spaces within the community where individuals and groups can openly discuss and
 address issues related to domestic violence, mental health, and other barriers. Provide resources,
 information, and support in these spaces to encourage dialogue and understanding.
- Promote the use of the health centre as a physical location for accessing information and resources related to various aspects of well-being, including mental health, transportation support, and financial assistance.

Numerous survey and workshop participants envisioned in their personal "once upon a time stories" what improvements in diversity, equity and inclusion for Bowen would look and feel like:

"Through collaboration and innovation, and with the leadership of community-based organizations including the Bowen Island Community Foundation, our island has now become a model of equity and inclusion for other small communities with populations that are growing and increasing in diversity."

"Over time, the community was recognized for more integration of those with special needs and interests."

" ... People on Bowen came together to welcome people who were blind and deaf. People were working – for instance at the General Store – with screen readers. They built a centre where people could access great medical care, including mental health care."



Environmental protection:

The birds and the bees need help

A plan for expanded environmental protection of Bowen Island should include strategies to promote sustainability, educate visitors and residents, protect critical environmental characteristics, achieve a balance between population growth and environmental stewardship, ensure water sustainability, and foster community engagement. The plan should aim to create a sustainable and vibrant community while preserving and protecting the unique habitats and natural beauty of Bowen Island.

Here are some of the ideas the group generated:

I. ENGAGE YOUTH

- Prioritize youth involvement in environmental initiatives.
- Create programs and opportunities that educate and empower young people to take an active role in protecting the environment.

2. REDUCE WASTE AND PLASTIC

- Implement measures to minimize waste and eliminate the use of plastic.
- Encourage businesses and residents to avoid franchising, reduce packaging, and promote sustainable alternatives.
- Take initiatives like rainwater collection projects to model sustainability.

3. FOSTER SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

- Preserve Bowen Island's status as a model for eco-tourism.
- Ensure that tourism development is within the island's capacity and promotes environmental sustainability.
- Encourage visitors to adopt sustainable practices and engage young people as tour guides to showcase the island's environmental successes.

4. STRENGTHEN ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEES

- Encourage more community members to join the Bowen Island Municipality Environmental Committee or sub-committees such as Parks and Trails or Conservancy.
- Strike a balance between recreation and conservation, involving both perspectives in decisionmaking processes.

5. COMMUNITY HOUSING AND CO-HOUSING

- Explore the possibility of developing Crown land for residential purposes, specifically co-housing and co-op housing.
- Transfer Crown land to a community trust to ensure affordable housing solutions, particularly for seniors.

6. PROMOTE SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORTATION

- Promote the use of e-bikes for shopping, emphasizing the health and environmental benefits.
- Create a social pressure campaign to encourage people to opt for biking instead of cars, ensuring infrastructure such as bike lanes is in place.

7. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN VISITORS

- Develop strategies to make visitors aware of Bowen Island's unique habitat and their responsibilities in preserving it.
- Encourage sustainable behaviours like bringing reusable bottles, discourage wasteful practices, and impose penalties for littering or leaving garbage behind.
- Foster a connection between young people and environmental volunteerism.

8. PROTECT CRITICAL ENVIRONMENT CHARACTERISTICS

- Conduct an inventory to identify key lands and wildlife corridors that need protection.
- Collaborate with developers and environmental organizations to ensure responsible development practices that safeguard the island's biodiversity.

9. BALANCE POPULATION GROWTH

- Strive for a sustainable population that maintains a viable community without overburdening the island's resources.
- Consider smaller-scale facilities that can support a larger population while prioritizing the wellbeing and values of the community.

10. WATER STEWARDSHIP AND LITERACY

- Place a higher value on water resources and promote water literacy among residents and visitors.
- Establish guidelines for sustainable water use and limit development to protect critical habitats like creeks and wetlands.
- Emphasize the interconnectedness of nature and the impact of human actions.

II. EDUCATION AND ENGAGEMENT

- Focus on educating youth groups to create a ripple effect of environmental knowledge and engagement.
- Encourage outdoor education, involve businesses in environmental literacy, and promote volunteerism in schools and within the community.

12. CONTINUITY IN GOVERNMENT AND REDUCED BUREAUCRACY

- Ensure continuity in local government to maintain consistent environmental policies.
- Streamline the permitting process for building in sensitive environments to protect areas like Fairy Fen Wetland while encouraging responsible development.

13. ASSESS CAPACITY FOR SUSTAINABILITY

- Conduct a comprehensive assessment of the island's capacity to support inhabitants and visitors in a sustainable manner.
- Consider the impact of different living arrangements (urban, suburban, rural) and implement strategies to promote sustainable practices.

14. COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS

- Establish partnerships and collaborations between knowledgeable individuals, public and private entities, and the municipal government.
- Foster a sense of shared responsibility and create a platform for ongoing cooperation to achieve the goals of environmental protection.

