

Update for January – December 2023



Youth Engagement Report

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Purpose

In May 2013, Halifax Regional Council directed Community & Recreation Services (now Parks & Recreation) to engage youth –both in their communities and online – to better understand the current trends and issues that youth face across the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM).

In April 2019, staff were directed to provide an annual information report to the Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee (CPED) regarding trends, issues, best practices and actions taken with respect to youth programming.

The information presented in this report provides an overview of the services and programs offered to youth, from January to December 2023.



Executive Summary



The *Youth Engagement Report* provides an annual update on youth services in the municipality. It also provides the opportunity for external youth service providers to highlight their programs and services.

In addition to regular activities, the Youth WORX Program celebrated the first anniversary of The Café, open daily on the main level of the Sackville Sports Stadium. The Café serves various hot and cold beverages, sandwiches, pizza, bagels, cinnamon buns, muffins and continues to expand their menu to better serve the local community.

The *Youth Services Plan* began implementation in 2022. This included the creation of a second multi-service youth centre at Captain William Spry Community Centre. An update on the Youth Services Plan is included in this report.

**The Youth Engagement Report
provides an annual update on youth
services in the municipality.**

Youth Services Plan

halifax.ca/yjsp

In 2005, the municipality's Recreation Programming Division worked with HeartWood Centre for Community Development to create the municipality's *Youth Engagement Strategy*. This engagement strategy focused on best-practice strategies on youth engagement. Since that time, the municipality has worked to ensure youth programs meet the needs of youth.

Reorganization in 2015 led to the creation of a youth-focused section of the Parks & Recreation business unit. The next step in providing youth services was for this new section to conduct a large-scale survey to gather information on the municipality's youth services. The *Youth Services Plan* was the final product of that year-long, youth-led, engagement process. To see a summary of the first plan, visit halifax.ca/yjsp.

The *Youth Engagement Strategy* has informed the development of a second *Youth Services Plan*. The *Youth Services Plan 2 (YSP2)* provides a broader approach and includes additional business units throughout the municipality. By identifying relevant issues for youth, the YSP2 will support decision making in how best to address the needs of our region's youth through the delivery of programs and services, as well as working collectively with other business units throughout the municipality and community partners.

YOUTH SERVICES PLAN 2022-2024

Vision statement

We envision a future where youth have the opportunities and supports to achieve their greatest potential.

Mission statement

We enrich the quality of life for youth by providing a variety of programs, services and spaces that are supportive of the municipality's diverse youth population.

Core values

Core values are the principles or philosophies that guide how we work with youth:

- diversity and inclusion
- transparency and accountability
- collaboration
- youth voice

Strategic priorities

1. youth have access to spaces in their community where they can take ownership, feel welcome, socialize, obtain support and access services;
2. all youth across the municipality feel represented and included in programs, services and committees;
3. youth feel prepared to make a successful transition to adulthood;
4. youth feel empowered to engage in local governance and contribute to shaping their communities; and
5. all youth are aware of the services and programs offered by the municipality.

2023 update:

In 2023, staff began implementing actions outlined in the *Youth Services Plan*. The activities on page 5 highlight the actions completed from January- December 2023.



ACTIVITIES		ACTIONS COMPLETED
	Immediate outcome 1: Youth have access to spaces in their community where they can take ownership, feel welcome, socialize, obtain support and access services	
Output 1.1	To focus on an integrated youth service delivery approach	
Activity 1.1.1	- establish Multi-Service Youth Centre (MSYC) in Spryfield - select third MSYC location	- Spryfield Youth Space opened - The Den partnered with Boys and Girls Club Greater Halifax to provide Outreach Worker services during Tuesday night drop-in. - The Den and Spryfield youth space staff participated in staff training to develop staff manuals for youth spaces - Mobile Youth Support team began offering services at The Den, Spryfield Youth Space and other municipal youth spaces - Downtown Dartmouth youth service providers round table created
Activity 1.1.2	conduct partnership recruitment at The Den	
Activity 1.1.3	coordinate activities between municipal youth spaces (rooms)	
Activity 1.1.4	promote youth counselling and youth outreach worker services to youth	
Output 1.2	To ensure youth spaces are welcoming, inclusive and accessible	
Activity 1.2.1	- adapt the Public Safety Office’s Women’s Safety Audit to create youth audits that assess the “youth-friendliness” of municipal youth spaces - train youth to deliver audits	- Nonviolent Crisis Intervention (NVCi) training delivered to all youth centre staff - friendly faces friendly spaces training delivered to four more recreation centres - accessibility and inclusion training for front line youth centre staff is being designed - setting healthy boundaries and conflict resolution training delivered to youth centre frontline staff - engagement done at Alderney Gate to get youth feedback on creating a safer environment in the building
Activity 1.2.2	host design charette for MSYC in Spryfield to ensure the space is youth friendly	
Activity 1.2.3	deliver accessibility and inclusion training to staff in youth spaces	
Activity 1.2.4	deliver Nonviolent Crisis Intervention, mental health first aid, harm reduction and Anti-Black Racism Training to staff in youth spaces	
Activity 1.2.5	- continue to deliver Friendly Faces Friendly Spaces to front line staff - revamp the training to be more trauma-informed	
Output 1.3	To ensure youth spaces support the mental well-being of youth	
Activity 1.3.1	create and maintain list of services and resources for youth on halifax.ca/youth webpage	ongoing
Activity 1.3.2	work with community partners to develop training for staff referring youth to social services, housing, food, employment and counselling	- Mobile Youth Support Team began offering counselling services and community resource navigation support in youth spaces - duty to report training delivered to all youth centre staff at The Den, Powerhouse and Spryfield
Activity 1.3.3	- expand counselling services in drop-in youth spaces - offer community resource navigation support by Youth Outreach Worker	
Activity 1.3.4	deliver peer support training to youth	
	Immediate Outcome 2: All youth across the Halifax region feel represented and included in programs, services and committees	
Output 2.1	To learn more about serving underrepresented youth populations and communities	
Activity 2.1.1	- conduct research on best practices for delivering equitable youth programs and services and provide an update in the annual Youth Engagement Report - identify barriers and challenges youth from underrepresented communities experience - identify training resources for youth staff to participate in	- research on best practices for supporting black youth was conducted - work being done with the ANSAIO and the D&I offices to create training further training for staff - review of Youth Engagement Strategy (Y.E.S.) Camp to identify barriers to participation
Activity 2.1.2	- review Multi-Service Youth Centres with an equity lens - review the implementation and evaluation of the Youth Services Plan with an equity lens	2024 priority
Output 2.2	To develop and improve programs and services for underrepresented youth populations and communities	
Activity 2.2.1	deliver youth programming and services specific to underrepresented youth populations including women and girls, urban Indigenous Peoples, 2SLGBTQIA+, African Nova Scotians, immigrants and youth with disabilities	- The Den and Powerhouse continue to offer specific programming for underrepresented youth populations. - the Ready for Rec Program for youth with disabilities delivered in Spryfield and Dartmouth
Activity 2.2.2	ensure rural youth programs and services are aligned with the Rural Recreation Strategy	2024 priority
Activity 2.2.3	recruit program staff and facilitators who are reflective of the municipality’s youth population	
Activity 2.2.4	conduct a program review of the Youth Advocate Program including its intake process, boundaries and ways youth are supported in the program	
	Immediate Outcome 3: Youth feel prepared to make a successful transition to adulthood	

