



NORTH KOOTENAY LAKE
COMMUNITY SERVICES
SOCIETY

Strategic Plan 2019 – 2024

INTRODUCTION

North Kootenay Lake Community Services Society (NKLCSS) is a well-established multi-service organization and registered Canadian charity that has been providing high quality programs and services in the West Kootenay region of British Columbia for over 40 years. The agency serves the North and East Kootenay Lake communities of Ainsworth, Mirror Lake, Kaslo, Lardeau, Cooper Creek, Meadow Creek, Howser, Argenta, Johnson's Landing, Crawford Bay, Riondel, Boswell and their surrounding areas. The main office is located in the village of Kaslo.

NKLCSS is governed by a volunteer board of directors, with funding for the work provided through a variety of government contracts, community partnerships, funding agencies and donations. NKLCSS is managed by an executive director and supported by 32 staff members (all of whom are part-time). The agency currently operates two family centres, youth programs, seniors supports, early childhood services, a food security hub, and provides counselling for individuals and families.

In 2014 a three year Strategic Plan was developed for the society. The organization made a good start on implementing the plan, however NKLCSS then went through a challenging period in which high turnover in the executive director position required additional attention and resources. The timeframe for the plan ended without the plan being completed or renewed. In 2019, with a new executive director and the support of a strong and engaged board of directors, steps were taken to review the organization's status and to develop a new Strategic Plan. An external facilitator was hired to guide the process, and this document is the result of that review and update.

“NKLCSS has a very positive reputation in the community, and beyond, for delivering solid, well-considered programs, and for being a supportive employer.”

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The work of any non-profit society is guided by a set of principles, usually including such elements as a vision, a mission statement, values and a service philosophy that help set priorities and the future direction of the organization. NKLCSS has a mission and vision, and a set of organizational values.

Mission:

- The Society's mission is to develop and provide services and programs which contribute to a thriving community and enhance the quality of life for North Kootenay Lake residents.

Vision:

- We are promoting health and well-being for all, through our programs and services designed to enhance the ability of individuals and groups to participate fully in the community. Our services adapt to the changing demographics, economy and ecology of our area.
- We are collaborating with other organizations and influencing community and social policy to ensure that the most vulnerable people of all ages are supported appropriately.
- We are contributing to learning, evaluation, innovation and development of current best practices in our fields and we inspire and support our board and staff to do the best possible job.
- Contracts, grants and donations provide adequate, sustainable funding to cover actual service and administrative costs.
- A rapidly growing investment fund provides a cushion for innovative activities and suitable facilities.
- Community members have a clear sense of what we contribute and many actively support our work as volunteers.

Values:

We believe:

- That individuals, family and community are at the centre of our work.
- That everyone deserves to be treated with respect. We respect the differences and rights of others. Relationships are based on an understanding of the equal worth of human beings and on respect for individual differences. Staff, board members and volunteers avoid bias, show respect for diversity, and demonstrate a welcoming attitude to people from all cultures and backgrounds.
- That building capacity in our clients and community will support well-being and self-sufficiency.
- In building inclusive communities that are accepting of all their members and give each member a voice.
- In an organizational culture that continually values and recognizes the contributions of staff and volunteers; fosters strong team approaches; and is open, honest and inviting in its communication practices.
- That respecting the natural environment contributes to a resilient, sustainable community.

In doing our work, we will:

- Ensure confidentiality.
- Work collaboratively with other groups and organizations.
- Support the health and well-being of our staff and volunteers.
- Be flexible in adapting to challenges and opportunities as they arise.
- Use our funds wisely and be accountable to our donors and funders.
- Support a strong identity for our agency, and work as a team in achieving our mission.

BACKGROUND

As part of the review and update process, various techniques were used to collect information and develop ideas for this plan.

- Relevant documents, previous plans, the society website, and customer satisfaction surveys were examined.
- The executive director was interviewed.
- Members of the board (six) were interviewed individually via telephone.
- Key staff members (five) were also interviewed individually via telephone.
- Staff, board members, and additional society members participated in an online survey which collected information about their perceptions of the organization and suggestions for future activities.
- On April 30, 2019 a facilitated planning session was held at “The Sentinel” with 21 participants. We opened the day with a territorial recognition and indigenous prayer, singing and drumming. Board members and staff attended the morning session, and board members and the executive director attended the afternoon component.

During the information gathering process, some consistent themes emerged. When asked **“What aspects of NKLCS are you especially proud of?”** staff and board members mentioned all the programs and services, the excellent quality of staff, a highly supportive work environment, the strong and engaged board, a good reputation in the community, flexibility and an ongoing commitment to “carrying on”, despite challenges. These comments were echoed in the results of client surveys where it was clear that services were valued and appreciated. Over the years, the organization has been very good at identifying and accessing multiple funding sources and changing service offerings in response to community needs and evolving funding opportunities.

“When we see a service gap in the community, we try to fill it.”

