

VITAL FOCUS

■ **GROWTH,**

■ ■ ■ **CHANGE** AND

■ **BELONGING**

WHISTLER'S

VitalSigns



Community
Foundation
of Whistler

VITAL

WHISTLER'S

VitalSigns

ABOUT VITAL SIGNS

The Community Foundation of Whistler seeks to serve as a catalyst for community development, and, through Vital Signs, to serve as an independent resource for knowledge about the community. Knowledge is the first step towards engaging people in action. Vital Signs aims to gather and share knowledge, to enhance community members' understanding of community strengths and issues, and to empower community members to participate and come together for effective action. Knowledge forms the basis for constructive and respectful dialogue that enhances people's understanding of their community.



Our thanks to the Vital Signs Committee: Carole Stretch, Carol Coffey, Sue Lawther, Anne Townley, Sue Maxwell, Jenny Fitzgerald, and the Board of the Community Foundation of Whistler.

We also thank the following organizations for their help and support: Centre for Sustainability, Resort Municipality of Whistler, Tourism Whistler, Whistler Museum, Whistler Settlement Services.

CONTACT US!

We know the issues and organizations in our community. If you are looking for ways to make a difference, we can help info@whistlerfoundation.com



Community Foundation of Whistler

FOCUS

ON GROWTH, CHANGE AND BELONGING

The Community Foundation of Whistler launched the first Whistler VitalSigns report in October 2016. Community conversations were held with local non-profits and community members in November and December 2016 to gain feedback on the report, and to identify the main trends and issues that emerged. The outcome of these conversations was that people wanted to have conversations about growth. Our community is growing and changing tremendously.

The theme for Community Foundations of Canada's national Vital Signs 2015-17 is belonging. This country-wide Vital Signs initiative explores how much we believe that we fit in, and how much a place or group welcomes us. Belonging is a two-way street. In 2016, Canada's Vital Signs looked at belonging through participation: volunteering, neighbourhood events, faith, sports, online and social media, the arts and getting outdoors. In 2017, it will look at the barriers to participation. We believe these two concepts of Growth and Belonging to be closely connected and this Vital Focus looks at these themes in the Whistler context.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

To inform this Vital Focus, three community engagement activities were undertaken focusing on how participants saw growth in Whistler impacting them and their family (in their personal and work lives), as well as the community as a whole:

- Vital Dialogue with local non-profits. A video summarizing their input can be accessed at www.whistlerfoundation.com
- Vital Conversation with community members to identify and discuss the impact of growth and change in Whistler, and to identify key indicators of that impact. At the same time, participants worked together to express how they saw and experienced growth and change collectively.
- Online Vital Signs Survey to community members.

The input from these community engagement initiatives was then used in key stakeholder meetings and interviews to collect data.



This initiative is made possible by the Community Fund for Canada's 150th, a collaboration between the Community Foundation of Whistler, the Government of Canada, and extraordinary leaders from coast to coast to coast.

GLOBAL CONTEXT

Whistler is going through a period of unprecedented change and growth, and experiencing challenges and identity issues as a result.

Summer 2015 and winter 2016-17 were Whistler's busiest seasons to date. With this success comes strain. Shortage of staff, affordable and appropriate housing, and access to affordable childcare were reported as major challenges for businesses, individuals and families.

How much of this, though, is specific to Whistler, and how much is a common issue across BC, Canada, and even globally?

HOUSING. Whistler received a 'severe' rating on the Rental Housing Index, based on 2011 data, but Greater Vancouver was rated 'critical' and Squamish received a 'poor' rating. Since 2011, affordable housing has become less available in all these communities.

CHILDCARE. Surprisingly, BC has regulated spaces available for only 20% of children. *'Wait lists are common for regulated child care, which is more expensive than it was two years ago, with fees rising an average of over 8% since 2014—three times faster than inflation.'* - Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives 2016

A LIVING WAGE is a conversation that is being had across BC. In a recent interview on CBC (June 2017), Jackie Dickinson of Whistler Community Services Society commented

"[There] is a concern around the cost and rising cost of housing and the accessibility, and then you bring in the living wage and what impact that has on people's ability to thrive and prosper, and Whistler is in similar situations like other communities."