ACTIVITIES		ACTIONS COMPLETED
Output 3.1	To offer a variety of ways for youth to develop their skills	
Activity 3.1.1	design and deliver programming and workshops on basic skills such as budgeting, finances and cooking	- Community Recreation Coordinators (CRCs) implementing programming in spring 2024 - Youth Week 2023 offered various skill-based programs and workshops
Activity 3.1.2	partner with external agencies to deliver workshops on science, technology, engineering and computer skills	
Activity 3.1.3	deliver peer support training to youth	
Output 3.2	To develop job readiness by enhancing employment programs and opportunities	
Activity 3.2.1	collaborate with service providers to offer programming and workshops that increase youth employability skills	- Youth WORX continue to build employment opportunities for youth as the café model expands - summer 2023 review of Youth Leader Modules was conducted by Youth Leadership Coordinators
Activity 3.2.2	conduct a review of the Youth Leadership Program’s employment modules to identify opportunities for improvement	
	Immediate Outcome 4: Youth feel empowered to engage in local government and contribute to shaping their communities	
Output 4.1	For youth to gain confidence to effectively engage in local governance	
Activity 4.1.1	host youth workshop series youth to learn how the municipal government operates and how they can contribute to local governance	- the Youth Advisory Committee recruited new members - the committee hosted a town hall to get input from other youth on how the municipality can better support youth - Youth Advisory Committee passed their first motion requesting a staff report on By-law M200
Activity 4.1.2	continue to support the Youth Advisory Committee as an opportunity for youth to learn about local governance	
Activity 4.1.3	work with the Municipal Clerk’s Office to support voter education efforts to reach youth from diverse communities and encourage their participation in municipal elections	
Activity 4.1.4	use @hfxnextgen Instagram account to raise awareness about the next municipal election	
Output 4.2	To provide avenues for youth to give input and feedback on municipal programs, services and projects	
Activity 4.2.1	continue to invest resources in public engagements and events that collect feedback from youth about their ideas, opinions and needs	- youth engagement completed at Alderney Gate – received youth input on damages being done in the building - youth engagement complete at The Den with feedback received on Youth WORX Café menu - youth engagement completed by YAC at Youth Week brunch with the Mayor
Activity 4.2.2	create an online dashboard to inform youth on how their input was used and inform them about the outcomes of their involvements in engagements	
Activity 4.2.3	continue to support the Youth Advisory Committee as an opportunity for youth to provide feedback on municipal decisions	
Activity 4.2.4	facilitate formal and informal opportunities to connect youth with their local Councillors and other municipal decision makers	
Output 4.3	To prepare youth to become leaders in their communities	
Activity 4.3.1	facilitate how youth can initiate change workshops	- workshops held in spring and fall 2023 on how youth can initiate change - Youth Community Developer updated the youth website with information on how this position can support youth - through use of the youth Instagram account, supported many municipal projects including helping to connect youth to the placemaking program - used the youth Instagram account to help increase awareness of the municipality’s Volunteer Awards 22 youth nominations were received for the 2023 municipal Volunteer Awards 20 youth received awards at the 2023 municipal Volunteer Awards ceremony
Activity 4.3.2	support youth in accessing resources that enable them to bring a youth-led project into action	
Activity 4.3.3	explore ways to connect youth to the municipal placemaking program	
Activity 4.3.4	increase the number of, and access to, meaningful youth volunteer opportunities	
Activity 4.3.5	recognize youth leaders by nominating them for HRM Volunteer Awards	
	Immediate Outcome 5: Youth are aware of the services and programs offered by the municipality	
Output 5.1	To target youth with marketing and promotions that are on trend and will catch their attention	
Activity 5.1.1	review the youth website to ensure content is updated and relevant to youths needs	- ongoing marketing efforts - visual identity for “youth-specific” material has been created - The Den and Spryfield received new creative and marketing materials - new banners designed and produced
Activity 5.1.2	work with corporate communications to create an annual youth marketing plan that includes promotion of the youth website, Instagram account and program and services	
Activity 5.1.3	- develop promotional material needed for pop-up engagements, including banners and handouts - create an annual plan for seasonal pop-up engagements in rural communities	



We enrich the quality of life for youth by providing a variety of programs, services and spaces that are supportive of the municipality's diverse youth population.

MISSION STATEMENT

Municipal youth programs, events and engagements



The municipality offers various programs, events and engagement opportunities for youth. This report highlights efforts taken by Parks & Recreation, Halifax Libraries, Halifax Regional Police, Office of the Municipal Clerk, Public Safety Office, the HaliFACT team and external youth service providers.





YOUTH ADVOCATE PROGRAM



halifax.ca/yap

The Youth Advocate Program is family centered crime-prevention program which means it looks to, and works with, the family of the youth to provide coordinated support. The program's goal is to reduce key risk factors such as isolation, stress and negative pressures that make young people vulnerable to engaging in criminal behavior. By connecting youth to existing community programs and support, the Youth Advocate Program increases self reliance, resiliency, life skills and social skills by engaging youth in constructive behaviors with family, school and community. The program is directed towards children and youth aged 10–15 years of age.

Youth Advocate Workers work directly with the youth and their family, building on the youth's strengths and connecting them with support services in their community. Together they build the skills and confidence required to withstand pressures to become involved in criminal activity. Staff also work closely with primary caregivers and anyone who has the youth's best interests at heart, and always privately, confidentially and with the consent of the family.

When a youth "graduates" from the program it means that they have built enough resiliency to overcome significant obstacles; they are going to school, may have secured employment, and have built healthy life skills and relationships with their peers and families.

This program offers support to youth in:

- Cole Harbour
- Dartmouth North
- East Dartmouth
- Fairview/Clayton Park/Bayers Road/Westwood
- Gaston Road/Woodside
- North End Halifax
- North and East Preston
- Lower and Middle Sackville
- Spryfield

In 2023, 63 youth from across the region were enrolled in the program, 138 youth were referred and 11 youth graduated from the program.

2023 STATISTICS

Youth Advocate Workers collaborate with school representatives to improve school performance, including attendance, behaviour, homework and participation in extra-curricular activities.

- 95 per cent of participants remained in or returned to school
- 50 per cent received academic support

The Youth Advocate Program promotes youth resiliency through an evidence-based wraparound approach that builds constructive relationships and support networks among youth and their families to build protective factors to prevent sexual abuse and exploitation. In 2023:

- eight per cent of participants received support/counselling for trafficking and exploitation
- 84 per cent of participants received or were connected to mental health supports to avoid and/or develop healthy mechanisms regarding dating violence, gender violence and unhealthy relationships or to receive medical support for diagnosis



RECREATION PROGRAMMING

The Youth Advocate Program uses leisure education screening tools to determine the best fit for recreation programming for each youth in the program. Where possible, youth are signed up for municipal recreation programs through the Recreation Funding Access Program. If the recreation service is not available within the municipality's programming, outside service providers are used. Staff work with other organizations to provide free or low-cost programming for youth.

Research has shown that recreation can be used effectively in a multi-approach toolkit addressing youth gang involvement and violence and provides protective factors against criminal engagement. Recreation programming provides positive role models, development of resilience and pro-social skills, offers safe spaces and opportunities for supervision outside of school hours and meaningful connection to hobbies. By leveraging the resources within Parks & Recreation, staff can connect youth and families to long-term recreation supports thus decreasing risk factors and increasing protective factors.

GIRLS UNITED PROGRAM

Girls United is a program for female-identifying youth between the ages of 13-15 showing high risk for criminal engagement. Girls United is peer-centered and peer-led, with a focus on building strong positive relationships. The goal of the program is to educate, engage and raise awareness about the supports and services available to female-identifying youth in the municipality. Girls United supports female-identifying youth in cultivating strength and resiliency to form cross-community relationships and support systems.

With participants from four communities across the Halifax region, few of the participants knew each other prior to programming. Some of our current participants were a part of our previous Girls United cohort. Girls United gave participants an opportunity to get to know other youth who may be going through similar life circumstances. Girls United provided youth with the opportunity to have positive new experiences together.

The Youth Advocate Program team remained in contact with the participants outside of the Girls United sessions, meeting them at schools, connecting with their parents and over the phone.

The program operated weekly between July and August 2023 with an average of seven youth attending the sessions. The program included several structured and unstructured activities, including recreational activities, playing board games, arts and crafts, instructional photography, life skills programming and cooking classes.





halifax.ca/youthworx

The Youth Live Program was recently renamed the Youth WORX Program. (Youth WORX).

The program offers 24 weeks of paid job and life skill-building for youth with employment barriers. The program is for youth between the ages of 16 to 24 years old who are not in school and who are facing employment barriers. Youth WORX has two main streams: Business Operations and Mentoring. Business Operations is comprised of on-the-job training and coaching at The Café, located at the Sackville Sports Stadium, paper recycling services, green cart delivery and repair. The mentoring stream includes working alongside program support staff who provide guidance and coaching on their employability and leadership skills. The youth also receive modules on life skills and job skills designed to prepare them for their future. Youth WORX operates two full programs a year, with one starting in May and the other in October.

The Youth WORX program focuses on the following nine employability skills:

1. accountability
2. adaptability
3. attitude
4. confidence
5. motivation
6. presentation
7. stress management
8. teamwork
9. time management



YOUTH WORX PROGRAM: 2023 STATS

In 2023, 30 youth participated in the program and 20 youth graduated.

BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT:

- 67 per cent had lack of job experience
- 40 per cent did not graduate high school
- 60 per cent had mental health concerns
- 43 per cent had a learning disability
- 0 per cent had children
- 13 per cent had a history of addiction

PERCENTAGE OF YOUTH THAT CAME TO OUR PROGRAM FROM DIFFERENT AREAS OF THE MUNICIPALITY:

- 40 per cent from Halifax
- 37 per cent from Dartmouth
- 13 per cent from Sackville
- 10 per cent from other areas of the Halifax region

YOUTH WORX CAFÉ

In 2023, the Youth WORX Program achieved a significant milestone by opening two new seasonal canteen locations. This development has injected a fresh wave of enthusiasm into the program, providing an immersive platform for young participants to explore the details of operating a canteen.

Situated in downtown Halifax at the Emera Oval and Fleming Park (Dingle Park) areas, the canteen locations serve as more than just food service venues. They have become integral parts of the local communities, fostering a sense of togetherness and connectivity.

The youth involved in the program can use their food-handling and customer-service abilities. Operating at the Emera Oval offers them a dynamic environment where they can interact with a diverse clientele. Operating in Fleming Park provides a contrasting experience, allowing the youth to connect with the community in a more serene and nature-infused setting. This dual-location approach ensures that the participating youth gain a versatile set of skills and experiences.

As the program continues to advance, it is evident that these canteen locations extend beyond mere business ventures; we are evolving into community hubs, where the spirit of leadership meets the warmth of shared experiences.



Youth spaces

halifax.ca/youthspaces

There are many youth spaces within the municipality offering a variety of activities, programs and drop-in times. These spaces include dedicated youth centres (including multi-service youth centres) and youth rooms within municipal recreation centres.

Adopting the Multi-Service Youth Centre (MSYC) model, the Spryfield, Herring Cove youth drop-in space located in the Captain William Spry Community Centre opened in the spring of 2023.

Power House Youth Centre

halifax.ca/powerhouse

The Power House Youth Centre serves as a place for youth to gather, to learn and to connect with others. It is also a meeting space for the municipality’s Youth Advisory Committee and the Friends of the Public Gardens.

The Power House Youth Centre offered multiple programs for youth 13-24 years of age. On average, 225 youth accessed the Power House (PH) each month for drop-in activities and registered programs. Participants are typically between 13-19 years old and come from areas of the municipality including Halifax Peninsula, Spryfield, Fairview, Dartmouth, Sackville and Bedford. While many youth living on the peninsula accessed the centre on a regular basis, there were high numbers commuting from elsewhere. As a result, they were able to make new friends outside of their home communities and schools and create new relationships to recreation and leisure. These connections made a positive impact especially for youth who struggle socially.

Over 175 new youth participants attended Power House for the first time this year.



REGISTERED PROGRAMS

- 105 participants per month participated in registered programs
- registered programs included: beginner and intermediate guitar lessons, intro to improv club, babysitters training, intro to cooking and the kitchen, 3D printing, animation, mindful art and gardening, creative writing, book lovers club and dungeons and dragons

Program Highlight: Mindful art and gardening

Mindful art and gardening gave youth the opportunity to care, tend to and plant a variety of vegetables, flowers and herbs in raised garden beds. This was a safe space for the youth who had never gardened before but also provided the chance for seasoned gardeners to teach the others. Youth in this program enjoyed mindfulness activities like Mindful BINGO, painting the Lorax on the garden beds, going for walks and block printing. At the end of the program, youth were able to enjoy a picnic with garlic bread made from the garlic they carefully grew, harvested and cured. This was by far one of the highlights of the summer according to the youth who attended the picnic. There is also a lot of anticipation among the youth to regrow garlic, harvest the pumpkins and tomatoes come fall!

Program Highlight: Book Lovers Club

This program provided an opportunity for youth to have a quiet and safe space to read and explore literature of different genres. While this club did not focus on one single novel, youth in the program got to expand their knowledge of literature styles with novels, graphic novels, comics and manga. Highlights of the book lovers club were visiting historical locations like the Citadel Hill, mentioned in of the youths’ novel selections, as well as block printing bookmarks and having a general space to return to for silent reading. Some youth even joined PH during drop-in hours after expressing their love for one of the graphic novels and excitement to have a reading space over the summer that was unrelated to school reading.



DROP-IN PROGRAMS

Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday from 3:30 - 7 p.m. and Saturday from 11:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m., 110 participants per month.

Drop-in activity examples:

Art	Crochet, screen printing, painting, character design, origami and sign painting.
Cultural	Drumming demonstration and fish cake dinner for African Nova Scotian Heritage Month, film screenings and art activities during Mi'kmaq History Month and Asian Heritage Month, weekly PRIDE-themed art workshops in the summer, holding space for Trans Day of Remembrance with art activities, gender-affirming products and sharing experiences, stories and grieving together.
Educational	Cyber-safety workshops, emergency preparedness and how to make a "go-bag," activism and protest safety.
Skill building	Support with learning about health and hygiene, preparing for an interview, apply-ing for college, finding volunteer opportunities and learning about running programs/facilitating.
Community connections	Mobile Youth Support Team has been a phenomenal support for relieving staff and giving youth much needed one-on-one help. Support navigating gender affirming care with Youth Project, housing and employment support with Phoenix Youth (PLEC).
Food security	Monthly chosen family meals, cookie decorating and cupcake baking, how to prepare food safely and cook different meals, how to make a grocery list and go shopping.
Clothing	Ongoing clothing drive set up with seasonally appropriate offerings. Support and education for accessing gender-affirming gear and clothing.

In addition, the following activities happened in 2023:

- Pride Parade sign-making
- Asian Heritage Month education and awareness
- Power House clothing shop



OVERHEARD AT DROP-IN:

“I have to schedule in hanging with my friends around Power House, I can’t miss drop-in.”

“I can’t wait to show my parents where I spend all of my time; and how cool it is!”

“This is honestly the smallest but best youth house because you do not need to sign up for anything, you can just show up and hang out.”

“This place is support... it’s like therapy without being therapized.”

Program highlight:
How to rainbow noodle jars

How to rainbow Noodles with local facilitator and social worker, Rae Paul, was the final drop-in Pride event of the summer but arguably the most important and impactful. Mixing food and wellbeing into a drop-in event gathered a group of youth who typically would not get this experience. The skills learned in this workshop were invaluable and demonstrated the importance of chosen family and taking the time to connect with those close to us. Some who attended the program took great pride in remembering what they had learned and went on to make the meal on their own after the program was done!



“I just went to the store and got stuff to make the noodles you showed us last week!”
– youth participant

POWER HOUSE YOUTH CENTRE: 2023 HIGHLIGHTS

In 2023 participants have reported the following about their experiences at Power House:

- finding their “besties” and transitioning to hanging out together in community
- feeling like the space was “theirs” and were comfortable to “be themselves”
- PH was a “neurodiverse and queer friendly space”
- enjoyed the “independent and chill atmosphere”

North American Indigenous Games and The Power House Youth Centre

During the week of July 15 - July 23, the Power House was a designated safe space for North American Indigenous Games (NAIG) youth. This provided the opportunity for youth from NAIG to join our space, share their experiences and expertise as well as learn from what many youths call home. These spaces encouraged youth to try new things, socialize with one another and grow in a secure, pro-social, inclusive environment.

POWER HOUSE YOUTH CENTRE: 2023 CHALLENGES

Food insecurity

This year a growing number of youths (many 2SLGBTQIA+ identifying) reported experiencing food insecurity. In response to this challenge, we connected youth with food banks and resources in their communities as well as helping them learn to prepare inexpensive meals on their own. We ensured that there was always access to nutritious food and drinks that all youth could consume. This included options of vegan, dairy-free and gluten-free meals. Several youth struggled to access food during the school days as well as at home and often arrived to drop-in hungry, not having eaten yet that day. In response, PH staff started a new drop-in program called “chosen family meals.” These special monthly meals included a main course with sides and often dessert too! These events continue to make a positive impact and provide an opportunity for conversations around the concept of family and meaning of sharing meals.