There was a sense that the organization has done well to deliver a wide range of programs and services to multiple communities over many decades. However, there was also a clear sense that as with many non-profit organizations, the ongoing challenge to find adequate and sustained funding to meet the demands for service is a constant struggle, and that this struggle is taking its toll. When asked **“What do you think are the biggest challenges facing NKLCS?”** the issue of funding was consistently mentioned by board, staff and society members. Respondents also mentioned:

- Not enough space to accommodate all the programs and services, and the challenges of sharing space with other organizations

- Geography – small community, spread out over large service area, NKLCSS only agency offering core social services
- Organizational structure is cumbersome, resulting in inefficiencies
- Community perception, lack of a clear “brand”, possible idea that services are for women only, website needs updating
- Risky environment, with no slack in the system, no back up for key staff
- Trying to be “everything for everybody”
- Inadequate funding levels resulting in low wages, all staff being part-time, ongoing staff turnover in some positions
- Services have traditionally been offered for free, so there has not been a consistent revenue stream to support programs and services
- Reporting requirements adversely affect planning and delivery of services

“The limits and parameters set by the funders of what can and cannot be offered by the programs. Also the limited number of hours people have to serve the high demand (also dictated by the amount of funding).”

In preparation for identifying changes to the plan, participants at the planning session on April 30 were asked to answer two questions to provide context. The questions and answers follow.

What has changed since the last plan?

Locally: lack of local doctor, increase in homelessness, routine change of RCMP personnel, changing school principals, type of employment (less blue-collar), new community paramedics, changing economic base, changes in Mental Health contract, possible school closures.

Provincially: new NDP government, change to service delivery for Persons With Disabilities (PWD), loss of Greyhound bus service, health care service teams creating more options.

Nationally: new Liberal government, ageing population, promotion of Truth and Reconciliation, cannabis legalization, medical assistance in dying, opioid crisis, increasing cost of living.

Globally: more men seeking services, Me Too movement, increased awareness around LGBTQ2S issues, increased use of social media, rising anxiety, climate issues, political shifts, increased online shopping, more need for connection for seniors and marginalized people, increasing disparity between rich and poor.

What upcoming issues or trends might affect our work?

- Rising cost of living
- More loss of employment
- Change of culture in the community
- Possible school closures
- More Indigenous presence – both awareness and need
- More clients for mental health
- More openness by the community to access services
- Increasing reports of child protection cases
- Focus on “self-management’ in the health sector
- Desire for extremes (politically)
- Social media issues (even for students in K and G1),
- Increase in anxiety for all ages
- Specialization at school for kids with disabilities
- Increasing need for assisted living for seniors
- Need for men’s counselling services
- Ongoing need for better transportation options

“We need to be more accommodating of men – this generation is not afraid to ask for help and we need to step up.”

CREATING THE PLAN

Looking at the existing need for social services in the region and the anticipated need for expanded services in the future, it is clear that there are many directions that NKLCSS could go, and no shortage of demand or opportunities. However, it is also clear that the organization has been in a state of transition for some time, and that work must be done to develop better organizational stability before considering any growth or expansion. Both staff and board members have expressed an awareness of the need to “take a break” and to focus on internal housekeeping and system-building as a priority.

For the purpose of this plan, six **FOCUS AREAS** have been identified to organize the work.

1. Program and Service Delivery
2. Human Resources
3. Organizational Development (Infrastructure)
4. Community Relations
5. Fund Development
6. Organizational Governance, Capacity and Sustainability

In many cases the six focus areas contain goals which are already being addressed, and the main activity will be to continue with ongoing successful or in-progress work. At the same time, each focus area contains some new activities that will move the organization forward in terms of improved operations. The focus areas are not listed in any order of priority, as each area has elements that need to be addressed in the immediate future, and all have elements that will be ongoing simultaneously. Within the focus areas, some of the goals and activities should be addressed within the first year of the plan, while others towards the end of the lists will be more long-term.

“We don’t need any more, just strengthening what we do.”

1. Program and Service Delivery

Offer a spectrum of relevant and effective services and programs to meet the evolving needs of the community.

- a.** Continue to offer core services and programs, based on current issues, community needs, and client feedback.
- b.** Maintain program flexibility, within organizational capacity, in order to respond to changing community needs.
- c.** Within each service area, (i.e. counselling, food security, early years, seniors, youth) develop specific goals and action steps related to that area.
- d.** Consider new areas of service only where sustainable funding and other resources are available and in place, and where an administration fee is included.
- e.** Prioritise a set of “ready to deliver” programs where service gaps exist and seek sustainable funding, working in partnership where appropriate.
- f.** Explore alternate methods for service delivery, such as greater use of technology, creating groups for clients with similar or common issues
- g.** Create strategic partnerships to develop, support, or enhance programs and services (e.g. transportation) where the issue is broader than the NKLCSS mandate.