Whistler residents report a high satisfaction with Whistler as a place to live and, while the cost of living is undeniably high, it is comparable with many other BC communities. The percent of low income families, individuals and children in Whistler sits substantially below the BC average.

This Vital Focus attempts to recognize these wider issues by acknowledging that Whistler does not sit in isolation but is affected by a whole range of wider issues and trends whilst at the same time trying to identify how our community specifically is growing and changing, and the impact that is having on how community members feel about belonging.

FOCUS ON WHISTLER

The key areas for this focus on growth, change and belonging in Whistler that emerged from Vital Signs community engagement this year were:

GROWTH AND CHANGING PATTERNS

Growth has been a constant for Whistler since it began, but lately the pace seems to have accelerated.



CAPACITY AND LIMITS TO GROWTH

Growth and capacity have always been carefully planned in Whistler, but the way this happens is undergoing significant changes that are important to understand.



EXPLORING WHISTLER'S VALUES: NATURE VS URBANIZATION

How can growth and the all-important natural environment - the core values Whistler has been built on - live and work together?



MORE, LESS AND BELONGING

Growth and change are bringing both more and less of many things. How do we feel we belong to our community, and what is it that binds us together?

Our community sees changes in patterns

We want to participate, to matter
The housing, daycare, schools, the hurry
We feel nervous, less relaxed, and worried
Whistler's Growing... Forget Us Not

We came for the nature, for the smiles
Now resources are stretched for miles
We have lost our freedom to plan and dream
The solutions lie in our heart, in our community
Whistler's Growing... Forget Us Not

Vital Signs Conversation, May 2017

GROWTH AND CHANGING PATTERNS

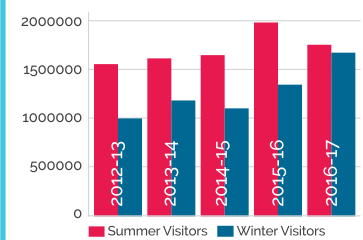
Since Whistler resort was built, it's been growing constantly, but in the last couple of years that **growth seems to have accelerated**. Local residents have suddenly felt the impact of more people, more traffic, less space, and less parking. But growth is the norm in Canada, and growth brings change. How are the growth and changing patterns of life in Whistler uniquely affecting the community?

MORE VISITORS

Visitor numbers have been growing steadily over the last few years. 2016-17 (April-May) brought a total of 3,401,557 visitors, and an average of 20,604/day. From 2012-13 to 2016-17, the number of annual visitors increased 33.5%, and the average number of visitors/day by 43%.

Summer has become Whistler's busiest season. 60% of our annual visitors come in the summer but they are less likely to stay overnight than winter visitors.

VISITOR NUMBERS 2012-2017

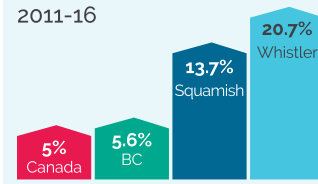


- Winter 2016-17 saw a **6% increase** in room nights over 2015-16.
- 2016 fall shoulder season saw a **22% increase** in room nights.

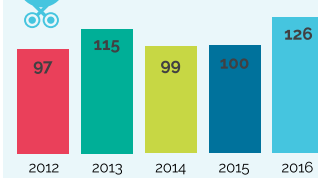
GROWING POPULATION, SMALL CHANGES

Whistler is experiencing one of the highest rates of population growth in BC. The age breakdown of Whistler's population also differs from elsewhere. For example, Whistler has 13.5% more working age (15-64 years) people than the BC average. Conversely, Whistler has 13.3% less seniors in its population. While the overall breakdown of the Whistler population by age has not changed between 2011 and 2016, the absolute numbers are rising at a rate above the BC average. This means 340 more seniors and 705 more children aged 0-14 years in our community than we had four years ago.