Numerous survey and workshop participants envisioned in their personal "once upon a time stories" what improvements in environmental protection for Bowen would look and feel like:

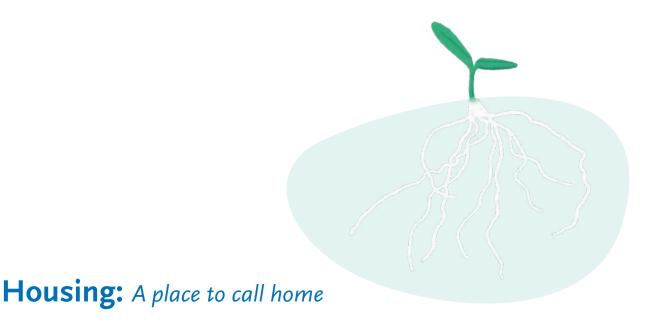
"People began to pause and look to the ocean to see the whales. To feel part of the great collective past of the community gain."

"Soon snakes and deer leisurely showed themselves to onlookers. Nature was happy—the smells of spring and summer flowers again ... A love permeated the space that grew like a beautiful aura that blessed every visitor and resident."

"There will still be trees holding the land in place during the heavy rains. There will still be beaches whilst the sea rises."

"Homeowners all had rain water collection systems. Septic, greywater use was monitored to track water consumption ... people were accountable for monitoring their carbon footprints with on-line carbon calculators. Bowen did not become another Manhattan Island!!"

"We decided, as an island, we could become a model to the world of taking charge on climate change, resource depletion, and population growth. So, we started monitoring ourselves. We held ourselves accountable. Tourists were reminded of this initiative by noticing our sign 'We are a zero-waste community' when they unloaded from the ferry. Pack out what you pack in. Help us protect the environment."



Bowen Islanders recognize the need for housing diversity to ensure an inclusive and vibrant community. By addressing challenges such as government red tape, promoting co-op housing, fostering a variety of housing styles, considering the needs of different groups of people, and incorporating social aspects, Bowen can create affordable and accessible housing options for all residents.

Here are some of the ideas the group discussed:

I. ADDRESS RED TAPE AND BUREAUCRACY

- Advocate for more municipal cooperation and support, encouraging exceptions to zoning policies to allow greater density and diverse housing options.
- Identify opportunities to streamline government processes and regulations related to housing, reducing barriers and facilitating innovative housing solutions.
- Learn from successful housing projects like BIRCH (Bowen Island Resilient Community Housing) and support similar initiatives that promote housing diversity.

2. PROMOTE CO-OP HOUSING

- Explore options for co-op housing on Bowen Island, considering diverse ages, social support, and shared amenities. Encourage the development of all-ages co-op housing with individual units and garden spaces.
- Identify free land opportunities, such as municipal land, available Crown land, or potential contributions from community stakeholders, to initiate co-op housing projects. Collaborate with relevant organizations and individuals to secure land for affordable housing initiatives.

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3. EXPLORE DIVERSE HOUSING STYLES

- Investigate the feasibility of introducing diverse housing styles, such as portable yurts or temporary housing options for specific seasons or contingencies (e.g., winter months or ferry cancellations).
- Advocate for the availability of accessible housing options with features like non-touch appliances, catering to a wide range of residents' needs.
- Support the development of housing options that provide a rural lifestyle, including houses
 with land, multi-generational accommodations, tiny homes, and eco-villages that emphasize
 affordability, connection to nature, and community.

4. SUPPORT VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

- Collaborate with organizations and agencies to provide affordable rental housing options for young tradespeople and workers in desperate situations.
- Work towards creating safe, secure, and financially attainable housing solutions for vulnerable populations, such as refugees, unhoused individuals, and single parents.
- Explore innovative models, inspired by successful programs in other areas, to support elders
 while integrating them into housing projects, such as incorporating dedicated spaces or
 secondary suites for unrelated family members to provide care.

5. INCORPORATE SOCIAL ASPECTS

- Advocate for the creation of dedicated spaces for elders within housing projects, promoting social connections and support systems.
- Encourage the integration of essential community services, like daycare facilities, within housing developments to foster a family-friendly environment.
- Facilitate small-group discussions and engagement opportunities to generate specific proposals
 for the municipality, following the principles of fractal democracy. This allows residents to have a
 voice in shaping housing initiatives.

6. POPULATION MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

Conduct a comprehensive assessment of the island's carrying capacity and infrastructure to
determine an appropriate maximum population on Bowen Island. Consider factors like water
supply, waste management, transportation, and community resources in the assessment.

Numerous survey and workshop participants envisioned in their personal "once upon a time stories" what improvements in housing for Bowen would look and feel like:

"One of the unifying visions captured in the plan was a model of community housing 'pods'. The pods were organically formed by individuals, families, and co-habitants. Each pod contributed resources to own a piece of land to develop their homes on ... The pods got busy and created thriving micro communities; some farmed, played music, created art developing new artisanal manufacturing and high-tech communication enterprises."

