2017 BY Bowen Island's VITAL Conversations | PEOPLE

POWERED



We respectfully acknowledge the First Nations people of Skwxwu7mesh (Squamish) on whose traditional territories we live, work and play.



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THE BOWEN ISLAND WE WANT TO BE



Bowen Island is our community, our home. It is a place of safety and belonging. A place where the young learn from the old and the old learn from the young.

On Bowen we encourage and accept everyone; all are respected, all voices heard. Our differences make us stronger.

Here, all have options for secure and affordable shelter. Our vulnerable are safe and warm. Those who work on Bowen, can live on Bowen.

On Bowen everyone has convenient and timely access to on-island healthcare, professional resources and services when we need them.

Bowen is a place where the protection of our natural environment—our greatest asset—is carefully considered in every decision we make. We live harmoniously and in concert with Mother Nature.

Bowen is a role model for green living, bringing positive change into the world.

Bowen is a place where the community gathers frequently with friends and neighbours, giving us the opportunity to share our stories and strengthen our bonds, surrounded by support and caring.

On Bowen we collectively take responsibility for raising the next generation with strong values and dreams.

Bowen is a place where we give back. Do our part. Are involved. A place where we are all united in our efforts to do and be the best we can.

Bowen Island is our community. It is our home.

Based on the discussions and stories from the Bowen Island Community Foundation's 2017 Vital Conversations.

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WHAT WE DID



On the cool, grey Saturday morning of September 9, 2017, sixty-one Bowen Island residents plus twenty island facilitators and scribes gathered at Cates Hill Chapel to participate in the second Vital Conversations sponsored by the Bowen Island Community Foundation. The goals for the community gathering were to:

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

To ensure the attendees represented diverse ages, experiences, walks of life, and interests, 55% of participants were individually selected and invited to participate. The remaining 45% were randomly chosen through a community-wide lottery.

For three and a half hours participants were guided through small group discussions centred around four questions:

- When you picture a strong community, what stands out in your mind? What does it look and feel like?
- What is Bowen doing well?
- Where does Bowen have opportunities for improvement within our community?
- What are possible solutions and actions for these improvement opportunities?

To close the Vital Conversations event, 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 successfully addressed.

This document captures the highlights of what the participants—our friends and neighbours saw as Bowen Island's opportunities for becoming an even better place to live. Whenever possible, participants' actual words, phrases, and stories are used to portray the essence of this exercise.

CHARACTERISTICS OF A STRONG COMMUNITY



To begin the conversations, the groups were asked: "When you picture a strong community, what stands out in your mind?"

Participants pictured a strong, diverse, and caring community, where **everyone**—regardless of age, gender, sexual orientation, race, or economic status—**is welcomed**. A community where all voices are heard and where different values and opinions are encouraged, even honoured. A place where everyone feels they belong.

"Diverse – support and opportunities for young and old" "Everyone has a voice" "Greater opportunity for diversity of ideas" "All feel welcome and that they belong" They described a strong community as being a **caring and compassionate** place; where neighbours look out for one another and support one another in times of need. **A safe place**, where children, parents, and grandparents alike can live, work, play together. It is a place where one is not afraid to be different or speak one's mind.

"Collective compassion; we look out for everybody" "Safety – both physical and emotional" "Ageing in place" "A great place to raise children" This strong community was seen as providing opportunities for **personal growth and development**. A place to be more and do more.

"Educational and healthcare opportunities"
"Opportunities (growth, engagement)"
"Opportunities to meet each other"

Finally, participants imagined an actively **engaged community** with pride of place and each other. Where everyone is able to contribute to the fullest of his or her capabilities. It is a place of mutual respect and personal dignity.

"We are engaged with the 'other'
(concerned and reaching out)"
"Lots of people are involved"
"Celebrate each other"

The following cloud chart depicts how participants pictured a strong community. The larger the word in the illustration, the more frequently it was mentioned. People, diverse/diversity, support, involved, engaged, opportunities, volunteers, safety, and healthcare were some of the most frequently mentioned words used to describe a strong community.



WHAT BOWEN DOES WELL



The next question participants addressed was: "What is Bowen Island doing well? What is working?" In this discussion, participants used many of the same words or phrases to describe Bowen as they did when describing the hypothetical strong community in the previous exercise.

First and foremost, they overwhelmingly described Bowen as **a very supportive community**, both collectively and individually. It is a community where people care and support one another.

"Incredible amount of community and individual support" "When a need is identified, the community steps up"

Participants agreed that Bowen Islanders are actively engaged in creating, maintaining, and enhancing our community. They noted that our sense of community responsibility is characterised in the dedication of Bowen's **many volunteers**. There were numerous examples of how Bowen is 'powered by people'; how our island 'runs on' volunteerism.

"High level of volunteerism; Bowfest,

Caring Circle, etc."

"People volunteer and step into leadership roles"

A number of conversations centred around the community's acceptance and willingness to **listen** to various points of view with civility and respect. Some participants perceived higher levels of tolerance than others. Still, Bowen is regarded as a place where each of us can safely pursue our individual interests and beliefs. The results can be seen in the various and diverse ways Bowen Islanders express themselves, the work they choose to do, and how they go about their often very different daily routines.

"Listening and encouraging other voices
(giving the community a voice)"

"Tolerant – willing to listen to diverse opinions"

"Giving voices to all groups"

"Religious/spiritual freedom"

"Lots of educational opportunities and opportunities for exploration"

Participants described Bowen as a **safe place**. We are a community that cares about all our people, especially our children. It is a shining example of the proverbial 'a good place to raise a family.'

"The Community School is a hub"

"There are wonderful opportunities for young children"

"8-13/14 year olds are taken care of (we function well as a nursery)"

There were also conversations about how Bowen provides many **opportunities for personal growth and development**. Through educational, artistic, and volunteer opportunities we are able to build on our talents and skills. We can do and be more.

"Lots of opportunities to volunteer"

"Artistic opportunities"

And, of course, we care dearly and deeply about our **environment**. For many of us it is a significant reason we choose to live here.

"Respect for nature and environment"

"We come together to protect nature = pride and stand up for what we believe in; we're prepared to be arrested!"

In the eyes of the sixty-one participants, it is clear that what they imagine as a strong community is very close to their perceptions of what Bowen does well. Similar to the previous discussions on what makes a strong community, some of the most frequently mentioned words associated with what Bowen is currently doing well are: people, support, volunteer, opportunities, diverse, and children.



OUR OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT



Next, participants were given the task of identifying opportunities for improvement in our Bowen community: "Where are there opportunities for improvement 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?"

Through lively discussions, the table groups identified numerous areas they believed needed attention to improve the lives of Bowen Islanders.

The following are the eight improvement areas most frequently mentioned. A few selected quotes from each area illustrate the tone and content of the discussions.