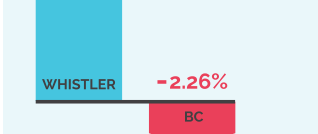
POPULATION INCREASE 2011-16



NUMBER OF BIRTHS



CHANGE IN K-12 PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS 2012-2017

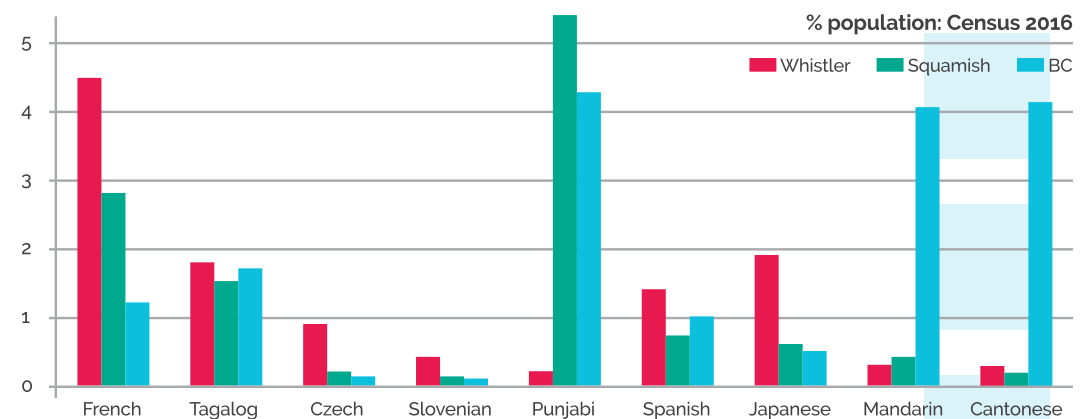


GROWTH IN DIVERSITY

From 2008 to 2015, the number of new immigrants landing to Whistler continued to increase by an average of 14% per year. As of 2016, 41 mother tongues

were spoken in Whistler. Whistler Settlement Services reports 31 languages spoken by those accessing their services between 2014 and 2017. Japanese, Filipino, and Spanish are the most spoken. In our schools, 13 languages are now reported as the language spoken at home (up 117% from 6 in 2013), with an equivalent decrease of 8% in English.

MOTHER TONGUES SPOKEN IN WHISTLER, SQUAMISH, & BC



#1 Courtesy of the Philip Collection at the Whistler Museum #2 Courtesy of the LAFORCE Collection at the Whistler Museum #3 Courtesy of the WMSC Collection at the Whistler Museum

CHANGES IN TRAFFIC AND PARKING PATTERNS

One very obvious sign of Whistler growth is the increase in traffic on the highway – especially south of the Village. Match that with parking congestion, and many residents report they have had to change their life patterns.

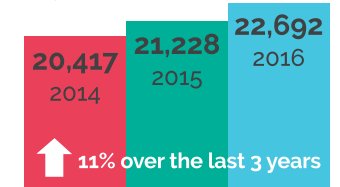


Parking lot congestion

TRAFFIC IS INCREASING

The Transportation Advisory Group's research showed significantly higher traffic levels in Whistler in 2016. Trips coming in and out of Whistler have grown, but about half the traffic during peak times is generated locally.

Estimated Annual Average Daily Traffic on Hwy 99 in Whistler



PARKING AVAILABILITY REDUCED

A 2016 parking study showed that parking availability was less than 10% in most lots in Whistler on weekends, and 0% in many lots on peak days. Motorists needed to arrive before 10 am to park for free in lots 4 and 5 in summer 2016.

People using preferred transportation, especially mass transit, carpooling or cycling 2005 = 57% | 2015 = 60% | 2017 = 62%

“Now we have to think and plan before we go in to the Village.... It can take quite a while to get back from Creekside to Cheakamus if we travel at the wrong time of day” - Amanda Glasser Steel, Cheakamus resident.

CHANGING BUSINESS PATTERNS

Where local residents used to experience two clear low seasons in the spring and fall, the frantic rate of work now seems to continue year round. While this ensures more stable employment, it also means no time for catching up, for enjoying the family.

“working all the time, never steady time off not able to schedule downtime” - Community Vital Survey, June 2017

A major business development strategy for the municipality has been to encourage visitors to events, especially during the traditional off-seasons, in order to boost visitor numbers year round. In 2015-16 50% of winter visitors and 73% of summer visitors attended an event.



Whistlerites seem to prefer giving back to their community by volunteering rather than giving money. Many events in Whistler rely on local and visiting volunteers to be successful, while services to support locals are constantly seeking funding.

VOLUNTEER WORK REMAINS IMPORTANT

As in previous years, 52% of permanent residents did unpaid volunteer work in 2017.