“I would actually really like some food support. I really appreciate that.”
– youth participant



Cyberbullying

Many participants reported experiencing cyberbullying via social media and communication platforms. Some had photos taken without consent, personal information shared, misinformation spread or hateful comments (racist, homophobic and/or transphobic) made towards them. Many did not know how to navigate the virtual world safely and had no concept of their rights or how laws could protect them. In response to these issues, we began looking into cyber safety education. In the fall of 2023, Power House partnered with researchers Suzie Dunn and Alexa Dodge from Saint Mary’s University to offer two DIY(Digitally Informed Youth) workshops on cyber harassment, security and safety. These workshops were a huge hit both for the youth and the facilitators, providing a safe space to talk about the importance of being aware in media spaces, to learn about previous/current use of media and the internet and to give some crucial information to the researchers to develop future workshops and educational resources.

Multi-Service Youth Centres

Multi-Service Youth Centres (MSYC) take a collaborative approach to the delivery of youth programs and services. Parks & Recreation and community-based organizations work together to achieve common goals:

- removal of barriers of access around mental and physical health
- provision and implementation of various drop in programs
- creation of youth services that are inclusive for all youth
- design of physical spaces that are open and welcoming to youth
- policies and best practices for service delivery of youth programs
- use of partnerships to deliver on non-municipal programs and services

These dedicated youth spaces offer young people a place to find support and services and a place to hang out with friends.

THE DEN YOUTH CENTRE | LOWER SACKVILLE

www.halifax.ca/TheDen

The Den Youth Centre is a safe, inclusive space for youth ages 13-18 from the Bedford/ Sackville communities. Working collaboratively with different organizations and groups, The Den provides services and a weekly drop-in space for youth to hang out.

Community outreach

In 2023, staff focused on increasing their presence in schools to promote The Den. Outreach at Millwood High, Sackville High and the Sackville Sports Stadium was successful in recruiting new youth at The Den.



Indigenous artwork and smudging ceremony

Staff organized a cultural artwork night with Mi'kmaw artist Quintin Syliboy. Quintin engaged youth in art activities and taught them about the importance of art in Indigenous culture. Youth also got to participate in a smudging ceremony. The smudging took place outside The Den and youth gathered to listen to Quintin share stories and knowledge.

Partnership with Cobequid Youth Health Centre

Youth can access free, drop-in counselling services within The Den, Monday - Wednesday 3:30 p.m - 8 p.m. and Friday 10 a.m. - 6 p.m.

Cobequid Youth Health Centre provides a place for youth and their families to turn to for help and support in an environment of respect and confidentiality. Social workers advocate, navigate and collaborate with community partners while providing counselling, support and referrals for young people aged 13 to 25, with or without their families.

In 2023, The Den counsellor provided direct services to 1,069 youth:

- 323 of those sessions were scheduled visits
- 746 of those sessions were informal, drop-in visits

THE DEN (THREE DAYS PER WEEK) 3-6 P.M.	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	SUB TOTAL
Appointments		55	35	51	41	32	31	35	43	323
Informal		131	132	108	101	53	78	83	60	746
Monthly total		186	167	159	142	85	109	118	103	1069

SPRYFIELD, HERRING COVE YOUTH CENTRE | SPRYFIELD

halifax.ca/spryfieldyouthcentre

Adopting the Multi Service Youth Centre (MSYC) model, the Spryfield, Herring Cove Youth drop-in space located in the Captain William Spry Community Centre opened in spring of 2023. With youth drop-in times of Monday and Wednesday from 4:30 – 7:30 p.m., the space offers video games, board games, TV, art supplies, WIFI, phone charging stations, free snacks and comfortable chairs and has a youth counsellor and outreach worker available to provide one-to-one support.

Since opening in the spring, the youth centre has seen an average of 10-15 youth participating in the drop-in nights.

Youth Leadership Program

halifax.ca/youthleadership

The program is for youth who want to develop leadership skills through fun and challenging learning experiences. Participants help make a difference in their communities by organizing and taking part in special events and assisting staff with children's programs. The program operates with four pillars: volunteering, socials, community action and training.

YOUTH LEADERSHIP PROGRAM: 2023 HIGHLIGHTS

Youth Leadership Week of Action

Every year during Youth Leadership Week of Action, the youth leaders organize activities to benefit their communities.

Bedford Hammonds Plains Community Centre & Lebrun Recreation Centre

Event: Youth Leadership Carnival and BBQ at DeWolf Park

Result: collected 192 kg of non-perishables for Feed Nova Scotia

Musquodoboit and Sheet Harbor

Event: bird house painting with seniors from The Birches

Result: 10 birdhouses painted and hung around The Birches

St. Andrew's Community Centre

Event: Adopt A Meal for Shelter NS

Result: youth made 30 individual meals for residents at Shelter NS

Gordon R. Snow community Centre

Event: Rad Fest Music Festival

Result: 50 community members donated items to Feed NS and Salvation Army

Dartmouth North Community Centre

Event: carnival for John MacNeil Elementary

Results: school supplies including backpacks, pencils and crayons

Lakeside Community Centre

Event: carwash for Feed NS

Results: collected 5 kg worth of food and \$150 in donations

Captain William Spry

Event: donations for Melville Gardens

Result: three large gift baskets that were distributed among senior residents

Adventure Earth Centre, Shubie Park and Flemming Park

Event: donation drive and community mural

Result: youth leaders worked with day camp participants from Fleming Park, Shubie Park and St. Mary's Boat Club to create a community mural and collected donations of non-perishable food items; clothing donations were also accepted

Citadel High and Needham Community Centre

Event: community carnival

Result: non-perishable food donations for Parker Street Food Bank

Findlay Community Centre

Event: outdoor movie night

Result: \$300 worth of school supplies for the community

Y.E.S. CAMP

Y.E.S. Camp is a sub-program of the summer Youth Leadership Program. It provides youth a unique leadership experience in an overnight camp setting. The focus at the overnight camp is team building, communication skills, skill sharing, event planning and leadership. A maximum of 50 youth who are participating in the Youth Leadership Program are invited to participate in this overnight camp.

Youth Leadership Coordinators are employed by Parks & Recreation to deliver the Youth Leadership Program to younger participants. Y.E.S. Camp is led and facilitated by the Youth Leader Coordinators, making it a truly youth-led experience.



National Youth Week 2023

[Halifaxyouth.ca](https://halifaxyouth.ca)

National Youth Week takes place every year from May 1-7 and is dedicated to the celebration of youth and their active participation within their communities. This week is a time to amplify youth programs and services. Whether it is recreation, drama, sport, dance, civic engagement, art, volunteerism or leadership, young people are regularly engaged in meaningful activities in their communities.

The Youth Section of Parks & Recreation coordinated several free workshops and activities to provide youth learning and social opportunities; 225 youth participated in National Youth Week events held at Parks & Recreation facilities.



- low sensory movie night with puzzles at Power House Youth Centre
- youth drop-in night at Power House Youth Centre Youth pizza night
- sidewalk art and button making at Power House Youth Centre
- after-school hoops at Sackville Sports Stadium
- ice cream social and pizza party at The Den Youth drop-in / basketball at Cole Harbour High School / youth scavenger hunt at Power House Youth Centre / 3 × 3 basketball at Gordon R. Snow Community Centre
- drop-in youth volleyball challenge at BLT Sr. Gymnasium
- pickleball and popcorn party at George Dixon Community Centre / youth paint night at Chocolate Lake Rec Centre / Friday night rocks at Sackville Sports Stadium gymnasium
- movie night at Needham Community Centre
- night hoops at Sackville Sports Stadium
- youth karaoke night at Horizon Rec Centre
- youth night at Findlay Community Centre Youth / painting and pizza at Halifax Common Multi-purpose room
- youth roller skating at Grey Arena
- Star Wars paint night at BLT Rec Office
- Nintendo Super Smash Kart tournament at Power House Youth Centre
- team scavenger hunt at The Den
- youth ops at Sackville Sports Stadium
- Lego Club at Power House Youth Centre
- spring clothing pop-up shop at Power House Youth Centre
- trivia and tacos at The Den

Mobile Youth Support Team

halifax.ca/MYST

Parks & Recreation is working with the Community Safety business unit to assist in the delivery of the Building Safer Communities Fund. Parks & Recreation, through the Youth section, is providing additional support to youth (ages 13-24) within recreation centres. Throughout 2023, a youth counsellor and youth outreach worker have been providing drop-in and by-appointment support to youth (ages 13-24), at various recreation centres across the municipality.