"... living at the Dowager Inn. A lovely sprawling structure with all the amenities I was looking for and then some."

"Grandpa and I downsized from our big house to a small house in an area of pocket homes built around a common garden."

"First we went after low hanging fruit: remove restrictions from families building secondary dwellings on their property. Our neighbourhood now has intergenerational vibrancy as grandma moves into her new coach house and the kids move back into the houses they grew up in ... Now by sharing resources in a family village they can all stay and retain their connections to the community."

"My home is in a shared co-op space filled with all ages, experiences. I enter the garden with coffee in hand. A mom is there with her young picking strawberries for breakfast. The little one knows me ... I feel connected and loved by my neighbourhood and community. And glad I can afford to live here ... Maybe my bones will stay on this lovely rock."



Transportation: Getting from Point A to Point B

We recognize the need for improved transportation options that prioritize sustainability, accessibility, and efficiency. This group discussed key objectives and strategies to enhance on-island mobility, coordinate access to services, improve ferry processes, and advocate for alternative transportation options. By implementing these initiatives, the island can create a connected and sustainable transportation network that meets the needs of residents and visitors alike.

Here are some of the ideas the group discussed:

I. FOSTER SUSTAINABLE ON-ISLAND MOBILITY

- Develop a communication plan to raise awareness and educate the community about the importance of transportation alternatives to cars, particularly for school journeys. This includes promoting bike safety, establishing bike-friendly routes, and encouraging the use of e-bikes.
- Create an e-bike club to facilitate social connections and support e-bike adoption. Establish a buying club to provide bulk discounts for those purchasing e-bikes together. Incentivize e-bike usage with positive rewards, such as offering discounts on groceries for those who arrive by bike.
- Provide infrastructure for e-bikes, including dedicated parking areas and charging stations.
 Explore the possibility of introducing an e-bike share program to allow residents to easily access e-bikes when needed.
- Offer educational resources on selecting and maintaining e-bikes to ensure residents make informed choices.

2. COORDINATE ACCESS TO ON- AND OFF-ISLAND SERVICES

Explore the potential for volunteer or fee-for-service programs to assist seniors and commuters
with picking up items from the city or accessing services on Bowen Island outside regular
business hours.

- Encourage bulk buying at Costco or other sources to facilitate grocery delivery for those who cannot physically go to the store themselves, reducing the number of cars on the ferry.
- Coordinate van or carpool services for shopping trips, providing a convenient and social transportation option. Consider scheduled trips to city centres or shopping areas.
- Increase awareness of existing transportation options, such as on-demand or scheduled services, that can connect residents to city shops or provide off-hour access to island services.

3. IMPROVE FERRY PROCESSES

- Enhance safety and pedestrian flow by implementing signage to discourage crossing the road
 when the ferry unloads in the Cove. Improve road infrastructure and crosswalks to ensure safer
 access.
- Work with BC Ferries to explore the feasibility of moving the ferry lineup into Crippen Park, allowing better traffic flow and freeing up the high street for local access and businesses.
- Engage volunteers to act as marshals and assist with directing traffic during loading and unloading, ensuring a smooth and efficient process.
- Encourage carpooling by providing priority boarding based on the number of occupants in a vehicle, particularly on the Horseshoe Bay side.
- Advocate for locals' priority on the ferry. Investigate the feasibility of implementing a ferry reservation system to enhance efficiency.
- Collaborate with BC Ferries to explore options for collecting a fee from visitors to the island, promoting sustainable transportation choices and supporting the island's infrastructure needs.

4. ADVOCATE FOR ALTERNATIVES TO FERRY TRAVEL

- Support and engage in conversations around the establishment of electric water taxi services, exploring partnerships with Sunshine Coast initiatives and seeking opportunities to provide alternative transportation options.
- Investigate the feasibility of reintroducing a combined bus and water taxi service for commuters, similar to the previous service provided by Peter's "Magic" Bus.
- Advocate for the expansion of foot passenger ferries and water taxi options, particularly during commuting hours and off-peak times, to reduce reliance on car ferry travel.
- Take a leadership role in passenger ferry advocacy, working with local and regional organizations to promote sustainable transportation options.
- Highlight the relationship between reliable transportation and welcoming visitors, emphasizing the importance of a well-connected transportation system to support tourism and local economy.

Numerous survey and workshop participants envisioned in their personal "once upon a time stories" what improvements in transportation for Bowen would look and feel like:

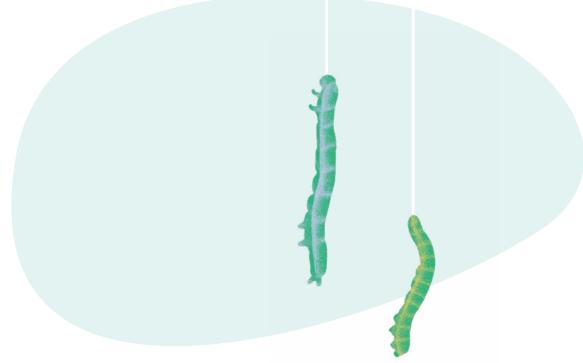
"We travel on bikes separately—but more together—than we ever could with cars."