SATISFACTION LEVELS DOWN

In 2016, only 68% of permanent residents and second homeowners were satisfied with the ability to travel to and from Whistler on Highway 99, down from 92% in 2015. The number of permanent residents who were very satisfied with the ability to get around by personal vehicle dropped from 70% to just 23%.

The Community Parking Study (Jan 2017) suggested that much of the additional demand can be attributed to local residents, employees and regional visitors. One strategy to reduce demand (and increase parking availability) is to shift local trips to transit and other modes. In summer 2017, as part of the Transportation Action Plan, pay parking was introduced in all lots during the peak visitor months, and free weekend bus transit was brought in to encourage locals to reduce car usage and take the bus or bike to work.

GIVING AND VOLUNTEERING

CHARITABLE DONATIONS DECREASING

% of tax filers who made charitable donations



LOCAL PROGRAMS AND SERVICES LACK SUSTAINABLE FUNDING

48% of local non-profit organizations report a lack of sustainable funding for operations is becoming more critical at a time when costs and demand on organizations is rising.

HOW IS GROWTH MANAGED IN WHISTLER?

THE MAIN TOOLS:

WHISTLER 2020

Whistler 2020 is a vision for the community that sets out our values and what success looks like for Whistler. It focuses on 5 priority areas:

1. Enriching Community Life
2. Enhancing the Resort Experience
3. Ensuring Economic Viability
4. Protecting the Environment
5. Partnering for Success

This is the highest level vision that guides all planning by local government.

THE OFFICIAL COMMUNITY PLAN

The **Official Community Plan (OCP)** is a provincially mandated document that lays out the policies and objectives to guide planning within the Resort Municipality of Whistler.

The OCP is the primary growth management tool that is created by the community. It is largely a tool for land use, but also includes growth management policies around economic development, social development and housing.

The Official Community Plan is developed through extensive community engagement.

THE STORY OF WHISTLER'S OFFICIAL COMMUNITY PLAN

Whistler was incorporated in 1975 with the *Resort Municipality of Whistler Act*. The Act requires Whistler to have an OCP that is approved by the province. The Act also requires Whistler to promote the development and operation of a resort area.

In 2013, Whistler and the province approved a new Official Community Plan. In 2014, approval of this plan was struck down in court as a result of a challenge by the Squamish and Lil'wat Nations who each have traditional unceded territory within the boundaries of the RMOW. As a result, Whistler is currently operating under the Official Community Plan that was adopted in 1993 and has been amended many times.

CAPACITY AND LIMITS TO GROWTH

Planning for growth in Whistler involves many groups. In recent years, the rights of Squamish and Lil'wat Nations have been increasingly recognized. Together with the substantial amount of growth and change taking place in the community, planning must now take into consideration a wider diversity of needs and values.

BED UNITS: THE DEVELOPMENT CAP IN WHISTLER

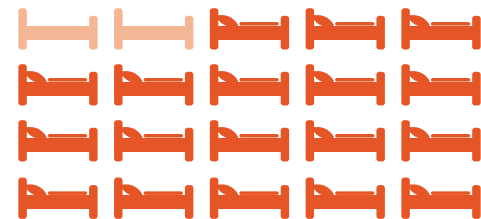
A bed unit is a measure intended to reflect servicing and facility requirements for one person. It was introduced in Whistler's first OCP adopted in 1976 as a way to manage the future growth of Whistler to be consistent with infrastructure and capacity.

Bed units have become a key reference point for the community's understanding of and expectations for Whistler's ultimate size and capacity.

The current maximum bed units comes from the use and density of all the various parcels of land that are zoned for development in the 2013 Official Community Plan.

Future development is prevented unless it demonstrates extraordinary benefit to the community.

Bed Unit Development as of 2016:



Undeveloped Units: 6,861
Developed Units: 54,652
Total: 61,513
Maximum capacity: 61,750 units

RECOGNIZING FIRST NATIONS' INTERESTS

In 2007, the Legacy Land Agreement between the Resort Municipality of Whistler, Squamish Nation and Lil'wat Nation provided for the First Nations supporting the RMOW's request to the province for a boundary expansion in exchange for development rights to 300 acres (over 7 properties) within the boundaries of the RMOW, along with 452 bed units for development.