Housing

"We are a community at risk; in need of diverse housing for everyone—families, singles, seniors"

"Housing for service people"

"Short-term emergency housing"

"Provide housing so people can stay on Bowen"

"More rental housing"

Diversity and Inclusion

"Create safe spaces for minorities, different race and sexual identity" "Actively caring for different demographics" "We need to widen our community's diversity" "Report and consult with Squamish peoples"

Healthcare

"Improvement regarding preventative, holistic medicine, etc."

"Need to address social issues: alcohol consumption, drugs"

"Mental health services"

"24 hour MD coverage"

"Access to on-island mobility aids (crutches, wheel chairs)"

"Seniors need support to live here—housing, healthcare"



Youth

"Engage and include youth in all aspects
of community"

"Increase opportunities for teens to get out and
be connected to authentic Bowen"

"For children under 10 there are limited
places to go"

"More children's services"

Volunteers

"Youth volunteer program opportunities"

"A way of organizing volunteers"

"More opportunities for seniors on island"

Transportation

"A walkable island (not just hiking)—
encourage a culture of walking/cycling"

"Investigate getting out of Transit"

"Multiple transportation options, i.e., increase
bike and walking paths, etc."

"Facilitating transportation (parking for
businesses, seniors, special needs, etc.)"

Gathering Places

"Winter activities for the community"

"Create neighbourhood parks"

"Create generic outdoor gathering place; a plaza
as an example"

"Alternatives to the Community Centre"

"Increase opportunities to get out and connect
for seniors"

Environment

"A permanent solution to the BC Timber
Sales issue"

"Converting garbage to energy; explore the
many options"

"Encourage water conservation techniques,
i.e., making use of home and run-off
collection techniques, etc."

"Figure out what to do about Crown Lands;
what options are there"

"Considering natural and environmental
systems in all decision making"

"Lower our footprint"

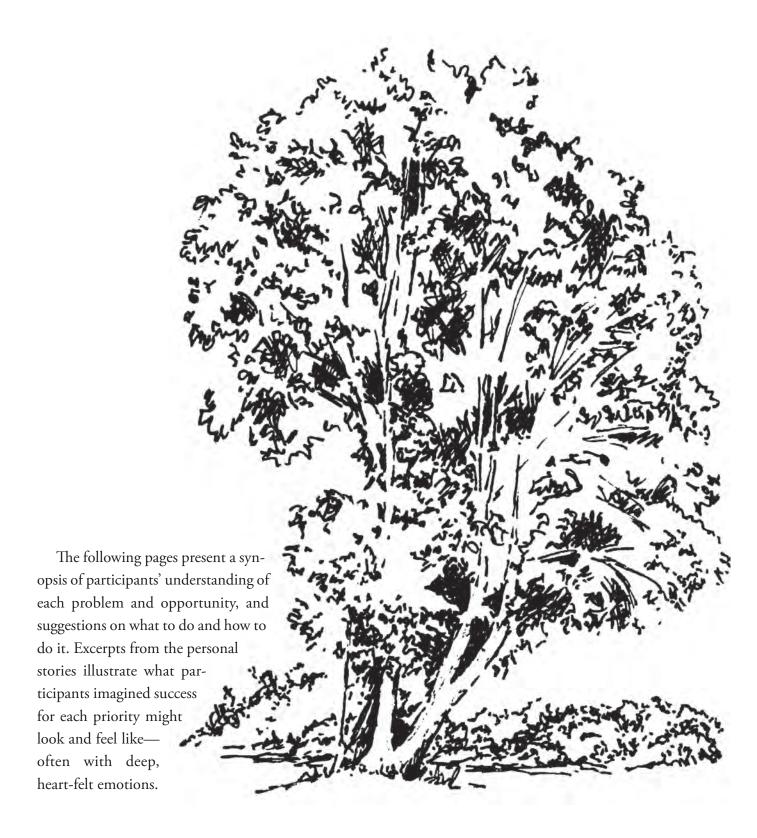
An important note on 'Seniors': Though not singled out as its own priority area, 'seniors' was raised frequently and provides a unique opportunity for improvement. Issues pertaining to seniors were mentioned in a number of the eight priority areas: housing, healthcare, gathering places, transportation. Participants felt that solutions in these areas must also consider issues particular to seniors.

IDEAS AND POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS



After the table groups identified the top eight priorities for improving our Bowen Island community, each participant selected an opportunity they felt was a top priority and wanted to discuss further. Participants then moved to that table where a deeper understanding of that particular priority was discussed. These discussions included possible problems—the root causes—that signalled the need for improvement and potential solutions or actions that might result in improvements for our collective good.

A critical realization that emerged from this Vital Conversations—and must be kept in mind moving forward—is that these priorities cannot be tackled solely on their own, independently from one another. For better or worse, 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.



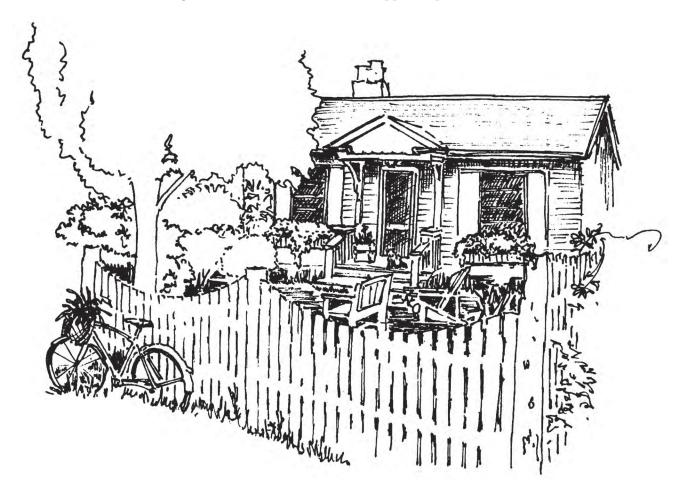
PRIORITY: DEVELOP HOUSING FOR ALL

Housing was the most frequently mentioned opportunity for improvement. Two table groups discussed the issue of housing. One group focused on diversity and affordability. The other group examined housing as it pertains to seniors and density.

Housing is a complex and often difficult issue. On Bowen, the issue is now acute. Table group participants discussed and debated various root causes for the housing crisis on Bowen. One commonly held perception is that with the meteoric increase in housing prices over the past 18 months, a number of investment property owners on Bowen decided to sell. These properties had been the foundation of Bowen's rental housing inventory.

Another opinion discussed is that due to the increase in tourism, some property owners are renting to short-term visitors instead of long-term island residents. With fewer long-term rental alternatives, some islanders have been forced to uproot their lives and leave Bowen. Well-established neighbour-hood and informal social networks—the traditional vehicles for getting things done—are stretched to capacity or being lost all altogether. Long-term relationships and friendships are strained. Our businesses struggle to find staff because of the scarcity of on-island housing.