"We brought in our own locally owned passenger ferry; your dad opened up his boat charting business connecting islanders to other places. BC ferries upgraded the Horseshoe Bay terminal to streamline ferry loading ... For getting around the island our blue bus increased its scope to include more areas of the island ... the Multi Use Path expanded its vision to include walking, biking, golf carts, ATVs, horse riding; we even got a local horse-riding guide to let people ride around the island."

"We found that the community felt less rushed and was able operate more freely 'on Bowen time'. We all had an easier time connecting with one another and our attitude toward tourists changed dramatically."

"Footpaths that were once scarce now form a network of dappled shade protected trails connecting neighbourhoods and amenities, bus stops, beaches and post boxes."

"Ten years ago, we decided to never increase ferry capacity. It was a rough couple of years as we adjusted and some people left because they could not adjust. But others who worked from home filled the void quickly with passenger ferries and all forms of alternative transit took hold and actually made it easier to get everywhere, and cheaper and less time consuming than the car."



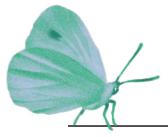
Visitor management: A balancing act

We acknowledge the need for effective visitor management to ensure a balance between community well-being and a thriving tourism industry. By fostering regenerative tourism, encouraging education and communication, and strengthening collaboration with stakeholders such as BC Ferries, we can create a harmonious relationship between residents and tourists while preserving the island's unique character and values.

Here are some of the ideas the group discussed:

1. EDUCATION AND COMMUNICATION

- Develop and distribute comprehensive information resources, including frequently asked questions (FAQs), brochures, and QR codes, to educate visitors about the island's offerings, rules, and expectations.
- Collaborate with Tourism Bowen Island and provide additional resources and support to enhance their ability to communicate the island's attractions, activities, and responsible tourism practices.
- Promote responsible messaging and communication through social media platforms, emphasizing the island's values, expectations, and highlighting the importance of mutual respect and understanding between residents and visitors.



2. ENHANCE THE VISITOR EXPERIENCE

- Improve wayfinding signage and information boards across the island, providing clear directions to popular attractions, parking areas, and accommodations.
- Strengthen collaboration with accommodation providers to ensure they are well-informed about Bowen Island's unique characteristics, rules, and community expectations. Encourage them to share this information with their guests.
- Establish a proactive approach to manage visitor expectations, including informing them about activities that may be restricted or regulated, such as leashing their dogs on trails, beaches, and in the Cove, through clear communication channels and signage.

3. TRANSPORTATION AND ACCESS MANAGEMENT

- Advocate for improved transportation options to and from the island, collaborating closely with BC Ferries to address visitor management concerns. Explore the possibility of creating a separate ferry or implementing priority access for residents.
- Collaborate with BC Ferries to establish a visitor fee collected during ticket purchase, which
 could be used to support local community initiatives, Tourism Bowen Island, or environmental
 conservation efforts.
- Explore innovative transportation solutions, such as shuttle services or carpooling initiatives, to reduce congestion and parking challenges, while providing convenient access for visitors.

4. COLLABORATION AND RESOURCE ALLOCATION

- Support Tourism Bowen Island with increased resources, funding, and marketing efforts to
 enhance their ability to educate and inform visitors about the island's unique offerings and
 community expectations.
- Foster collaboration among various levels of government, community organizations, and residents to develop a holistic visitor management strategy that addresses infrastructure, regulations, and community well-being.
- Develop partnerships with conservation officers or similar authorities to educate visitors on responsible behaviour, conservation efforts, and the island's ecological sensitivity, promoting a culture of stewardship.

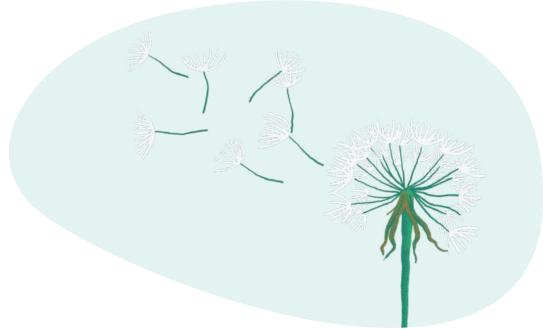
Numerous survey and workshop participants envisioned in their personal "once upon a time stories" what improvements in visitor management for Bowen would look and feel like:

"Bowen became a place known for its sustainable and welcoming tourism."

"They ran small workshops to create educational materials for visitors ...
They supported initiatives of summer internships where Bowen kids were to provide guided tours to environmentally sensitive areas ... workshops were conducted so that islanders could educate visitors in local wildlife and edible plants as well as how to respect them."

"A tourism tax was levied on all visitors and collected by BC Ferries. The revenue was used to create signage and for trail upkeep."