In February 2017, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed by the Squamish Nation, Lil'wat Nation, Government of BC, Resort Municipality of Whistler and Whistler Blackcomb. Under this MOU, the parties agree to work together towards approval of Whistler's updated Official Community Plan.

LAND USE

The amount of land either developed or zoned for development in 2016 is 1,139 ha. The majority of Whistler's land base, 22,583 ha, is crown-owned land and zoned as RR1 which provides for resource uses and low density developments that are compatible with resource uses and resort activities in the Municipality. Its development would have to represent extraordinary benefits to the community. Most of the currently undeveloped land is rural and forested in nature.

CHEAKAMUS COMMUNITY FOREST

The Cheakamus Community Forest (CCF) manages 33,000 ha surrounding Whistler. The CCF is a partnership between the Squamish Nation, Lil'wat Nation and the RMOW. Approximately 15,000 ha are protected either legally or voluntarily from being commercially harvested. However, the CCF is obligated by the Ministry of Forest, Lands and Natural Resource Operations to harvest 20,000 m³ of timber per year (approx. 40 ha/year). The CCF's silviculture plan uses small openings from 2- 5 ha rather than clear cuts and as much as possible, they focus on second growth areas. Approx. 50% of the CCF is old growth forest.

WHISTLER BLACKCOMB

Whistler Blackcomb operates on the traditional territory of the Squamish and Lil'wat Nations, and is also located on Crown Land in the RMOW. In February 2017, the province renewed Whistler Blackcomb's Master Development Agreement and associated Master Plans. In addition, Whistler Blackcomb and the Squamish and Lil'wat Nations signed 60-year agreements that allow the First Nations to participate in the economic success of Whistler Blackcomb's operations. These agreements were among the first steps towards the Renaissance project announced by Whistler Blackcomb in April 2016.

Vital Signs Dialogue, May 2017



Tiny town is growing.
More residents, more visitors, more development, more cars, more service pressures. More More More.
Cracks are appearing Highway, lifts and beds are at capacity! Again
We have the amenities we need But we are exhausted
Are we losing touch
- with each other?
- with ourselves?
- with nature?
Growth means some people are winning And some people are losing
Is this the Whistler way?
Is this the time to revisit our limit to growth?

HOW CAN COMMUNITY MEMBERS PARTICIPATE IN PLANNING FOR GROWTH?

- Participate in community surveys
- Attend open houses and community engagement sessions
- Talk to your municipal council
- Participate in a Task Force

For those who want to get involved in health care planning in the community, Vancouver Coastal Health has a *Community Engagement Advisory Network*, a group of members of the public who support patient and public involvement in health service planning and decision-making.

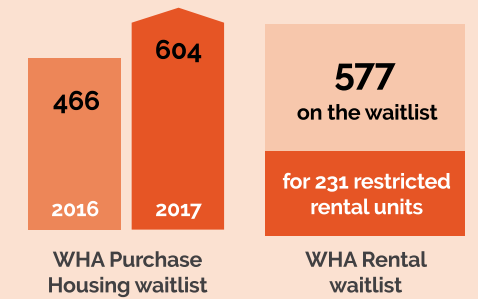
HOW WELL ARE SERVICES SUPPORTING DEMAND IN WHISTLER?

PARKING

Parking spaces available:

6,432 IN WINTER 6,493 IN SUMMER

2017 HOUSING WAITLISTS



WHA Purchase Housing waitlist

WHA Rental waitlist

CAPACITY OF SCHOOLS

3 public schools and 1 independent school in Whistler.

School	2016-17 Enrollment / Capacity
Myrtle Philip Community School	326 / 330
Spring Creek Community School	331 / 430
Whistler Secondary School	382 / 375
New Waldorf School	200 / 345

MEDICAL SERVICES

FAMILY DOCTORS: As of summer 2017, only two doctors in Whistler are accepting new patients.

SERVICES FOR PREGNANCY: In Whistler, a full range of tests and ultrasounds are available and there are monthly obstetrician visits. However, delivery must take place in either Squamish or North Vancouver. Pre-natal classes, travel and accommodation to doctors appointments later in pregnancy are at the mother's expense. Midwives now visit Whistler weekly for those who choose midwife delivery.