Other barriers to housing solutions voiced by table group participants are: the current zoning and approval processes; an historical resistance to



multi-family housing units on the island; the perception that such housing options potentially can lower surrounding property values; a 'not-in-my-backyard' attitude; and in general, a reluctance to think outside the box.

The primary solutions the two table groups recommended are:

Establish a Bowen Island Housing Authority with a mandate to oversee the development, administration, and management of affordable and senior housing on Bowen (rental and ownership) thereby fostering a more diverse and vibrant local population. The HA would be a stand-alone entity funded by both developers and the municipality.

- Create and maintain an up-to-date and accurate database of the Bowen housing market to better understand and monitor the on-going housing situation, including short-term rentals.
- Encourage the Municipality to appropriately zone surplus lands for mixed-use, affordable-market, and non-market housing.
- Focus on **senior housing options** with varying levels of care, located where seniors— even those with mobility issues—can have easy access to the Cove and other island community amenities.

Individual stories envisioning what improvements in DEVELOPING HOUSING FOR ALL might look and feel like

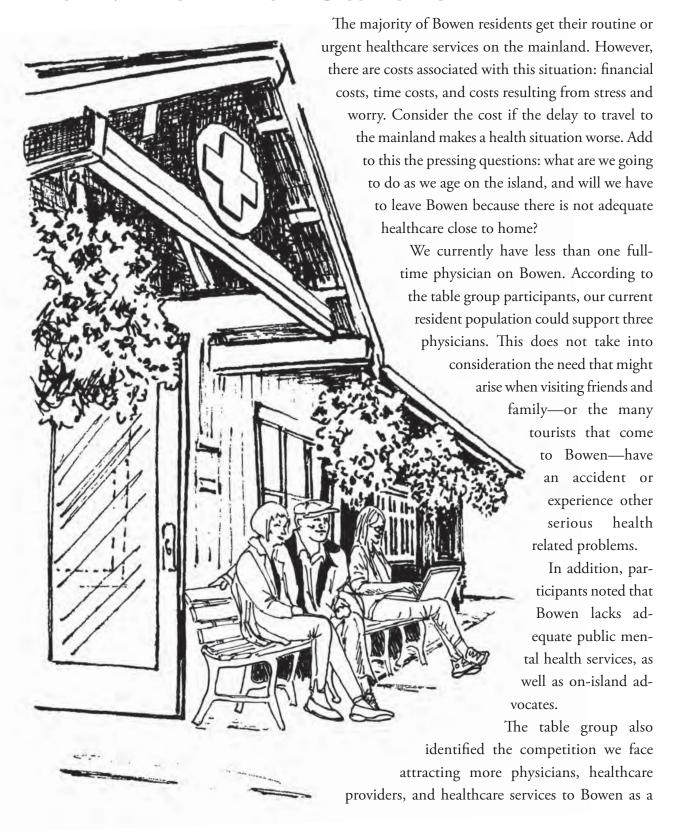
"I have a dream...it's a dream of a tiny home village. Though tiny in size and scale, it is actually a huge revolutionary idea. I can see a collection of tiny homes, each uniquely designed, organized in clusters around a community garden and park." ~

"I meet my elderly father at his rental unit near Snug Cove. We walk to the village for dinner. The surrounding neighbourhood within walking distance is full of housing... More importantly there is a sense of vitality and life. The space is now lived in as all the shops and restaurants have staff apartments attached or above. The Cove feels vibrant and a hub of community activity... The island no longer feels like there are 'haves' and 'have nots.' It feels welcome to a diverse range of ages, incomes, and living situations." —

"I heard that a new Housing Authority was being set up. I thought 'finally an organization that can focus on this issue...an organization that can get something done'...so I decided to volunteer." ~

"Bowen...housed all of its inhabitants in state-of- the art housing. There was a place for all ages; co-op, rental, owned, shared, short-tern and long-term rentals: whatever was required." ~

PRIORITY: BRING HEALTHCARE CLOSE TO HOME



significant barrier to establishing a local health care capability. This problem is exacerbated because Bowen does not have rural status—which gives priority to rural communities in need of healthcare solutions. Lack of rural status also means we are not eligible for a number of Provincial grants that might help address this priority.

After discussing the situation and brainstorming solutions, the table group offered the following priorities for helping to solve our healthcare problem:

Build a healthcare clinic with a turnkey professional and business opportunity in order to successfully recruit physicians and other healthcare providers. The service model would

- include a collaborative group of primary care practitioners.
- Approach local organizations and government to provide funding opportunities and bursaries for **professional development and training** for local residents, primary providers and responders in such areas as emergency medicine, home care aides/workers and mental health.
- Establish a mental health service to support and advocate for patients.
- Have Bowen Island designated as a rural community for health services.

Individual stories envisioning what improvements in BRINGING HEALTHCARE CLOSE TO HOME look and feel like

"One day, while playing at the beach, Harry plummeted to the rocks below. Hours later a solitary hiker stumbled by a poor, broken boy. The hiker immediately phoned the ambulance. Harry was rushed to Bowen's Integrative Health Centre where he was assessed by the attending physician. Luckily for Harry, he only needed a few stitches, x-rays, and a cast to mend his broken arm. All of these in the comfort of the health centre, without a trip to town, without a long wait in emergency. Unfortunately, one of the consequences of Harry's fall involved many hours of physiotherapy, as well as a new diagnosis of anxiety. Fortunately for Harry, he was able to attend physio sessions at the Centre, as well as a new group session for teens and youth with anxiety. These sessions allowed Harry to slowly heal, gain confidence and apply strategies to help combat his anxiety and stress." ~

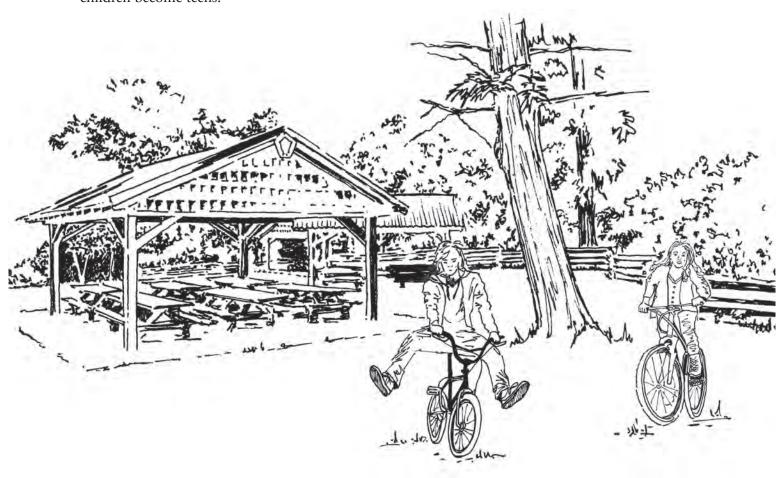
"Once upon a time, it was late—long past the last ferry—and dark and wet and cold. And Gladys fell... The paramedics were there in 15 minutes and she was on her way to the urgent care room of the health centre... Gladys was bruised and bleeding, but luckily hadn't broken anything, and after a few stitches, she was well enough to start fretting about how she would get home." ~

PRIORITY: SUPPORT OUR YOUTH

Bowen Island is home to many children and young people. And as the saying goes, 'it takes a village' to raise a child. Our community has a major impact on these children: how they see the world, their sense of belonging, their values, and the contributions they will make in their adult years. And, conversely, these young people can—if given the opportunity—significantly and positively impact our community.