"Tourists were provided with brochures explaining 'the environmental code of conduct on Bowen'."



Volunteerism: Raise your hand

We recognize the value and importance of volunteerism in maintaining a vibrant and sustainable community. By creating a supportive environment that encourages and celebrates volunteerism, particularly by addressing barriers, providing resources, and fostering a culture of giving back, we can enhance volunteer engagement and create meaningful opportunities for individuals of all ages.

Here are some of the ideas the group discussed:

1. VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT AND SUPPORT

- Develop an administrative guidance program to provide support and capacity building for volunteer organizations. This includes assisting with creating job descriptions, establishing time limits, and offering mentorship to volunteers.
- Launch a volunteer matchmaking website or platform that connects individuals interested in volunteering with suitable opportunities. The platform should allow volunteers to browse through different organizations and projects, matching their skills and interests.
- Organize a Volunteer Opportunity Fair where local organizations showcase their behind-thescenes work, enabling newcomers and community members to understand the breadth of volunteer opportunities available.
- Implement age-appropriate volunteer opportunities to incentivize children and youth to engage in community service. This could involve activities such as environmental clean-ups, mentoring programs, and skill development initiatives.

2. RECOGNIZE AND INCENTIVIZE VOLUNTEERISM

- Establish a volunteer recognition program that includes incentives, points, awards, and public acknowledgment for the most active and dedicated volunteers.
- Organize a community-wide event, such as a party, to celebrate and appreciate the contributions of all volunteers on the island.
- Encourage local businesses to participate in micro corporate social responsibility initiatives, where they support and encourage their employees to volunteer in the community.

3. CREATE A VOLUNTEER-FRIENDLY CULTURE

- Conduct targeted communication and education campaigns to highlight the importance and benefits of volunteerism in the community. Emphasize how volunteerism serves the soul and contributes to community well-being.
- Cultivate a local culture of volunteerism by integrating volunteer opportunities into community activities, similar to joining a sports team or participating in social clubs.
- Develop easily accessible tools and resources for individuals interested in volunteering, including a comprehensive list of volunteer organizations, opportunities, and relevant contact information.
- Provide mentoring and support for volunteers, including guidance on skill development and
 job search assistance to help them gain new experiences and transition into paid employment
 if desired.

4. OVERCOME BARRIERS AND PITFALLS

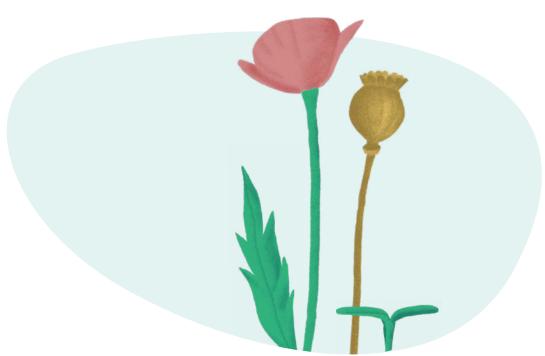
- Address the issue of time constraints by offering volunteer opportunities with flexible time commitments and clearly defined expectations.
- Encourage a shared responsibility and load by providing clear guidelines on the amount of time and effort expected from volunteers. Respect individual capacities and avoid overburdening them.
- Combat apathy and engage different age groups by promoting the personal fulfillment and positive impact that volunteerism can have on individuals and the community.
- Recognize and appreciate the historical contributions of volunteers and volunteer organizations on Bowen Island, highlighting their role in building a strong community.

Numerous survey and workshop participants envisioned in their personal "once upon a time stories" what improvements in volunteerism for Bowen would look and feel like:

"There was a community where volunteering was the norm and younger members of the community were mentored at a young age to be involved, make a difference and gain valuable experience and skills. Collectively individual or committee volunteers contributed to a more vibrant, interesting and healthier community that was so desirable to live in, even more than it is now, and Bowen Island became the model community that the rest of BC wished they had."

"A new organization was formed that helped steward a new generation of volunteers ... this group supported organizations in developing their capacity to connect volunteers that was the best match for them ... In turn volunteers felt more recognized for their contributions and saw the direct impact on the time they spent on their chosen cause."

"There was a population of people who understood the value of giving back and truly paying it forward. They invested in the island by giving their time and they were rewarded with lower property taxes ... everyone did their part."



Youth and seniors:

The circle of life builds community cohesiveness

Prioritizing support for youth and seniors creates a community that values and respects individuals across generations. It strengthens social bonds, promotes intergenerational understanding, and enhances the well-being and collective growth of the community as a whole. The circle of life becomes a foundation for community cohesiveness, where each generation contributes to and benefits from the shared values, experiences, and aspirations that make the community thrive.