2023 overview:

- the Mobile Youth Support Team (MYST) had a soft launch in January 2023, which had the team actively working with youth individually and attending drop-in centers
- MYST officially launched their services to the community during the open house on November 21, 2023.
- MYST has met with approximately 40 youth outside of drop-ins on a more regular and case-specific basis
 - these meetings aim to address individualized concerns such as peer pressure, conflicts, family dynamics, self-esteem, violence and mental health
- MYST has provided provincial court-specific support to approximately 19 youth and their families
 - MYST actively engaged with multiple youth at the courthouse, providing them with information on the services MYST offers
- MYST is collaborating with municipal recreation centres to improve youth engagement and youth safety in these spaces
 - MYST has provided support for:
 - peer pressure and crisis situations
 - suicide intervention support
 - drug use/abuse
 - family conflict
 - pregnancy
 - restorative justice and conflict with the law
 - education and employment support
 - relationship issues

Accessibility & inclusion

halifax.ca/rec

Parks & Recreation invites individuals of all abilities to participate in our recreation and leisure programs. The municipality is committed to providing safe and accessible programs for everyone to enjoy. Employees recognize that some residents will require assistance to participate via adapted equipment, program modification and/or through the provision of one-to-one inclusion support.

Ready for Rec

Number of youth campers: 11

Ready for Rec programs are designed for youth (13-18) who have diverse needs and require additional supports to be successful in a recreation environment. The program is community-focused and exposes the youth to different community recreation opportunities in a fun and engaging manner. This program was partially funded in 2023 through a grant from Canadian Tire Jumpstart®.

Employee training

In 2023, inclusion training was provided for summer employees (specialized inclusion support staff, inclusion coordinators and summer coordinators). *Nonviolent Crisis Intervention Training* was delivered for Ready for Rec summer employees, inclusion coordinators and summer coordinators.

Registered youth programming

halifax.ca/rec

Parks & Recreation offers a multitude of programs directed to youth ages 13 to 18. These programs and activities are advertised on the Recreation web page, on printed posters and youth-specific information is promoted through social media.

- municipal recreation centres offered registered youth programming to **5482 youth** in 2023
- number of youth programs offered: **454 registered programs**



Outdoor recreation

halifax.ca/outdoorrec

ADVENTURE EARTH CENTRE (AEC)

halifax.ca/aec

The Adventure Earth team provide opportunities for people of all ages to connect with the natural world, to pursue a healthy and active lifestyle outdoors, to develop personal and leadership skills, to give back to the community and to connect with other like-minded people. The Adventure Earth Centre is in Sir Sandford Fleming Park (Halifax) and in Shubie Park (Dartmouth).

L.E.A.D | SUMMER OVERNIGHT CAMP

Number of youth participants: 30

This program is one of the most exciting, engaging and adventurous experiences that a youth camper can undergo in one week. The camp incorporates the four elements of L.E.A.D. (Leadership, Environment, Adventure and Discovery) through creativity, exploration and hands-on activities. Participants spend most of the camp outside in nature at Camp Mockingee.

L.E.A.D. is a dynamic, engaging and life-changing experience that gives leaders a glimpse into the lives of change-makers and community builders working to create a more sustainable future. Supported by experienced employees, the camp emphasizes leadership, environmental learning, adventure and discovery.

Through team building, community service and reflection, youth can develop leadership skills that can be used in their own lives, with family and in community.

This year, 30 participants contributed to the success of L.E.A.D. camp and developed their skills as part of this overnight experience.

H.E.A.T. YOUTH ACTION TEAM

Number of youth: 15 per session

H.E.A.T. stands for “Helping the Earth by Acting Together.” It is a “youth-driven” environmental and leadership group that meets regularly throughout the year. “Youth-driven” means that all activities,

events, camps and programming are designed and picked by the youth. H.E.A.T. provides great opportunities for youth, ages 13 and up, who have an interest in the environment, their community and who would like to “make a difference.”

H.E.A.T. was originally created by a passionate group of like-minded youth that cared about environmental causes and taking action. As our world changes so does our team and what we do but this program is still youth-led and focuses on more than just social programs. H.E.A.T. is a safe, welcoming and caring community and we are growing.

H.E.A.T. plans at least one event per week. These programs are usually weeknights or weekends and run out of our Fleming Park, Shubie Park and St Mary's Boat Club locations. However, we also have the freedom to explore the Halifax region, whether it is a local trail, downtown Halifax or helping a local organization. Furthermore, each season we hold an overnight camp at Camp Mockingee near Windsor. These events are also planned by youth participants.

Throughout the spring, fall and winter, youth participants between the ages of 13-19 participate in our H.E.A.T. youth program.

The youth group comes together each month to plan their activities around the four values of social, health, environmental and community. In 2023, the group participated in beach clean ups, donation events, group cooking, outdoor skill programs, social events and ecology information events.

H.E.A.T OVERNIGHT CAMPS

Number of camps in 2023: two

Number of youth participants: 40

The group planned and participated in two overnight camps at Camp Mockingee near Windsor, where they spent time practicing their outdoor skills, creating art projects, canoeing and swimming.



ST. MARY’S BOAT CLUB

halifax.ca/smbc

Youth paddle nights

Number of youth participants: 68

St. Mary’s Boat Club paddle nights give youth the opportunity to learn paddling skills and safely explore the Northwest Arm. Certified instructors take groups of 15 paddlers on the water and show them how to fit safety equipment and find the correct-sized boat. After practicing basic paddle strokes on land, the instructor demonstrates how to get in and out of the boats safely. After instruction, participants practice their paddling while exploring the shoreline.



EMERA OVAL

halifax.ca/emeraoval

The Emera Oval is an outdoor skating surface equivalent in size to three NHL hockey rinks. It is the largest outdoor, artificially refrigerated ice surface east of Quebec City. The Emera Oval is on the Halifax orth Common at the corner of North Park Street and Cogswell Street.

In 2023, Youth WORX opened a new seasonal canteen location situated in downtown Halifax at the Emera Oval. This location served as more than just a food service venue; it became an integral part of the local community, fostering a sense of togetherness and connectivity.

CLAM HARBOUR BEACH SANDCASTLE COMPETITION

clamharboursandcastle.ca

The annual sandcastle and sand-sculpturing contest attracts more than 10,000 people every year to the Eastern Shore of Nova Scotia. The competition offers cash prizes for children, youth and adults.

Seven youth teams entered the 2023 competition. The winning group was the "Birthday Crew" who created a fat kitty sculpture.

The information and merchandise booth is operated by the Musquodoboit Harbour Youth Leadership Program.



Halifax Public Libraries (HPL)



[Halifaxpubliclibraries.ca](https://halifaxpubliclibraries.ca)

The Halifax Public Library (HPL) is committed to serving youth and delivering services and programs at all 14 branches and many community locations. The library works with community experts, service providers and partners to offer relevant, high quality, free programming and services.

In 2023, Halifax Public Libraries offered 1,076 programs for youth across the municipality (detailed statistics attached). In addition, youth volunteered more than 6,800 hours at the library. Below are highlights of the types of volunteer opportunities and programs that were offered.

YOUTH VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Kids' Newcomers English Club

Volunteers ages 15-18 assist elementary school-aged students and teens who are new to Canada and keen to practice English skills. For one hour per week, volunteers lead activities, games and conversations with newcomer kids. They create a fun encouraging space for kids to practice their English speaking, reading and writing skills. They lead small groups as well as work together with other volunteers on bigger activities. After each session there is time to debrief and plan. HPL branch: Keshen Goodman

YMCA Homework Club

This program provides a safe and friendly environment that offers free tutoring in all school subjects as well as a chance to practice fun, conversational English for youth who are new to Canada. The teen volunteers are required to have an enthusiasm for meeting people from different countries and the ability to help with tutoring junior/senior high school subjects, especially science and math.

Teen Advisory Council

This program is designed for teenagers in the community aged 14-18 seeking a safe and engaging space that reflects their interests and values. For one hour per week, teens meet in person with other members of the Teen Advisory Council to advise library staff on the teen experience at Halifax Central Library. This includes but is not limited to, program/event planning and hosting, youth outreach within the library and creating displays that reflect the diversity of our community.