Participants noted that while Bowen is known as a great place to raise children, it can also be a challenging place for our young people to flourish and grow as they become older. Sometimes, families are forced to move off Bowen when their children become teens.

The challenges for our youth—especially teens—are many. Table group participants identified a number of them. Our young people spend a great deal of time on the mainland for education, sports, and social activities. This off-island time often increases as younger children grow into their teens. Facilities for older teen activities on Bowen are limited. As part of the West Vancouver curriculum, high school students are required to fulfill 30 hours of volunteer work. Currently most of those volunteer hours are completed in West Vancouver. Why? Because Bowen doesn't have an effective means for matching and communicating volunteer opportunities with our Bowen youth.



The top priorities for improvement in supporting our youth are:

- Develop an application/platform that enables Bowen youth to easily learn what's happening on Bowen and how they can get involved.
- Recognize and support youth leaders in the community.
- Host an annual meeting or Vital Conversations for youth.
- Work with the West Vancouver School District to encourage required volunteer time be completed on Bowen.

Individual stories envisioning what improvements in SUPPORTING OUR YOUTH look and feel like

"These youth were not isolated...but were able to make friends and connections with both the older and younger citizens because of organized events like co-ed soccer. With such a strong base this person went off to a great university...never forgetting their roots." —

".... having youth spearhead their own needs and community wants. Not being told what should work for them by adults. The solution being put into action is an achievement of a communal voice being heard here on Bowen, one that has been silent...Empowering our youth in matters that concern them, creates adults with can-do attitudes and problem-solving abilities. A truly connected community would facilitate a sense of belonging, fostering unlikely friendships crossing all age barriers. ... A sharing community reflects all age groups where all voices are heard." —

"As the children got older, they helped volunteer in the community garden, learning the importance of caring for the environment and the plants and creatures within it." ~

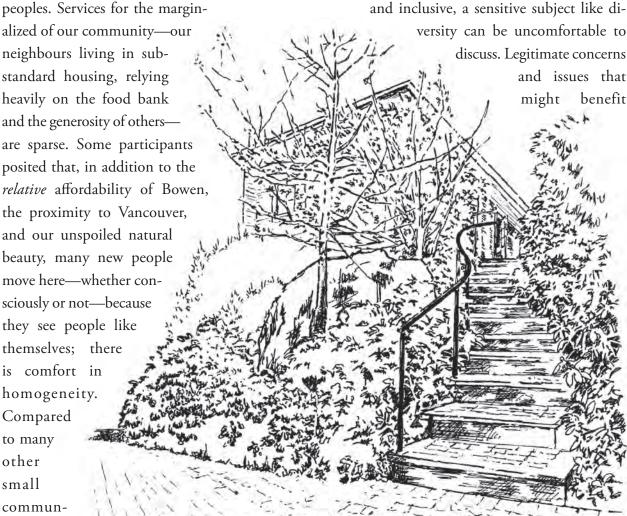
PRIORITY: CELEBRATE DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

When the large group was asked: "What is our community doing well? What is working?" we heard many people voice the opinion that Bowen is a tolerant, inclusive, welcoming community. Yet, diversity and inclusion (meaning respect for and appreciation of differences in race, ethnicity, gender, age, national origin, abilities, sexual orientation, culture, education, and belief) was also identified as a top priority for improvement.

In discussing this topic, the participants at this table group raised some difficult issues. Bowen is home to few visible minorities and indigenous peoples. Services for the margin-

and Canada—many Bowen islanders can *generally* be considered affluent. And as housing prices increase, the table group felt that relative affluence will also increase and have possible negative effects on diversity.

In addition, the table group participants discussed how this leads to the 'chicken and egg' circular dilemma: lack of diversity begets lack of diversity. Participants continued by suggesting that, as a community, we need to break the cycle through discussion, dialogue, and education. Because we think of our community as generally welcoming and inclusive, a sensitive subject like di-



ities in BC

from dialogue are perhaps left unspoken. The table group believed that addressing these issues candidly and openly could be transformative.

To promote diversity and inclusion on Bowen, the table group suggested the following action priorities:

- Develop a Community Charter that commits all community initiatives to support and encourage diversity.
- Create a volunteer **community group** with the purpose of encouraging more diversity. Activities might include:
- Workshops for educators and people of influence;

- Film festivals, highlighting visible minorities, indigenous peoples, LGBTQ, etc. issues;
- Meetings with 'safe spaces' for thoughtful and open dialogue;
- Monthly parties at the teen centre to celebrate diversity.
- Strive for the Bowen Island Community Foundation to role model diversity and inclusion by ensuring board makeup is representative of our community and our territory.
- Create stronger ties with the **Squamish nation**.

Individual stories envisioning what improvements in CELEBRATING DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION look and feel like

"How we treat our most marginalized individuals is a true measure of what we believe...let's reduce our 'grand plans' and be sure our most vulnerable are housed and fed, and cared for." ~

"In 2017 a group of Bowenites decided that Bowen was becoming so isolated in its make-up that it was losing out on the richness that diversity brings. They decided to do something about it... People from all over the world were curious about this tiny community that actually wanted to build diversity, enriching everyone's lives... The community benefitted so deeply that they documented what they had done to share with the world. Bowen became a centre of excellence." —

"...everyone was welcome. Old people and young people, people on income assistance and people living off generous retirement pensions. All cared and looked after each other." ~

"...we held each other up as a community, a village where everybody felt valued, powerful and needed. We held each other up in times of need, in times of sorrow, in times of joy...everyone knows they belong here...It acknowledges our diversity. ... It unites us across our differences and holds us up... It opens our hearts and our minds and reminds us of who we are as a community." ~

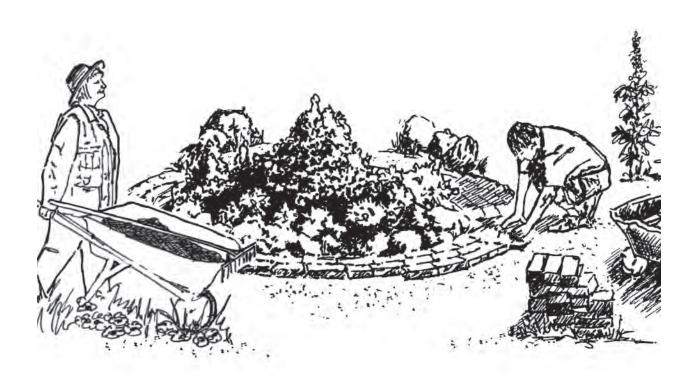
"...single moms, a vibrant people of colour community group, and an LGBTQ organization worked with the local school and municipality to create LGBTQ friendly events." ~

PRIORITY: INCREASE OUR VOLUNTEER POOL

Being an island we have to be self-reliant. We have learned to take care of ourselves and our fellow islanders. Volunteering is a significant vehicle for doing this. Volunteers are *the* most important resource community organizations have. As one participant astutely observed: Bowen Island 'runs on volunteers.' Volunteers are the ones that make things happen; they are the heart and soul of our community. Many wonderful Bowen organizations or events simply would not exist—or their mandates greatly diminished—without volunteers: the Knick Knack Nook, Bowfest, BIAC, and the Museum to name but a few. Volunteering strengthens our bonds with one another; it fosters a sense of ownership and belonging.