Here are some of the ideas the group generated:

FOSTER INTERGENERATIONAL CONNECTIONS

- Organize reflection sessions and shared discussions, such as a Gallery Tour, to encourage dialogue and understanding between seniors and youth. This will foster connections and promote a sense of community.
- Promote the value of mentorship by connecting experienced volunteers with individuals who are interested in getting involved but may not know how to start.
- Develop programs and activities that bridge the generation gap, such as intergenerational
 projects or events that bring together seniors and youth. This can include initiatives like the SKY
 internship, which can be expanded to offer on-island opportunities for youth to engage with
 community organizations.

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2. ADDRESS HOUSING CHALLENGES FOR SENIORS AND YOUTH

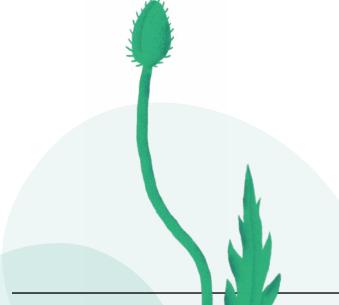
- Explore innovative housing solutions that encourage intergenerational living arrangements. Consider implementing a program where younger individuals can provide assistance to seniors in exchange for affordable housing, benefiting both parties.
- Support the revival of the adult daycare plan by providing funding, space, and staff. Collaborate
 with organizations focused on this mission to ensure the availability of adult daycare services on
 Bowen Island.

3. ENHANCE DAYCARE OPTIONS

- Advocate for increased availability of childcare facilities on Bowen Island, particularly to support families with young children. Work with provincial programs and local stakeholders to address the shortage of affordable daycare options.
- Explore the potential of expanding the BICF scholarship program to include on-island internships, such as data internships, daycare worker internships, or intergenerational housing internships. This will provide valuable learning experiences for youth while addressing community needs.

4. TRAIN AND SUPPORT VOLUNTEERS AND INTERNS

- Organize a volunteer "dating" event, similar to university club days, where potential volunteers can connect with community organizations. BICF can provide funding to organizations that meet certain standards to support their participation in the event.
- Provide basic training for interns, volunteers, and board members to ensure they have the
 necessary skills and knowledge to contribute effectively. BICF can fund training sessions or
 courses to support organizations in maximizing the impact of their volunteers and interns.



Numerous survey and workshop participants envisioned in their personal "once upon a time stories" what improvements in youth and seniors for Bowen would look and feel like:

"Once upon a time there was a community with people of all ages, children, adults (parents), teenagers, young adults, adults with no kids, seniors who came together to meet each other's needs ... Seniors offered their expertise in making these connections in their homes/properties/spaces and made cookies and pies! It was a mashup of the best of who each person was. It was magical."

"Once a month an educational inspirational speaker series came to where the kids were (zoom or the library or the teen centre) and talked about the issues they were freaking out about ... drugs, sex, identity, body image, relationships etc. Golf and soccer and kayaking and baseball opportunities ON Bowen were free and supported and for the artists in this demographic, local artists offered art supplies for free if someone needed them, and they also mentored them for free. There was a sense on the island that these kids were our future and we needed to lift them up and help them see their value in this community, for the sake of us all. And all of these things acted as a catalyst for the young people in the community to help each other when they felt resilient themselves."

Other notable findings and discussions

From the survey and during the workshop, some additional areas for improvement were mentioned, including:

Childcare

For the workshop group assigned to Building Community, the topic of childcare arose as a particularly critical need for community building. Their deep dive discussions focused on this particular area for improvement. Here are some of the ideas the group generated:

ESTABLISH A CENTRALIZED CHILDCARE AND BABYSITTER HUB

- Determine if there is an existing centralized babysitter and childcare hub on Bowen Island. If not, create one that serves as a central point for coordinating childcare services.
- This hub can connect parents with available babysitters and caregivers who can act as mentors and provide engaging activities for children.

IMPLEMENT WRAPAROUND SUPPORT

- Integrate mental health and addiction resources within the childcare system. This ensures that both parents and children have access to the necessary support.
- By providing comprehensive care, the system can address the challenges faced by families dealing with mental health or addiction issues.

ACTIVITY COORDINATOR AND TRANSPORTATION SOLUTIONS

- Hire an activity coordinator responsible for coordinating both on-island and off-island activities for children.
- This coordinator can organize activities and outings, including arranging transportation such as a dedicated bus service to reduce ferry traffic and support environmental goals.
- This coordinated effort alleviates the burden on individual families and provides children with more opportunities.

• ESTABLISH DIGITAL PLATFORMS

- Develop a user-friendly app or digital platform to facilitate coordination of activities, commutes, and other childcare-related needs.
- This platform can include sign-up sheets, information about available activities, transportation schedules, and communication channels for parents and caregivers.
- Seek funding to ensure the app's sustainability, including employee(s) and infrastructure requirements.

• ENGAGE THE COMMUNITY

- Foster community engagement and buy-in by highlighting the tangible benefits of improved childcare.
- Communicate how this initiative positively impacts the entire community, such as reducing traffic congestion, supporting environmental goals, and creating opportunities for volunteering.
- Encourage active participation and involvement from parents, caregivers, and community members.