Leading Readers Support

In Leading Readers, teens 15-18 are paired with a partner (a child in grades 1-6) to share a love of books and offer reading support and encouragement. Pairs meet once a week for an hour to read together and play literacy-based games. Youth volunteers assist staff in developing program ideas, help prepare materials for the program and work together with participants to plan and implement the end-of-session celebration events.

Teen Media: Podcast & Blog

For one to two hours each week, youth 14-18 met with other Teen Media volunteers to create content for Halifax Public Libraries’ youth-run podcast and community blog. Responsibilities included creating and editing segments of audio content, such as interviews, commentaries and essays as well as structuring, writing and editing accompanying blog posts.

Video Game Assistant

In two-hour shifts, every month, youth 14-18 assisted children ages 5-14 with playing the library’s video games. Volunteers assisted with video game set-up and troubleshooting. They may play games with the children or help with monitoring the charge/availability of controllers.

Program Assistant/Program Prep Assistant

Program assistants, age 14-18 primarily assist employees with children’s programs. One primary example was assisting with summer reading program activities.

Program prep assistants, ages 13-18 assisted library staff in preparing crafts, supplies and programming materials. This is a “backstage” role with no direct interaction with library patrons.

CULTURALLY REFLECTIVE PROGRAMMING

Fruits of Our Labour in the Preston Township

In partnership with the Boys & Girls’ Club of Preston and Nova Scotia Community College, Akerley, as well as local farms and businesses, Halifax Public Libraries developed the program Fruits of Our Labour, in which community youth spent six weeks learning different culinary skills from the ground up, including gardening, farming, local history and working with community cooking mentors to learn cooking techniques. This culminated in a reception on June 9, 2023, in which participants prepared and served a banquet-style three-course dinner for the community and supporters to enjoy alongside culinary experts to demonstrate their learnings.

Bold & Beyond: Girls’ Group Engagement in the Preston Township

In partnership with Schools Plus, our team visited girls’ groups at Nelson Whynder Elementary School (grades 5-6) and Ross Road School (grades 7-9) in the Preston Township. During these monthly visits, our team guided participants in fun activities of their choosing like crafting, cooking and chatting about issues such as personal growth and self-esteem. In the first session, the participants created goals vision boards and named the group the Bold & Beyond.

GSA Programming in Cole Harbour

Each month, 2SLGBTQIA+ youth attend the inter-school Gender-Sexuality Alliance (GSA) at Cole Harbour Library and pop-up GSA programming at each of the schools that the library supports through providing space, snacks and fun activities. The name of this club was formerly Reading Rainbow but youth who run the program recently changed the name to Club Queirido to reflect the inclusiveness of the programming.

DROP-IN PROGRAMS FOR YOUTH

Teen Night is two hours of fun offered weekly at most Library branches. Each week there is something new planned that gets youth out of their comfort zones in a safe way, from partying at a semi-formal dance, to playing laser tag or hosting guests from local museums. The goal of teen night is to have a space where teens can connect to each other, develop healthy developmental relationships with team members and build connections with the Library and their community.

There are also specific drop-in programs offered for newcomer youth at the Keshen Goodman Library and Woodlawn Library that allow youth to make new friends while practicing the English-language skills.

Lunchtime Book Club at Musquodoboit Valley Rural High School

The weekly lunchtime book club for youth continued in the library at the Musquodoboit Valley Rural High School. In addition to reading books together, the youth use this time to socialize and make new friends, play fun literacy games and activities, have snacks and become more familiar with their local library.



COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Youth poetry slams at Woodlawn Library

In partnership with David Zinck, head of Fine Arts Development at Halifax Regional Centre for Education (HRCE), Woodlawn Library hosted monthly open mic nights to help develop local youth poets. Participants would have the chance to observe others and then gain confidence to share their own work.

HRCE HeadStrong Summit

On November 22, Halifax Public Libraries employees attended the HeadStrong Summit at the main building/learning bub on Spectacle Lake Drive in Dartmouth and represented HPL as part of the lunchtime resources fair, which provides mental health resources for about 100 students in grade 8 who are looking to be leaders in mental health at their schools. Staff were able to speak with students about how the Library can assist with mental wellness through resources such as providing hangout spaces, teen programming, volunteer positions, musical instrument lending, eBooks and audiobooks, etc.



Halifax Regional Police (HRP)

HALIFAX REGIONAL POLICE YOUTH PROGRAM

halifax.ca/HRPYouthProgram

Number of youth volunteers: 22

Founded in 1996, the Halifax Regional Police Youth Program (HRPYP) is a volunteer-based, non-profit program for youth aged 14-18 who are interested in community service and working with police. The program offers a structured learning atmosphere and teaches citizenship with an emphasis on leadership and voluntary service to the community.

The HRPYP engages in a variety of youth-driven crime prevention initiatives within our community. Activities can be educational, community-service related or just plain fun and may include: presentations by guest speakers, field trips, traffic and crowd control, Police Display Day, child identification record clinics, mascot appearances, bike patrols, parades, concerts and tree lighting ceremonies. Youth members learn leaderships skills, the importance of civic engagement, public speaking and teamwork, to name a few.

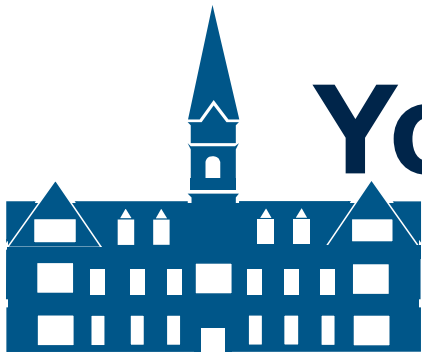
There are seven program elements explored during the program year: health, environment, community, vocation, justice, education and ethics. These key elements make the program unique and allow for exploration beyond policing, making participation in the program a much broader experience for all members. Regular Thursday evening meetings are held throughout the school year (September to June) and take place at the Northbrook training facility (2 Chapman Street, Dartmouth).

Youth also participated in community events and activities throughout the entire calendar year; these can take place anywhere within the Halifax region. Youth can apply to become a member by applying to the Volunteer Programs Coordinator on the HRP website. Their application is reviewed and, if qualified, they are invited for an interview.



Municipal Clerk's Office





Youth

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Bringing youth voices to Regional Council

YOUTH ADVISORY COMMITTEE

halifax.ca/yac

The Youth Advisory Committee (YAC) was created to give youth a voice at Regional Council. The committee advises Council on how municipal policies, programs and services affect youth and challenge the areas where we can do better.

In 2023, YAC identified three priorities to guide their work plan.

- Priority 1:** youth perspective and engagement on the municipality’s social policy priorities with an emphasis on food security, housing and the Public Safety Office.
- Priority 2:** climate action; advise Executive Standing Committee on how to continually incorporate input from youth of all races, genders and abilities in HaliFACT, Halifax’s climate action plan.
- Priority 3:** support youth self-reliance; raise awareness about and advocate for sustainable and affordable resources for youth in the Halifax region, especially when transitioning to self-reliance.

Youth Week 2023: Brunch with the Mayor

To kick off National Youth Week the YAC held a brunch with the Mayor in City Hall. Youth from across the municipality enjoyed a delicious brunch, learned about YAC and through interactive workshops and gave input on how the municipality can better support youth.

halifax.ca/climate

HalifACT is one of the most ambitious climate action movements in Canada. It is the municipality's community response to the climate crisis that will build a more resilient and healthy future in Atlantic Canada while preparing for current and future climate impacts. HalifACT encourages youth to take climate action.

Total number of youths engaged in 2023: 160

HalifACT 2023 highlights: Climate Futures Lab

HalifACT partnered with Youth Challenge International (YCI) to run the first Climate Futures Lab in Halifax. The program is aimed at training and mentoring 50 youth, aged 16-24, to become local climate champions to create their own climate action projects in line with Halifax's climate action plan, HalifACT.

Number of youths engaged: 50

North Preston's Future

HalifACT provided climate action training to the interns at North Preston's Future on Halifax's climate action plan and the importance of youth's perspective in the climate movement. HalifACT also sponsored the Peace Basketball Tournament through North Preston's Future which aims to promotes peace for at-risk youth, specifically African Nova Scotian and Black Nova Scotian youth.

Nova Scotia's Youth Climate Council

One member of the HalifACT team sits on the inaugural NS Youth Climate Council and engages directly with the youth on the council as well as the youth of the municipality and Nova Scotia more broadly to provide youth-focused climate education and outreach and communicate the youth perspective to the province.