It can also be personally rewarding to be a Bowen Island volunteer. It is satisfying—especially in a small, close knit, self-reliant community—to give back, to help out. And, volunteering is an opportunity to connect with old friends and make new ones.

Unfortunately, the obstacles to increasing volunteerism are many and varied. Table group participants identified busy schedules as an obvious impediment. Other obstacles noted included finding a volunteer position that suits an individual's skill set and interests. Or simply, not being aware of volunteer opportunities. Additionally, some volunteer positions require some specific training, which may cause potential volunteers to reconsider.



As our Bowen Island continues to grow, the need to increase our pool of volunteers becomes more and more important. Without more volunteers, we run the risk of volunteer burnout, potentially damaging our culture of activism and self-sufficiency. Table group participants suggested that we need to particularly encourage our youth, young adults, and 35–50 year olds. There is extraordinary talent and skills in these people that Bowen needs to recognize and harness.

This table group generated many possible solutions for expanding our volunteer pool. Their top priorities are:

- Create a paid position for a Bowen Island
 Community Volunteer Co-ordinator.
- Increase awareness of the various volunteer opportunities available.
- **Tell more stories** about volunteers on Bowen and their contributions.

Individual stories envisioning what improvements in INCREASING OUR VOLUNTEER POOL look and feel like

"... a volunteer co-ordinator on Bowen. This person is a senior with knowledge of school children and families, organizations and local government. She is good at organizing parties and events, potlucks and festivals, small or large...she loves to meet and talk to people and figure out their talents and passions and also loves working with small groups to prioritize and plan...she wants to figure out great matches while supporting, encouraging and helping." —

"The more time she gave to places far away, the more she realized the answers were helping her own community...she not only wanted to give back but inspire the other kids her age too." ~

"Once upon a time, a volunteer coordinator was hired to bring together all the various charities, societies, non-profits, etc. of Bowen Island. She was energetic and organized, and her role led to cohesion among previously disparate groups. Her position made the tireless work of these groups more fruitful, more co-ordinated, and ultimately more effective. Organizations found recruitment and retention of volunteers a much simpler task, freeing up time for productive work." —

"...volunteering would strengthen a sense of ownership and caring about the community as a whole, not just one's little circle...creating ties, expanding worlds, and building a foundation of volunteers beyond the super-volunteer class...it strengthens diversity of all kinds." ~

PRIORITY: EXPAND OUR TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS

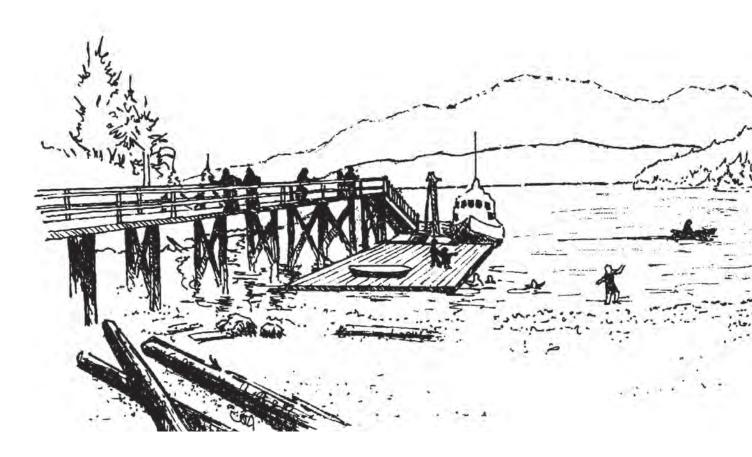
The participants of this table group identified Bowen's many challenges regarding on-island transportation. Our homes and neighbourhoods are scattered far and wide across the island. Our roads are narrow and—in places—are often in ill-repair. The bus schedule is focused on commuters and the ferry. Our youth, our elderly, and those who don't drive have limited options. Parking in the Cove is problematic, which is not an ideal situation for local businesses. Ferry traffic dominates the Cove on an hourly basis. The hilly, rocky topography of the island is a physical reality that can make cycling and walking both difficult and dangerous, especially for seniors and the mobility impaired.

In this age of climate change, we need to continuously try to reduce our carbon footprint as

we seek transportation and mobility solutions. In doing so, many of the other undesirable consequences of our reliance on the automobile will also decrease.

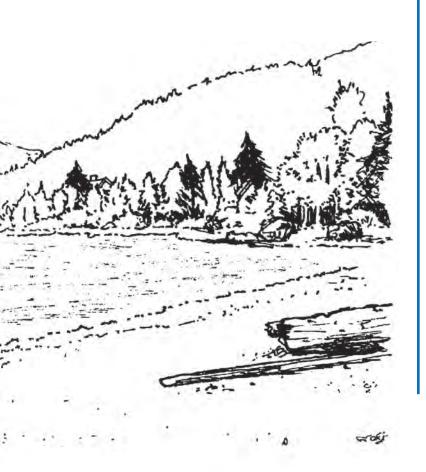
A number of positive actions over the past two years have made significant improvements to Bowen's transportation challenges. The Bowen Express Bus makes commuting to the city easier, faster, and more convenient. The new taxi service is a valuable addition, especially at those times when there is no bus service. The new parking lot, built by the Municipality, has increased commuter parking and freed up more hourly parking for shoppers in the Cove.

In brainstorming transportation solutions, the table group focused primarily on on-island mobility.



Their top recommendations are:

- Establish affordable and self-funded community-owned transit; consider charging an Airbnb transportation tax for funding.
- Increase density in the Cove so that more people can easily walk to shopping and restaurants
- Consider a free island **Hop On/Hop Off bus**.
- Provide electric community co-op vehicles (similar to Car2Go).
- Despite the challenging terrain, work to create and maintain walkable sidewalks/walking/biking trails to and from the Cove.