• SECURE FUNDING AND VOLUNTEERISM

- Seek financial support and investment for implementing and sustaining the improved childcare system.
- Explore grant opportunities, partnerships with local organizations, and potential fundraising campaigns.
- Additionally, encourage volunteerism by providing flexible opportunities for parents and community members to contribute their time and skills to support childcare initiatives.

Accessibility

While accessibility was not identified as a priority, per se, the subject was both explicitly and implicitly mentioned in the areas of:

HEALTH CARE

- Ensure that the future health care centre being built is designed with accessibility in mind, including ramps, elevators, and clear signage.

- Train healthcare professionals on how to communicate effectively with individuals who are blind or deaf, such as through the use of sign language interpreters or accessible communication devices.
- Provide information and resources about available healthcare services in accessible formats, such as large print or braille.

HOUSING

- Increase the availability of accessible and affordable housing options for seniors and families, such as through the construction of housing complexes specifically designed for individuals with disabilities.
- Implement policies and incentives for developers to include accessibility features in new housing developments.
- Provide financial assistance or subsidies to individuals with disabilities to help make housing more affordable and accessible.

TRANSPORTATION

- Improve transportation options for seniors, such as by increasing the frequency and accessibility of public transportation services to off-island destinations.
- Ensure that public transportation vehicles are equipped with features to accommodate individuals with disabilities, such as wheelchair ramps and designated seating areas.
- Provide transportation services specifically tailored to the needs of individuals who are blind or deaf, such as through the use of specialized vehicles or sign language interpreters.

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

- Increase the availability of resources and programs for teens at the Community Centre, such as through the establishment of a dedicated youth centre or the expansion of existing programs.
- Provide training and support to community organizations and service providers on how to make their services more accessible and inclusive for individuals with disabilities.

MENTAL HEALTH

- Develop and implement mental health support programs specifically targeted at the younger population, such as counseling services or peer support groups.
- Increase awareness and education about mental health issues and available resources through community outreach programs and events.
- Provide funding and resources to expand mental health services and facilities in the community, including specialized services for individuals with disabilities.

Mental health and well-being

The importance of addressing mental health issues, particularly for individuals who are newly blind and experiencing mental health challenges. The need for accessible mental health services and support is highlighted.

Youth engagement and support

Concerns regarding youth, particularly those aged 12-16 and 18-25, who may face mental health issues, boredom, isolation, and a lack of opportunities. It is important to connect with youth through platforms they use, such as social media, and provide them with resources and support.

Emergency preparedness and safety

The importance of fire safety, emergency preparedness, and having plans in place to ensure the safety and well-being of the community during disasters or emergencies.

Participatory democracy and governance

Encouraging more community engagement and participation in decision-making processes, finding ways to make governance and budgeting more understandable and accessible, and creating structures to effectively utilize volunteer resources.

Community building and capacity development

Recognizing the importance of community building, particularly in the face of challenges, and the need to create structures or groups to build capacity, provide support, and engage volunteers effectively.



The emotions and aspirations that drive us

"Stories nourish our souls and ignite our imaginations. They remind us of who we are and what we can become."

~ Unknown

There is much to digest and contemplate in the opportunities we have to make Bowen Island a better place to live, work, and play. However, there is more to learn and explore if we dig a bit deeper. That is why participants who completed the on-line survey and/or attended the June 3 Vital Conversations session were asked to imagine: It is 2033: 10 years from now. You are telling your child, grandchild, or friend about how Bowen Island came together to make your chosen opportunity happen. It is in the stories that we see the real, the authentic emotions driving the opportunities and ideas.

HEALING

A number of stories lamented the polarization and divisiveness they believed are obstructing our progress and change. The imagery they used in their stories to counter this was a sense of "working together," "putting aside differences," "exploring common ground." These solutions went beyond the notion of merely "fixing" … there was a sense of a deeper healing.

In fact, the word "healing" was used in several of the stories and implied in many more. Healing is different than fixing or improving. We fix and improve situations, opportunities, objects—inanimate "things". We heal that which is dear to us. That which brings joy and value to our lives. A quick exploration into word derivation indicates that the word "heal" originates from the Old German word "heilen" literally meaning to "make whole again."

In the stories, what is portrayed as being "healed" or "made whole again" is our community, nature, our often-polarizing opinions, etc. The healing brings our island community back together again. Putting the opportunities identified by the Vital Conversations participants into action is much more than fixing problems or improving our situation. It is forgoing our differences and focusing on bringing us together to do these things. One can argue that the "bringing together" is as important as the results. When we are "together," great things are possible. Excerpts from the stories portray this quite elegantly:

"The community began to heal with one voice; one heart at a time."

"The healing memory of the collective experience made them realize we are all one."

"Over time our community healed and rallied as were back to the old ways of helping each other."