A Call to Climate Action: HalifACT Human Library and Ideas Fair

HalifACT partnered with the Halifax Public Libraries, who hosted a human library event in November. Checking out a "human book" gave attendees the chance to chat with people that have experience with various kinds of climate action, from changing the way we heat and power our homes, to improving the way we get around, to making the ways we grow our food and treat the natural environment more sustainable. While the event was geared towards the general public, many in attendance were youth interested in incorporating more climate actions into their daily lives.

Concert for the Climate

HalifACT had a table at the November 2023 Concert for Climate, organized by the Stage at St. Andrews and Music Declares Emergency. Both musical performers Braden Lam and Moira & Claire were young, climate-active bands/musicians and the audience was primarily young people from across Halifax. In all, there were about 80 people in the audience and about 50 were youth. About 40 youth stopped by the table to find out more about HalifACT and the efforts the municipality is making about climate change. There was a lot of interest in the human library and the sustainability initiatives connected to the JUNOS.



Municipal Volunteer Awards



halifax.ca/volunteering

Each year during National Volunteer Week, the Halifax Regional Municipality holds an awards ceremony to acknowledge and honour the contributions of volunteers and volunteer organizations in our communities. While the celebration had to be postponed this year, we would like to recognize the volunteers and community groups who were selected to receive a 2023 Volunteer Award. Please join us in thanking these exceptional youth volunteers and organizations.

INDIVIDUAL YOUTH AWARDS:

- Cailyn Robinson
- Willa Morvan
- Van Bernard
- Sarah Finkle
- Lilah MacIsaac
- Casey McDonald
- Jane Garnier
- Andrew Brooks
- Benjamin Amusan
- Michael Tynes Jr.
- Lillian Pappas
- Georgia Boutilier
- Mohamed Jabi
- Lauren Hurst
- Tarelle Sterling
- Juliana Bruce
- Rebecca Mannette
- Jack Burton
- Emma Browne
- Ewan Hawley

YOUTH GROUP CATEGORY AWARD:

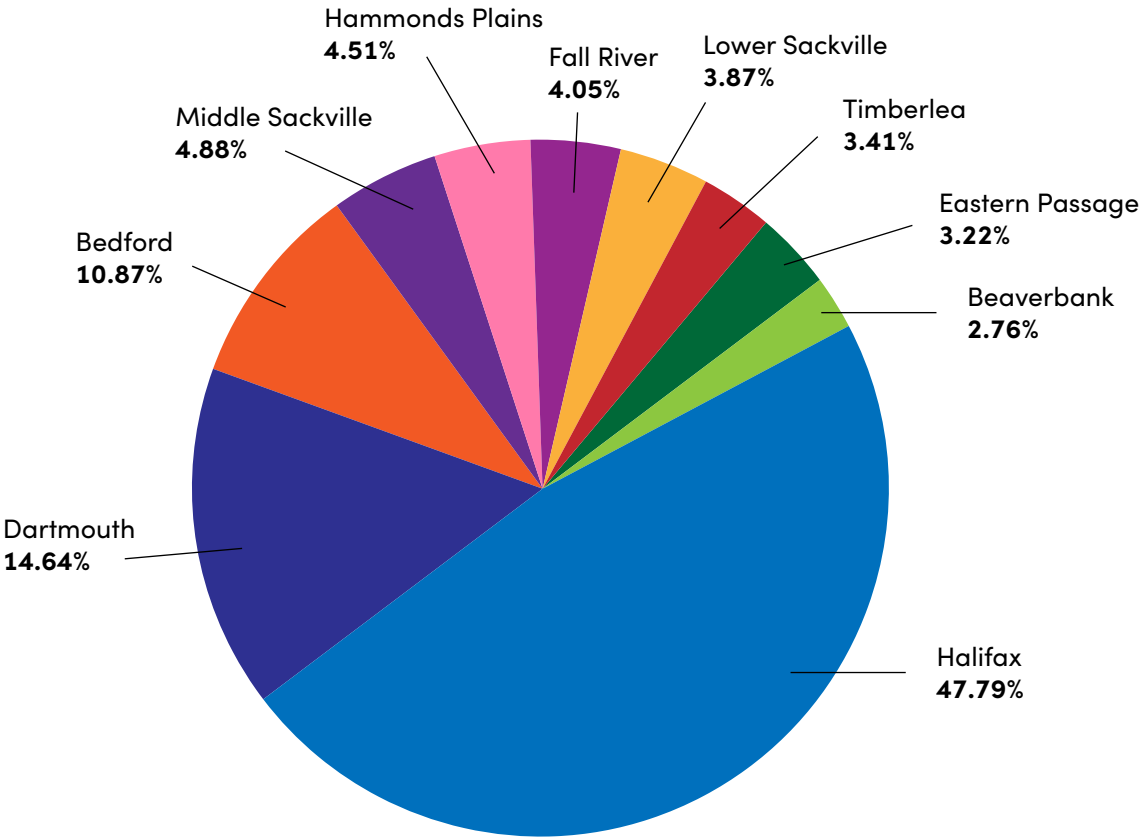
Cheetahs for Change (CFC): is a collaborative student-led club and organization at Charles P. Allen High School in Bedford. It seeks to advance equity and bring awareness to social justice issues in the community and globally. The group provides a safe environment for students to share their untold and unheard stories, experiences, voices and a place to amplify the voices of historically underrepresented groups. Their mission is to foster open-mindedness, tolerance, empathy and intercultural intelligence, which is essential in empowering voices of young people and members of the racialized and LGBTQ+ communities.

Youth employment statistics

The following section provides an overview of the number of youth (16-24) employed with the the municipality during 2023:

BUSINESS UNIT	COUNT OF PERS. NO.
Finance & Asset Management	1
Fire & Emergency Services	83
Halifax Forum	22
Halifax Transit Services	10
Information Technology	6
Legal & Legislative Services	2
Parks & Recreation	1195
Planning & Development	8
Property, Fleet & Environment	3
Public Works	30
Regional Police	23
Total	1404

TOP 10 LOCATIONS FOR YOUTH EMPLOYEES



External service provider updates



Youth service providers across the municipality played a vital role in supporting the overall wellbeing of youth in 2023. While this is not a comprehensive list, the following highlights feature a selection of organizations whose work reflects the diverse and impactful efforts happening across the region. These examples were chosen to showcase a range of services, geographic areas, and program types that made a meaningful difference for young people last year. To have your organization included in the next report, e-mail youth@halifax.ca.

BEDFORD BLIZZARDS VOLLEYBALL

blizzardvolleyball.ca

The Bedford Blizzard Volleyball Club is a competitive-oriented volleyball club that offers teams for both girls and boys. The competitive season is January to May. In the 2023 competitive season the Bedford Blizzards had 15 teams: 3 × 13U Girls, 2 × 14U Girls, 2 × 15U Girls, 2 X 16U Girls, 1 x 17U Girls, 1 × 18U Girls, 2 × 14U Boys, 1 × 15U Boys, 1 × 16U Boys.

Number of youth participants: 170

ATLANTIC ACADEMY OF SPACE

atascubesat.ca

ATLAS (Atlantic Academy of Space), an accredited program by the Nova Scotia Department of Education, offers high school students in Atlantic Canada an exciting opportunity. The two-week ATLAS summer academy provides participants with the chance to delve into space engineering and technology through an intensive CubeSat satellite design program at Dalhousie University. Notably, in 2023, 57 students who took part in this academy can now claim high school credit for their involvement.

This initiative, provided free of charge to students in the region, offers critical guidance and insight into STEM careers and academic opportunities within the space sector.

Number of youth participants: 57

NOVA UNITED MARTIAL ARTS (NUMA) CLUB

teamnuma.com

NUMA performance Judo is an all-inclusive long-term athlete development program for all ages.

NUMA offers several youth programs including a high-performance program. This program focuses on ages 13-19 and the main goal is for participants to make the National team.

JUDO4ALL PROGRAM

This program is for newcomers to Canada. This allows newcomers to do judo for free and helps avoid barriers for anyone new to Canada. This helps youth meet new friends, helps with their English language and makes the newcomer feel welcomed and at home.

ACTIVE YOUTH PROGRAM

This is for youth that want to be active and meet new friends.