Individual stories envisioning what improvements in EXPANDING OUR TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS look and feel like

"...as I stepped off the ferry I noticed that the Ferry Marshall was coming to direct those that needed it to the hop-on/hop-off bus." ~

"Time to get up. Mates (my dog) needs his walk. Lovely having an off-leash park close by. Back home now. Change into off-island clothes, walk to corner, hop-on the new mini-bus, into Cove, and then onto the passenger only ferry....Stop off at Seniors' Social place for a coffee and quick chat. Then back on the bus up Cates Hill. Nice that it runs so often...The opportunity to have the convenience to leave the island and to return easily and the opportunity to socialize with friends easily near my new home." ~

"It (the Cove) is a pedestrian friendly open feeling space. More similar to Granville Island than the black-top strip it is now." ~

"He learned to bike on Bowen Island's cross- island bike path. It was safe from cars and taught him that this form of transportation was just as normal as cars." ~

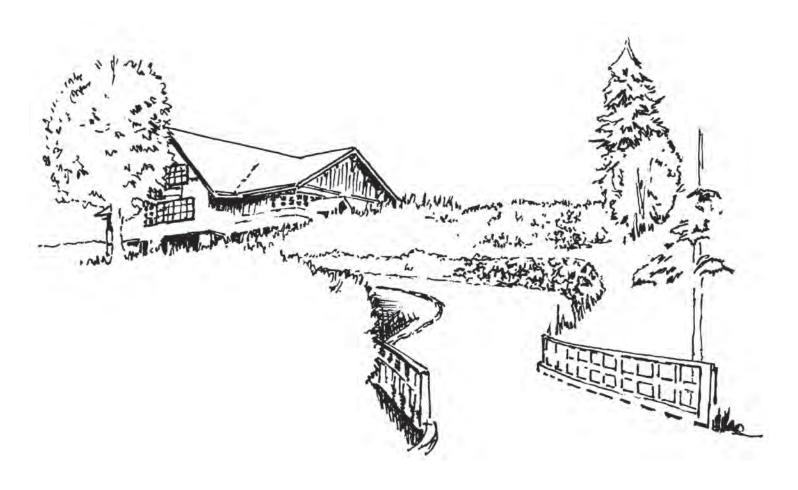
"A bus with a bike rack on the front and a wheelchair/stroller lift... This bus was free for anyone to ride and stopped wherever and whenever they wanted. It was quiet and efficient, powered by electricity generated on-island (solar in the summer, hydro in the winter)." ~

PRIORITY: CREATE GATHERING PLACES FOR ALL

A common gathering place—or places—is essential for a vibrant community. Currently, Bowen has a number of venues for various social, artistic, and sports activities: Tir-na-nOg, the soccer field, Cates Hill Chapel, the baseball field, the Art Gallery, BICS gym, Tunstall Bay clubhouse are but a few. However, table group participants noted these facilities have their limitations. They are scattered across the island and for the most part are not always adequate to accommodate large groups of people. These limitations have consequences. Often our youth must go off-island for their social and athletic activities. Parents' time, energy, and

dollars are consumed by these off-island excursions. Leaving them with less time and energy to give to on-island activities. Our seniors are also affected, having fewer accessible facilities or places to gather for conversation or activities.

For many islanders, a community centre is the logical solution to these limitations. A community centre has been a point of discussion—and numerous studies—for decades. Table group participants discussed how many obstacles have stood in the way of progress including the cost, the changing priorities of local government, and perhaps the community will. We now have a plan in place



that could finally result in the construction of the centre. While a number of table group participants generally think positively about this potential community centre, some were still uncertain about the specifics: what it would cost, look like, and what services might be provided.

A community centre is not the only solution to this problem. The concepts of small neighbourhood parks, community gardens, and even a skateboard park were raised and discussed or portrayed in the individual stories.

The more time we can spend together on Bowen, the stronger our community will be. The table group identified the following priorities to address the Island's need for gathering places for all:

- Ensure that the current community centre plan satisfies multiple community priorities (youth, senior, family, arts, sports, social, physical, etc.).
- Consider private/public partnerships in developing and managing facilities.
- Provide better access to and communication of municipal decision making; streamline the process.
- Consider smaller neighbourhood parks and community gardens when thinking about common gathering places.

Individual stories envisioning what improvements in CREATING GATHERING SPACES FOR ALL look and feel like

"...on a magical island not far off the coast of Vancouver, a vibrant, diverse community of people shared their lives together....One major problem was that there was no place for people to connect, even if only to discuss their differences. A community centre where the smell of coffee brewing and the sound of kids laughing, splashing, balls bouncing, seniors chatting, exercise instructors counting, movies, music, fundraising events, people talking, people growing...When people connect, problems get solved, initiatives take momentum, and things come to fruition." —

"A community gathering space—one that went beyond registered paid recreation and culture programs—would give me and my family a place to go and just be around other people. A space where on a rainy or cold day we could go and my kids could run around with other kids and I could talk to other adults. A place that feels like home and everyone is welcome. It has a community kitchen and a café and lots of comfy chairs and open space. It is accessible and there are lots of affordable and free programs for families, youth, seniors and adults. It's a place that the entire community cares about and works together to maintain and develop. It's more than a community centre or community hall. People can go there whenever they just need to be around other people...It does not close at 5 pm. There are movie nights, and spaces for board games and pajama parties. There are huge community dinners. Most importantly, I am always welcome." —

"...they found things to do, places to be, not just one place to go all the time, or to leave the community, but a collection of places to go; all with their own possibilities." ~

PRIORITY: TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE STEWARDSHIP OF OUR ENVIRONMENT

A significant part of Bowen's appeal to residents and visitors alike is the breathtaking, pristine beauty that surrounds us. We live in a soothing and peaceful paradise. It brings smiles to our faces and provides our kids with wonderful places to play and explore. It inspires our local artists and is a significant asset for our local economy. While we are all appreciative of Bowen's natural environment, participants believe that we can do more in our role as stewards of our environment.

Table group participants noted the need to keep our environment consciously and deliberately in the forefront of all our decision-making. This is not solely limited to the decisions our municipality makes. It is also applicable to our community as a whole, and to each and every one of us as individuals. As Bowen continues to grow, we need to be diligently aware of our increasing impact on our natural resources. If we denigrate these, we lose so much.

To improve our interaction with the environment, the group offered these priorities for action:

Review, revise, and enforce the Official Community Plan to ensure environmental protection is a priority.



- Offer education and opportunities to engage in systems thinking (water usage, carbon footprint, etc.) in all our decisions.
- Create an on-island composting facility that transforms organic waste into revenue producing products, organic fertilizer, worms, etc.
- Make Bowen a 'Green Island', e.g., no plastic bags, single use straws, etc.
- Explore the criteria to become a 'best practices' community in terms of environmental stewardship.



