



Media Release

Reviewing Efficiency Opportunities in Golden & Area A's Non Profit Sector

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(Golden, BC) Golden is in the middle of answering some very important questions about its non profit sector.

How many non profit organizations serve Golden & Area A? What's their impact – both financially and socially – on the community? How well are they equipped to fulfill their mission? How can we help them do it better?

Where does one look to find these answers?

These are just a few of the questions that this community project is trying to answer. One may be surprised to learn that no one knows the answer to these questions, in fact there is no single place to look. Golden Community Resources Society (GCRS), one of the community's largest non profit organizations, decided they would dedicate some time to finally answer these questions.

But to begin, it took some creative thinking and collaboration to start this project. And as those who work or volunteer in the sector know, that is what non profits do best.

“At last year's Learning Initiatives for Rural and Northern BC (LIRN) event in Golden, which Joanne McCullough coordinated, the challenges of our local non profit sector were identified and soon after I helped GCRS devise a project proposal and applied for CBT support,” outlined Denise English, Golden & District Community Foundation Vice Chair and a member of the project steering committee.

After being hired in August, Ryan Watmough has been collecting and reviewing the sparse research available, identifying additional potential partners and interviewing non profit experts and practitioners across Canada. He believes that it will take some innovation to complete this original project.

“I have been working in the local non profit sector for three years and I am quite regularly surprised to hear about a new-to-me organization that had been operating for years or discover that a new organization had just been formed,” stated Ryan Watmough. “It wasn't until we heard back from the national and provincial registrations that we realized how many there were operating or serving Golden & Area A.”

Officially, there are 25 registered charities and 79 non profit societies with Golden or Area A listed as their mailing address. Some organizations are registered with both. Other organizations are registered

elsewhere but have a local presence. And more still are not registered but have an impact in the community. There are another 50 plus established groups that have some operations here.

With this background, the project will begin reaching out to all local non profit organizations to determine what their strengths and challenges are, and if they all, collectively at the community level, can maximize their impact by working together.

The non profit sector plays many roles in our community – although it's yet to be determined how significant this impact is. The many organizations take many volunteers to operate and often compete over the same funds, either through grants or donations. It's hoped that this project can take a good first attempt at measuring its financial impact on the community.

“Right now we don't know if the sector has a \$2M impact or a \$10M impact,” stressed Mr. Watmough. “We don't know how much of their budgets are raised locally or come in the form of an inflow from outside sources; nor do we know what cost sharing can be realized, which could help stretch the sectors limited dollars further.”

While businesses and government have the resources to do long term planning, it's often not on the radar of non profit organizations. Volunteer burnout, high staff turnover and lack of regular funding often keep non profits struggling to tread water. Golden Community Resources Society identified that many groups were facing similar challenges and commissioned an exploration of the topic.

“We could ask a hundred groups what we need to do and get a hundred different answers,” explained Mr. Watmough. “Although no other community has done the same project, I have been looking to community non profit best practices around the world to learn where success lies and what's required to achieve it. Often much of the consolidated research is at the national or provincial level – very little is available at the community level and much less still has been applied to very small and rural community like ours.”

“When looking around the world, across the country or in our community, one can find some great examples of where non profits saw a need or faced a challenge and collaborated on a particular project. It has been very challenging to create a methodology that will enable and encourage this at the community level.”

While community-developed solutions often have the highest probability of success, those solutions are often adapted from other regions. “The non profit sector, particularly in small, rural Golden, doesn't have the luxury of re-inventing any wheels.”

But this local initiative hasn't been limited to the local area.

“Through this project GCRS has had the opportunity to sit on the BC Non Profit Sector Employers Council, which examines the 'human resources' component of BC's Government Non Profit Initiative and Labour Market Partnership. Those sitting at this table are able to hear about non profit research and pilot projects happening across the province and subsequent funding opportunities first. While we have

already gained a great deal from this process, over the next few months there will be non profit project funding and learning opportunities that we may access, too.”

Both Mrs. Barlow and Mr. Watmough realize that there are many locals interested in this project and eager to learn of what has been discovered. Soon, the results of this preliminary research will be available to the community, including recommendations for Phase2, when the many non profit groups will be consulted.

“Everyone volunteering or working in the non profit sector is very busy, and when we ask them to be engaged we have to respect their time by only asking for information that can be used within the scope of this project,” cautioned Mr. Watmough. “With a much more thorough understanding of the local non profit landscape, doing much of the work on the front end, they can be assured that when we are asking them for their input it, we really need it and are equipped to act on it.”

After compiling this research the group can determine the appetite, need and readiness for increasing efficiencies in local non profits and tailor a plan for implementation for those willing to participate.

“The topic of exploring efficiencies in local non profits is so huge in scope, so we are trying to use a new and well-planned methodology that can benefit the entire community, attracting both local and distant resources. There is no doubt that we have the potential to be a leader in the non profit sector.”

If you would like to learn more about the project and how your non profit organization can be included in the research, contact Ryan Watmough at nonprofits.gcrs@gmail.com.

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About Golden Community Resources Society

Golden Community Resources Society administers non statutory social services in the Golden area including employment programs, early learning programs, and seniors housing.

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