2. Human Resources

Build and sustain a qualified team of people to achieve the mission and vision of the organization.

- a.** Continue to build and maintain an engaged board of directors that provides effective leadership and direction to the organization, through targeted recruitment, a formal board orientation process, and ongoing board development activities.
- b.** Continue to recruit, maintain and develop a highly qualified team of professional staff members, through ongoing professional development, promotion of wellness activities, and by providing a culture of support and innovation.
- c.** Review and update job descriptions, performance expectations and reporting structures. Encourage healthy boundaries around hours worked vs hours paid.
- d.** Conduct a wage and compensation review and analysis, comparing NKLCSS rates and benefits to other non-profits, other employers and actual contract requirements. Ensure wages and benefits are aligned with industry standards.
- e.** Develop a Succession Plan recognizing the need for shared knowledge, system back-ups and specialized expertise.
- f.** Conduct regular performance reviews, supporting staff in reaching their professional development and career goals.
- g.** Continue to provide regular professional development opportunities to improve skills, meet needs and provide inspiration.
- h.** Consider increasing the use of volunteers (with appropriate expertise) to participate on committees and assist with specific assignments such as fundraising.

3. Organizational Development (Infrastructure)

Develop and maintain the necessary organizational and physical structures to ensure ongoing success.

- a.** Continue developing a Facilities Plan to address the need for additional physical space for programs, offices, meetings and activities.
- b.** Continue to strengthen the role of board committees through clear mandates, functions and deliverables.
- c.** Create and phase in an organizational structure that allows for more effective administration, collaboration and supervision, while reducing the number of direct reports to the executive director.
- d.** Conduct a risk management assessment, review current practices and analyze insurance coverage.
- e.** Review policies and procedures, update current ones and develop new ones as needed.

4. Community Relations

Clarify and increase the profile of the organization and the issues it addresses.

- a.** Continue to communicate regularly with the community, NKLCSS members, volunteers, board, staff, clients, funders and key stakeholders.
- b.** Develop a Communications Plan to build greater community awareness through such mechanisms as a stronger social media presence (i.e. Facebook), an e-bulletin, and additional outreach.
- c.** Update the website (including more images of men, indigenous, LGBTQ2S, and diverse community members) to reflect the current realities of the organization and community.
- d.** Clarify and expand the membership program, increasing connections with community members.
- e.** Continue to create and/or participate in strategic partnerships locally and regionally, including the private sector, government, and other non-profits.
- f.** Maintain active membership in relevant partner organizations, such as the Kootenay Boundary Community Services Co-op
- g.** Explore options for updating the logo and changing the name of the organization to more accurately reflect the current character of NKLCSS

5. Fund Development

Diversify funding sources in order to secure, maintain and distribute the funds necessary to achieve the mission and vision of NKLCSS.

- a.** Continue to access a variety of contracts for service.
- b.** Continue to seek grant funds from multiple sources, including a wider range of options (i.e. Grant Advance), especially at the federal level.
- c.** Consider developing a Fundraising Plan
- d.** Explore options for implementing fees for service.
- e.** Consider formalizing and expanding the current donor program, to build a committed donor base.
- f.** Consider enhancing the annual “signature” fundraising event.
- g.** Communicate more strategically with funders regarding effectiveness of funding priorities and distribution methods

6. Organizational Governance, Capacity and Sustainability

Continually review, assess and improve organizational practices.

- a.** Continue to gather feedback from clients, members and staff through a variety of methods, and reach out to the broader community for additional input.
- b.** Continue the process to achieve certification through BC Association of Family Resource Programs.
- c.** Review and update the vision and mission of the organization. Ensure compatibility with objects (as submitted to CRA) and purposes (as submitted to BC Registries).
- d.** Embed the recommendations from the Truth and Reconciliation Report into organizational practice and programming. Include actions such as regularly acknowledging territory, and adding a value statement to the current list of organizational values.
- e.** Continue to identify and track gaps in service delivery and programs.
- f.** Engage in issue identification and problem solving at the systemic level – influencing community and social policy to address causes as well as symptoms.
- g.** Prior to the end of 2024, revisit the Strategic Plan, evaluate progress and begin work on the new plan.

CONCLUSION

North Kootenay Lake Community Services Society has a strong history of delivering high quality programs and services to their community, as well as an ability to adapt to the changing needs of the community over several decades of service. As demands for service increase (as current trends suggest they will), the organization will need to find a balance between continuing to offer quality programming and maintaining organizational stability.

For the term of this plan (2019 – 2024) the focus should be on strengthening organizational structures, maintaining best practices, and diversifying funding sources to allow for growth that is both viable and sustainable.

“Prioritizing needs as our community and its culture changes is a big challenge. I appreciate the huge role that NKLCSS plays in Kaslo and its surrounding area.”

Quotes are taken from the survey results and interview notes.

Strategic planning process conducted by Val Mayes, of Building Connections Training and Consulting.

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