"Once upon a time the people in our little village decided to put away their divisions and have a real conversation with each other. This conversation happened in stages, maybe it was a gathering at the pub, a talk at the library, a meeting at the town hall ... People finally realized that the key to addressing so much of their unhappiness and strife was to finally reject their safe little bubble of isolation and move towards each other ... Suddenly the clouds broke and people began to meet more frequently, maybe there were weekly meetings, and round tables prioritizing the coming together of the people. Realizing that together we are stronger and that all along the answer was right in front of us."

CONNECTIONS

"Connections" should not be a surprise. We saw similar results in the 2017 Vital Conversations event. Strong connections are necessary for a healthy, vibrant community. Connections—with one another, with nature, with those of different ages and experiences, and even those with dissimilar perspectives—broaden our appreciation and understanding of the world and how we can best live in it. Connections provide a common ground of understanding. And more importantly, they foster a wider range of ways to implement these opportunities. Connections can be likened to "networks" on steroids. However, making successful connections requires time; maintaining them requires an ongoing effort. Sometimes we need to let go of personal opinions to allow connections to grow and develop.

The deep-seated emotion underlying connections is a sense of belonging. The feeling that we are part of something bigger. Something that we can count on to provide support. Something that values our individual talents and contributions. Something that makes us feel safe. The stories illustrate the power of connections and resulting benefits. They highlight how "connections" and "healing" are themselves interrelated. Especially the notions of "coming together":

"We had to dismantle some pretty ingrained systems first, and many needed to face their own dark nights of the soul, but from the ashes rose the phoenix; a better understanding of how individual and community needs are interconnected. Individual health and community health are one and the same."

"Bowen citizens came together, working with different nonprofits, government organizations and private businesses to find balance and support a healthy community where people of all walks of life could live and flourish."

"Success will come, if it does, from all of us being enabled, by each other, and by our connection and knowledge of each other."

"And all of these things acted as a catalyst for the young people in the community to help each other when they felt resilient themselves. They became the support network for each other. The health of the entire community was enhanced."

Epilogue

As the saying goes: "the more things change, the more they stay the same." This is the third Vital Conversations conducted on Bowen Island. Most of the opportunities identified in this iteration have appeared in some shape or form in past Vital Conversations. Does this mean we are not making progress? Absolutely not!

The Vital Conversations 2017 report was widely shared and positively received by Island residents, community groups, and the Municipality. Bowen Islanders quickly stepped up and took action in all of the priority areas, to varying degrees. While there is still much to be done, we can be proud of what we have collectively accomplished to date including: the Cove Commons Community Plaza; assessment of seniors' needs; girl power and boy power programming for youth; Bowen bike park; affordable housing feasibility study; disc golf course; truth and reconciliation workshop; community health centre operations and governance study; Mt. Gardner trail navigation project; a children's garden; horse riding ring upgrade; a westside natural playscape destination. These are a just a few of the projects for which the Bowen Island Community Foundation granted \$689,050 for addressing the Vital Conversations priorities over the last five years.

In addition, two major priorities—Create Gathering Places for All and Bring Health Care Close to Home—are near completion with Bowen's new Community Centre and our new Health Care Centre.

These successes also remind us of the immense amount of work our small, island community can accomplish when we share common visions. And, of course, persevere.

We at the Community Foundation look forward to the great project ideas that will be brought forward and implemented over the next five years to address the community-identified priorities articulated through the 2023 Vital Conversations event.



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Our heartfelt thanks to each resident of Bowen Island who shared their thoughts and hopes with us for our third Vital Conversations. Thanks to each of you for making such a difference, and while your names are anonymous your voices have been heard as you see throughout this report.

In addition to the participants, we'd also like to acknowledge:

Lead Facilitator

Don Durand, Granger Network

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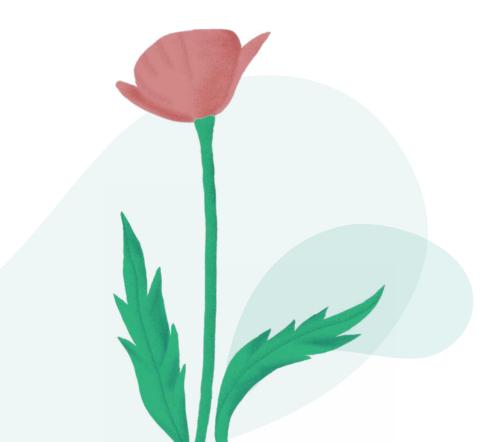
Edward Wachtman and Sheree Johnson donated countless hours of their time and skillfully took literally hundreds of pieces of paper and translated this into our Vital Conversations 2023 Report.

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VITAL CONVERSATIONS COMMITTEE

Richard Smith – Committee Chair, Holly Graff, Joanne Gassman, Gillian Corless, Wendy Hackney, Zach Finley, Jennifer Hall, Henry Campbell, Leah Gregg, and Gayle Farrell

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VITAL

absolutely necessary or important; essential

CONVERSATIONS

a talk in which news and ideas are exchanged



Bowen Island's 2023 Vital Conversations