Individual stories envisioning what improvements in TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE STEWARDSHIP OF OUR ENVIRONMENT look and feel like

"...there was an island that went 'green'. Mother nature became more and more important, treasured. In fact it grew from no plastic bags to ways to help folks have access to the community garden... Some people had bees, some had horses. The green trails led to the village of tiny houses, all built and designed to exceed environmental standards." —

"... an island called Bowen. It was magical and green. The air was clean and fresh. The water was clean and full of fish. The whales and porpoises had returned. Everyone on the island cared about the environment. Everyone recycled and composted. We used the compost in our community gardens—they were watered by the catchments the members of the community had built in the gardens and also had at their homes. The food was shared... Our goal was to become the 'greenest' island in Canada. We started by eliminating plastic bags from use at stores. We stopped the use of other unnecessary plastics—straws, water bottles, plastic cutlery—and instead encourage use of thermoses for coffee, water, etc." —

"...there was a community that cared about nature. Their children grew up among the trees and they had a robust recycling system... The community started engaging local businesses, asking them to sell products with less waste and lower carbon footprints...this community became a model easily and joyfully replicated elsewhere... the whole world was healthier for this." —

THE EMOTIONS AND ASPIRATIONS THAT DRIVE US



The three primary goals of Vital Conservations—providing ideas and insights to create a clearer picture of our local needs; identifying priorities for individual and organizational action; and guiding the Bowen Island Community Foundation's work for granting funding—were well served by the process. All participants can feel pride in their efforts.

In addition—through the individual stories—not only were we able to better understand what participants imagined success to look and feel like, we could also go deeper and explore emotions. It is these emotions that drive the motivation for taking action. Think of this as turning the lens of a microscope to a higher magnification; an entirely new and fascinating world is in view.

Following are some of the more emotionally powerful and aspirational themes that emerged from the stories.

Intergenerational Connections

Participants at two separate table groups discussed issues and priorities about Bowen's young people and seniors. One group explored youth-related issues generally; the other discussed seniors within the context of housing. What is interesting is that in a number of stories young and old are portrayed working with each other, helping each other—and together—working for the community's common good.

These stories were not confined to the specific table groups mentioned above. This cooperation is also evident in stories about other priorities and solutions. It is a cooperation that both the Community Foundation and our island can harness for the betterment of us all. Bowen's past and future are inextricably connected in this intergenerational alliance of our elders and our youth.

"They valued both very young voices as well as seniors."

"...to visit her grandmother at the seniors caring community. There she sat in awe of the stories the elders would impart...while sitting amongst the wisdom of the ages, she felt the warmth of community."

"The small children were cared for by retired seniors...as the children got older they helped volunteer in the community garden."

Belonging: We Are Better for Being Here

What is belonging and why is it important? First and foremost, it is about 'acceptance'. Being welcomed and accepted into the family, the clan, the community. When we feel accepted, we feel safe; we are recognized and welcomed. We are known and we know those around us. We are no longer strangers travelling alone and facing the trials and dangers of the world unaided. Instead, we are surrounded by support and caring. We feel connected to something larger than ourselves; we 'fit in'. Belonging is the essence of a positive and healthy community.

Belonging is reciprocal. Just as there are great benefits to belonging, there is also responsibility. We must give back. Do our part. Be involved. Only then can we feel that we truly belong.

"... The community would celebrate and grieve together; this is the heart of the community."

"A truly connected community would facilitate a sense of belonging."

"'Getting on the bus' came to be seen as symbolic of joining and staying connected to the community."

"...she still felt the pull of her community at the edge of her soul and she wanted to give back."

Bigger Than Bowen

Participants were asked to envision a story about their personal vision of success, specifically as it pertained to a priority and solution about which they felt strongly. Some participants went further. They imagined success as having a far greater impact than just on our small island. In these stories, the vision, hard work, and commitment of islanders brought significant benefit not only to our community, but to a much wider audience. They envisioned Bowen as a world-class leader in housing, the environment, diversity, and transportation. In these stories, Bowen Island's success was a shining example of what a small but dedicated community might do to bring positive change into the world.

"A special place, separate from the world, but still connected to the core of what the world is about...it was the right kind of conditions for social experiments...a new high school was created...helping the world become a better place."

"The community benefited so deeply that they documented what they had done, to share with the world. Bowen became a centre of excellence." "The campaign drew attention across the water and further. The island became a shining

example of how a small group can make a significant change...an example that sparked others around the world to make change."

Harmony and Unity

For decades Bowen Islanders have openly—and often enjoyably—aired their differences and opinions. Sides are taken. Arguments raised and countered.

At first glance, this appears potentially divisive and detrimental to our common good. But a closer look indicates that these differences are only superficial stumbling blocks that we seem to overcome when we are faced with true adversity, collectively or individually. Differences of opinion, socio-economic status, age, ability, or gender fade to the background when a neighbour is injured or ill, or a home is lost in a fire. At the collective, community level—the recent 'logging scare' is a prime example—we united in a common cause. Where there were differences, there is now harmony.

We are not perfect. But our desire to overlook differences, and ultimately embrace them is a goal worth working towards.

"In a magical place far away...there existed thousands of people, all trying their best to live together in harmony."

"The island no longer feels like there are 'have's and 'have nots.' It feels welcome to a diverse range of ages, incomes, and living conditions."

"Suddenly the community realized how to guide both conservation and development.

How to make room for people of other cultures and abilities."



ACHIEVING OUR BOWEN VISION: THE COMMUNITY WE WANT TO BE



No community is perfect and Bowen Island is no exception. Is perfection even possible? The answer really doesn't matter. What is important is that as a community we can candidly discuss what we need to do better, imagine how that might be, and—most importantly—take the necessary action to make that happen.

Vital Conversations 2017 is Bowen's endeavour to do this. By tapping into our shared emotions and aspirations and by focusing on the priorities for our community, we can be better. We will be better. Our efforts are powered by the people of Bowen.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



In 2014, the Bowen Island Community Foundation sponsored its first Vital Conversations. Since then, numerous organizations and individuals have stepped forward to address the improvement opportunities that were identified. Today, Bowen is a better place for the leadership and efforts of these champions.

In September 2017, the Foundation wished to again assess the current state of our local needs, identify priorities for individual and organizational action, and guide the Foundation's community grant giving efforts. Sixty-one Bowen residents plus twenty island facilitators and scribes participated in this most recent Vital Conversations.

For three and a half hours on September 9, participants were guided through small group discussions addressing four key questions:

- When you picture a strong community, what stands out in your mind? What does it look and feel like?
- What is Bowen doing well?
- Where does Bowen have opportunities for improvement within our community?
- What are possible solutions and actions for these improvement opportunities?

To close the Vital Conversations event, 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 key opportunities identified in the conversations and discussions came to fruition.