SERVICES FOR SENIORS: There are no BC Housing assisted living residences in Whistler and none are planned at this time. Limited availability of geriatric GPs means a lack of continuity for patients.

Whistler was founded on the desire to connect with nature. It's still a part of our identity. But, as a resort visited by millions each year, the rural feel and connection to nature are strained. The question of finding the balance between the two is not new. However, the reasons people choose to live in Whistler are changing and this adds new layers of complexity to our values and identity.

From Rainbow Lodge, which brought people from Vancouver in the early 1900s to enjoy Alta Lake and the summers, to Whistler Mountain and white gold in the 1970s, to the 2010 Olympics, Whistler's attraction has always been the access to the backcountry and outdoor experiences. Businesses have been built on skiing, hiking, biking... but the more infrastructure that is built, the more people come. As a result, today, that infrastructure attracts people looking for a different experience – hotels, spas, entertainment, restaurants – all bringing a more urban feel to Whistler.

NATURE VERSUS URBANIZATION

– FINDING WHISTLER'S VALUES



CHANGING REASONS FOR MAKING WHISTLER HOME

The Olympics brought Whistler closer to the world, but also brought the world to Whistler. In many ways, the 2010 Olympics was a major driver of this change we are now experiencing. The Olympics

- increased diversity in our community by bringing in many new people who came primarily for the jobs and the opportunity to move to Canada
- prompted hotels and other businesses to transfer in existing staff from Mexico, South America, the Philippines, the Middle East and elsewhere.

These people were typically older and had families. Their employers sponsored them on the Provincial Nominee Program and their families followed them.

- brought infrastructure that made Whistler much more accessible, both virtually and actually

At the same time, demographics mean that many baby boomers – the ones who bought the lots, who bought into the dream, in the 1970s – are now retiring and moving to Whistler full-time.

BUSINESSES AND THE BACKCOUNTRY EXPERIENCE

More infrastructure, better highway, better access, more trails opened up, brings the backcountry closer to people. More visitors to parks and backcountry areas creates a feeling of overcrowding. Social media has played a large role in increasing visitation to back country areas and users are concerned about garbage, sanitation, and a diminishment of the experience. There is concern as people push their

limits seeking to get away from crowds. Whistler Search and Rescue (WSAR) crews were called out 46 times in 2016, up from 36 in 2015, with snowmobiling the #1 type of emergency response. WSAR reports a rise in mountain bike incidents as well as an increase in usage in historically untouched areas.

IMPACT ON NATURE

Just the simple number of people now out in nature, and using the facilities, means that the natural environment – the reason that Whistler is here – is being impacted. The community perceives a growing litter problem in and around Whistler and its trails.

RMOW Bylaw Services has experienced a 233% increase in the number of calls it receives related to garbage. Bylaw staff are busier than ever before. However, they believe this is actually because the public is now more engaged on the issue and not a reflection of a worsening problem. One possibility is that community education programs around garbage, recycling and bear attractants are actually working.



Garbage left at a bus stop in Whistler. Taking waste to the depot can be a challenge for car-free residents and litter has increased with growth.

“Negative impacts on the natural world. Trash and garbage everywhere. Too much traffic. Too many people.”

OUR ENVIRONMENT

WATER USAGE

Target for total water consumption in Whistler is 425 litres/per person/day.

Total water usage/ person/day (Billion Litres)	2014	2015	2016
	5.35	5.63	5.64

WASTE AND RECYCLING

Whistler's target for waste generated per person is 400 kgs/person/year.

Total landfilled waste	2015	2016
	14,805	17,063 up 15%

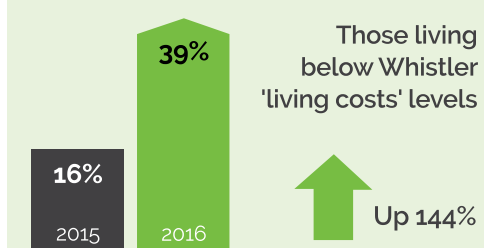
The waste generated per person, at 500 kgs/person/year, also increased compared to 2015.