The individual story writing was an addition to the process used for the first Vital Conversations. This activity brought a deeper emotional perspective to understanding the needs and the aspirations of our Bowen community. Through these very personal stories, four strong themes emerged. They were a common thread that wove through many participants' vision of a future Bowen:

- Intergenerational Connections: In the stories, young and old are portrayed working with each other, helping each other, and together, working for the community's common good. Bowen's past and future are inextricably connected in this intergenerational collaboration of our elders and our youth. This alliance of young and old is a strength that can benefit our community in any number of ways.
- Belonging: Belonging is the essence of a positive and healthy community. Belonging is about being welcomed and accepted; it is about feeling connected to something larger than ourselves. And it is about giving back, doing our part, being involved. The personal stories are replete with examples of the bond of belonging that makes Bowen the strong community that it is.
- Bigger than Bowen: In some stories, the vision, hard work and commitment of islanders brought significant benefit not only to our community, but also to a much wider audience. Bowen Island's success was a shining example of what a small but dedicated community might do to bring positive change into the world.
- Harmony and Unity: While Bowen Islanders openly air their different opinions, when faced with true adversity, we come together and unite in our common causes.

These four powerful themes radiated throughout the individual stories, envisioning success in eight priority improvement areas for Bowen. The eight areas identified by the Vital Conversations participants were:

Develop Housing for All

Housing is a complex and difficult issue encompassing diversity, affordability, density and seniors housing.

Solutions identified are to establish a Housing Authority; create and maintain an accurate database of the Bowen housing market; appropriately zone surplus land; and focus on senior housing needs.

Bring Healthcare Close to Home

The majority of Bowen residents get their routine or urgent healthcare services on the mainland. Accessing these off-island services can be a financial and emotional burden and when urgent care is needed, can jeopardize our health and well-being.

Participants identified the following actions to address this priority opportunity: build a health-care clinic with a turnkey professional and business opportunity in order to successfully recruit physicians and other healthcare providers; identify funding and bursaries for professional development and training for local residents, primary providers and responders in such areas as emergency medicine, home care aides/workers and mental health; establish a mental health service to support and advocate for patients; and have Bowen

Island designated as a rural community for health services grants.

Support our Youth

Bowen is a great place to raise children. However, it can become a challenging place as children grow older and spend greater amounts of time on the mainland for education, sports and social activities.

The actions identified to better support our youth are to: develop an application/platform that would enable Bowen youth to easily learn what's happening on Bowen for them; recognize and support youth leaders in the community; host an annual meeting or Vital Conversations for youth; and work with the West Vancouver School District to encourage required volunteer time be completed on Bowen.

Celebrate Diversity and Inclusion

Bowen is more homogeneous than it is diverse (diverse meaning respect for and appreciation of differences in race, ethnicity, gender, age, national origin, abilities, sexual orientation, culture, education, and belief). Bowen is home to few visible minorities and indigenous peoples. Services for the marginalized of our community are sparse. Although often uncomfortable, addressing these issues candidly and openly can be transformative.

Solutions identified are to develop a community charter to support and encourage diversity; create a community group with the purpose of encouraging diversity and offering activities such as workshops, film festivals, meetings with safe spaces for thoughtful and open dialogue; create stronger ties with the Squamish nation; and strive for the Bowen Island Community Foundation to be a role model of diversity and inclusion by ensuring board makeup is representative of our community and our territory.

Increase our Volunteer Pool

As Bowen Island continues to grow, the need to increase our pool of volunteers becomes more and more important. Without more volunteers, we run the risk of volunteer burnout, potentially damaging our culture of activism and self-sufficiency.

The top priorities identified were: create a paid position for a Bowen Island Community Volunteer Co-ordinator; increase awareness of where there are opportunities to volunteer; and tell more stories around volunteers on Bowen and what they contribute to our community.

Expand our Transportation Options

Bowen has many challenges regarding on-island transportation. In this age of climate change, we need to continuously attempt to reduce our carbon footprint as we seek transportation and mobility solutions.

Priority actions identified were to: establish affordable, self-funded, community-owned transit, possibly consider charging an Airbnb transportation tax for funding; increase density in the Cove so that more people can easily walk to shopping and restaurants; consider a free Island Hop On/Hop Off bus; provide electric community co-op vehicles; and create and maintain walkable sidewalks/walking/biking trails to and from the Cove.

Create Gathering Places for All

A common gathering place—or places—is essential for a vibrant community. The more time we can spend together on Bowen, the stronger our community will be.

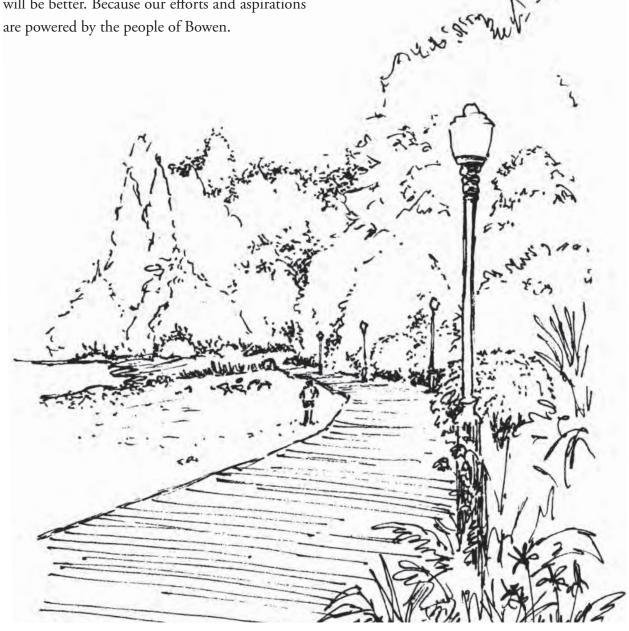
Participants identified the following priorities to address this need: ensure that the current Community Centre plan satisfies many community priorities; consider private/public partnerships in developing and managing facilities; provide better access to and communication of municipal decision making; consider smaller neighbourhood parks and community gardens when thinking about common gathering places.

Take Responsibility for the Stewardship of our Environment

A significant part of Bowen's appeal to residents and visitors alike is the breathtaking and pristine beauty that surrounds us. We need to keep our environment consciously and deliberately in the forefront of all our decision-making.

To accomplish this goal, participants suggested to: review, revise and enforce the Official Community Plan to ensure environmental protection is a priority; offer education and opportunities to engage in systems thinking in all our decisions; create an on-island composting facility; make Bowen a "Green Island"; and explore the criteria to become a 'best practices' community in terms of environmental stewardship.

Through Vital Conversations 2017, the diverse voices of Bowen Island identified and discussed what we're already doing well and what the priorities for being even better should be. Progress and success will depend on our community's organizations and individuals stepping up and championing these ideas. By tapping into our shared emotions and aspirations and by focusing on the priorities for our community, we can be better. We will be better. Because our efforts and aspirations are powered by the people of Bowen



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



Our community is indeed powered by the people of Bowen Island, and our second undertaking of Vital Conversations is a vivid illustration of just that. Our heartfelt thanks to those below who made it possible and most importantly to the sixty-one residents of Bowen Island who shared their thoughts and hopes. Thank you 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.

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