LITTER

Total calls to bylaw for garbage:
Jan-June 2016 = 14 | Jan-June 2017 = 60

URBANIZATION

Urbanization is often associated with social alienation, affordability issues and a sense of the haves and the have-nots. In 2015, 16% of permanent residents reported incomes below “living costs” levels. In 2016, that number rose to 39%.

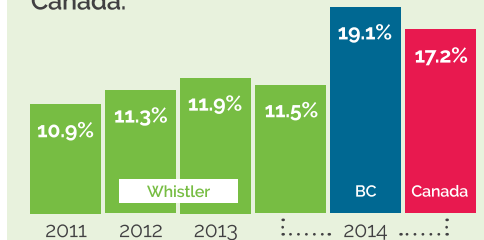


But to put it in a wider context:

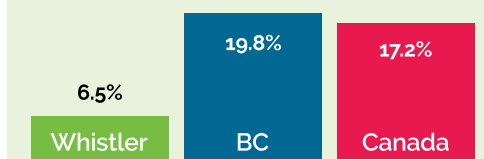
POVERTY LEVEL

The percent of low income families, individuals and children in Whistler is significantly below the national and BC averages based on the indicator of relative poverty, Low Income Measure (LIM).

Percent share of low income families and individuals in Whistler, BC and Canada.



Percent share of low income children in 2014 in Whistler, BC and Canada.



Courtesy of the Philip Collection at the Whistler Museum

THE IMPACT OF GROWTH & CHANGE

MORE...

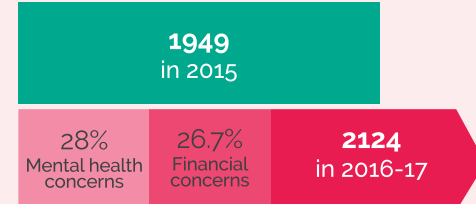
"it's more difficult and expensive"

EMPLOYMENT: Winter 2015-2016 season workforce increased 3.2% from 2014-15. There were 820 full time equivalent positions unfilled, up from 300 in winter 2014/2015.

STRESS: 79% of permanent residents in 2017 rated their physical, mental and social well-being as very good or excellent, down from 84% in 2014.

SOCIAL SERVICES HELP BEING SOUGHT:

Whistler Community Services Outreach Sessions:



Food Bank:



COMPLEXITY: more visitors, more residents, more diversity of cultures, more reasons to come to Whistler, more and different ways and reasons to connect. And more opportunities for conflict.

NONPROFITS TRYING TO DO MORE WITH LESS RESOURCES:

Local nonprofits are having to meet an increasing demand for their services without a corresponding increase in operational funding to support them.

People are the most valuable asset of local nonprofit organizations, yet their greatest challenge is retaining staff and volunteers with issues of housing and the cost of living in Whistler.

LESS...

"Less time to connect with people for work, networking & socially."

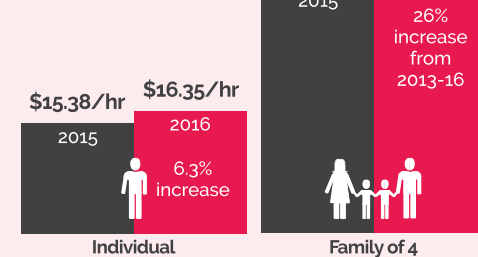
FREEDOM: Many residents report having to take more time to think and plan their journeys to and from work, the Village, and around the community.

LESS TIME FOR FAMILY/TIME TO CONNECT:

"working all the time, never steady time off not able to schedule downtime"

- Vital Signs Survey, June 2017

AFFORDABILITY: living income in Whistler



TRUST IN LOCAL DECISION MAKERS:

In the 2017 Community Life Survey:

- 59% of permanent residents had trust most or all of the time, down from 78% in 2015.
- 74% of permanent residents were satisfied with overall planning of the community, down from 88% in 2015.

ON BELONGING

Our Vital Conversation on May 30, 2017 showed clearly that growth and change is bringing both more and less to the community, and that it is impacting how and why people feel they belong.



BUILDING BLOCKS OF BELONGING IN WHISTLER:

"Citizens who feel like they belong will be more likely to be involved in the governance of the community, donate their time and money to improving the community, and show caring for the other people who live there."

- Kitchener Waterloo Community Foundation.

In 2017, 87% of Whistler's permanent residents reported they have a very or somewhat strong sense of belonging, just a slight decrease from 92% in 2016.

Busyness, crowds on hill
Cause us space challenges
Pressure on relationships, housing, childcare, services
But we don't want to leave
Happy to have young families, seniors, and more diversity.
And help those who struggle, to feel they belong in Whistler.

Busyness, values changing
Make it difficult to connect
Longer waitlines cause congestion
At the store and on the hill
Does this mean we lose our core?
No, we need to embrace our community

Vital Signs Dialogue, May 2017

In 2017, the Community Foundation of Whistler has provided funding for over a dozen programs and events to help develop connections and shared experiences, such as the Mama Baby Connection Prenatal program at the Whistler Women's Centre, Parenting Across Cultures, and the Neighbourhoods Work Block Parties.

MEANINGFUL AND STABLE WORK



Barbora Vaneckova has now been here 6 years and plans on staying. But she wasn't always sure that Whistler was a place where she could put down roots. After working in cleaning, maintenance and hosting, Barbora felt she was wasting her education.

Promotion at work brought more fulfillment, but while she was earning lots of money, and overtime, she had to work very long hours. Barbora felt appreciated, but also used up - with no life balance. Luck and connections resulted in a change of work to more fulfilling work in social services. Now Barbora and her husband both have stable jobs, have started a family, and are home owners.

"It's been a tough, long journey... but ... this is our home now"

Barbora Vaneckova works at the Whistler Welcome Centre as a Multicultural Outreach Worker.



BELONGING MAKER

When people seek support from social service workers they are stepping outside their comfort zone and are vulnerable. Research shows that just a few minutes spent with a pet lowers heart rate and blood pressure and reduces stress and anxiety. Whether it is someone to talk to, finding a referral or accessing a resource, what people often need most is to feel a sense of belonging, of connection, to know that they are not alone. With a wag of her tail and a friendly kiss, Nokomis (Komi), Kelsey Rose's 3-year-old Portuguese water dog, is warm and welcoming to people who might feel nervous about accessing the Whistler's Women's Centre.

Kelsey Rose and Komi have worked at Whistler Women's Centre since 2011

CONNECTIONS AND SHARED EXPERIENCES

How we experience belonging can vary with stage of life. For young parents, community and their sense of belonging may be built around activities they do with their children. For some, it may be created by walking their dog with other dog owners. For others, work is where they make their connections (or perhaps how they become isolated, if they work at home). For retirees, it may be through volunteering and their involvement with organized groups.

My Belonging Moment

"When I got married at Whistler Skiers Chapel"

"When I participate in Remembrance Day"

"When I got daycare!"

"When our baby was born"

"When I ran into my friends in the village."

SOCIAL MEDIA

There are dozens of Facebook pages designed for Whistler residents to connect with one another. Whistler Moms has 840 members. Babysitters Nannies Whistler BC has 2,666 members. Whistler Housing Rentals for locals has 22,533 members. Whistler Hikers has 2,733 members. Social media plays a huge role now in how we connect but can it replace face to face interactions?

CREATING BELONGING THROUGH CONNECTION TO ANIMALS

About the Community Foundation of Whistler

The Community Foundation of Whistler is a charitable public foundation, serving the communities of Whistler and Pemberton, and operated by members of our local community who live, work and raise their families here in the Sea to Sky region.

Our vision is a thriving local community where all members are engaged and informed, and where strong connections create a resilient and caring community.

The Community Foundation of Whistler:

- invests in the future of our community by managing permanent endowment funds
- provides grants to local charitable organizations to create impact in all areas of community life
- offers donors the opportunity to establish charitable funds, endowed in perpetuity, for the ongoing benefit of the local community.
- promotes community knowledge, volunteerism, and community leadership

We bring people together to create opportunities for dialogue, learning, and partnership. Our knowledge of the community helps us to create maximum impact with our grant programs.

► *Investing in a Thriving Community*



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Vital Signs® is a community checkup conducted by community foundations across Canada that measures the vitality of our communities and identifies significant trends in a range of areas critical to quality of life. Vital Signs is coordinated nationally by Community Foundations of Canada and with special thanks to the Toronto Foundation for developing and sharing the Vital Signs concept. vitalsignscanada.ca



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