2023 club highlights: NUMA had a Ukrainian athlete that joined the Judo4All Program and now is part of the Canadian National Team Program. NUMA helped guide him toward the right path to apply for his permanent residency and helped with any barriers. He is now fighting internationally for the Numa Judo Program and showing huge results.

YWCA HALIFAX

ywcahalifax.com

The YWCA Halifax has continued offering the Open New Tab Program to junior high schools across the Halifax Regional Municipality. In 2023, 320 students in schools across the municipality participated, including Rocky Lake Junior High, Ridgecliff Junior High and Cunard Junior High. During the 2023 summer months, YWCA offered a total of five summer camps. These camps focused on healthy masculinity and sport, advocacy and leadership and openness to guys, girls, non-binary and gender-diverse youth. One brand new camp was added in 2023, called Camp Discovery, which is entirely gender-neutral and focused on experiencing new activities.

CATAPULT LEADERSHIP SOCIETY

catapultcamp.com

Catapult Leadership Society is a registered charity that provides leadership programming for youth with demonstrated natural leadership qualities but who lack the opportunities that help youth reach their potential. Catapult’s mission is to cultivate new leaders who will make a positive difference in communities across Nova Scotia.

Each summer, 50 students attend a unique camp at Acadia University and work with local and international leaders who are experts in the field of motivating teens. Teachers and youth workers submit grade 9 student nominations and selection is based on leadership potential and strong character despite life circumstances that could jeopardize their talents. Following camp, youth can elect to join Catapult Plus where they complete leadership development activities throughout

the year. This year 100 per cent of attendees reported an increase in confidence. After Catapult, students reported they gained confidence in leadership 100 per cent, public speaking 90 per cent, getting involved 95 per cent and meeting others 95 per cent. For our Catapult Plus youth, 98 per cent set goals, 100 per cent volunteered, 93 per cent extra-curricular involvement, 91 per cent practiced public speaking and 98 per cent met new people.

SPORT NOVA SCOTIA

sportnovascotia.ca

Sport Nova Scotia is a non-government, non-profit organization focused on supporting the sport system for all participants. Sport Nova Scotia offers youth the opportunity to develop fundamental life skills, such as leadership, problem solving skills, time-management and accountability.

JUNIOR ACHIEVEMENT (JA) NOVA SCOTIA

janovascotia.ca

JA Nova Scotia provides programming which inspires and prepares youth to succeed, focusing on building workplace readiness, financial health and entrepreneurship skills. Their programming complements the school curriculum, offering teachers and volunteers opportunities to engage youth of various ages. Youth learn from hands-on, interactive activities and develop skills to foster self-efficacy and develop transferable skills to ensure they are confident and capable of making positive decisions for their future.

The JA Company Program provides high school students in grades 9 through 12 with an opportunity to learn about real world business from experienced volunteer mentors. Over 15 weeks, students create a business, complete with an executive team, to design a product and brand, market it, sell it in the community and then dissolve the business. Throughout the program the students take on various leadership roles and gain an understanding of entrepreneurship and innovation. They discover the rewards and challenges of starting a business by creating a business plan, developing performance indicators, maintaining records and completing accountability reports to reflect on processes and improvements. In addition, JA provides all youth with the opportunity to receive awards and scholarships during the end-of year-celebration, which recognizes achievers and advisors in a variety of categories.

NOVA SCOTIANS HELPING NOVA SCOTIANS ASSOCIATION (NSHNSA)

novascotianshelpingns.com

NSHNSA is dedicated to addressing and preventing challenges faced by youth in Nova Scotia. They aim to achieve this by operating a supervised youth center and establishing a versatile community/recreational facility. Their vision is to cultivate a community-centric wellness hub that serves various purposes, including before and after-school programs, summer camps, community sports, meetings and group gatherings.

ONE Basketball Club

A standout initiative under NSHNSA's umbrella is the ONE Basketball Club. Through this program, they aim to dismantle social and economic barriers by providing free programs that emphasize inclusivity. Their club caters to participants from underrepresented/marginalized communities and is a proud member of Basketball Nova Scotia as well as Recreation Nova Scotia. They have officially signed onto the Anti-Racism Charter in Recreation with Recreation Nova Scotia, emphasizing their unwavering dedication to promoting equity and inclusion.

2023 program recap

In 2023, their program called ONE provided free basketball programs for boys and girls ages five to 16. Activities included weekly training sessions, monthly camps, transportation and a mental health and wellbeing initiative. They are proud to have cultivated essential mental health partnerships, seamlessly integrating mental wellness components into their programs. As part of this effort, they are honored to collaborate with [Dr. Pure](#).

All their meals are halal and they use their taste buds to explore other cultures. They have served several different countries' meals, allowing the kids to learn about cultures through food. Additionally, they are helping with food insecurity by serving meals.

They have also orchestrated field trips, such as watching a professional basketball game. They incorporate a unique focus on entrepreneurship, engaging in activities such as snow shoveling to impart crucial lessons to the children about identifying community needs and exploring avenues for sustainable living. Furthermore, they provided a junior leadership opportunity that allowed their members to learn what it takes to become a junior basketball trainer.

What makes them unique is that they are open and free to everyone, regardless of their financial capability. They take pride in having seen over 100 children actively participate in their programs, fostering a sense of community and inclusivity.

The program utilizes basketball as a vehicle to inspire and engage the youth, providing them with a purpose to stay off the streets, socialize positively and avoid potential trouble. They aimed to identify their interests and create opportunities for them. In their commitment to community wellbeing, they have addressed food insecurity, promoted physical activity and

cultural education and introduced various career options, thus creating comprehensive growth opportunities.

At NSHNSA, their commitment to social determinants of health drives every aspect of their work. They understand the importance of providing safe and inclusive spaces for youth to thrive. They would like to remind everyone that for some of the youth in their programs, this is the only thing they have. Many come from environments where they would face bans due to behavioral issues. Their programs often serve as the only option. They aim to address these behavioral issues and keep them off the streets, preventing trouble and promoting positive growth. Together, we can make a difference in the lives of these youth and build a stronger, safer community.



Current best practices, trends and research

This section highlights best practices, emerging trends and youth-related research. For this report, employees focused on the following:

- fulfilling basic needs for 2SLGBTQIA+ Youth in the Halifax region

Under the Rainbow Report: Fulfilling basic needs for 2SLGBTQIA+ Youth in the Halifax region

The Under the Rainbow Report, co-developed by municipal youth centre workers in January 2024, provides an overview of the current situation for 2SLGBTQIA+ youth in Halifax. Informed by data from the 2021/22 Student Success Survey, which reveals that 27 per cent of students in grades 7-12 in the municipality identify as 2SLGBTQIA+ and face higher challenges compared to other demographics, the report identifies resources, gaps and needs. The findings, supported by qualitative narratives from frontline workers, underscore the urgent need for safe and inclusive environments for 2SLGBTQIA+ youth. Subsequent sections will delve into the heightened challenges faced by this demographic, highlighting the pivotal role of youth workers and safe, youth-focused spaces in providing essential support.

Selected statistics from the Student Success Survey (2SLGBTQIA+ youth)

Feelings of belonging	• only 50 per cent feel like they belong (77 per cent average)
Feeling unsafe	• 36 per cent feel unsafe (19 per cent average)
Discrimination /school response	• 52 per cent experienced homophobia or transphobia and 76 per cent witnessed it • Only 16 per cent who experienced it and 19 per cent who witnessed it felt the school responded well • 81 per cent felt discrimination impacts mental health (60 per cent average) • absenteeism rates: 51 per cent (38 per cent average) due to mental health: 52 per cent (21 per cent average)
Attention	• 80 per cent report difficulty paying attention (61 per cent average)
Eating habits/safe spaces	• least likely to eat breakfast: 43 per cent (61 per cent average)

QUEER Analysis

The QUEER analysis, derived from the SWOOP framework, offers a comprehensive evaluation of services for 2SLGBTQIA+ youth in our community. This holistic approach assesses strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, obstacles and perspectives and emphasizes positive thinking. The analysis aims to identify gaps, enhance support and guide future actions over the next decade. Key recommendations include increased investment in research, employment opportunities (2SLGBTQIA+ support positions), youth spaces and voices, along with updating policies to prioritize the 2SLGBTQIA+ community.

Q - Quality (positive thinking):

Existing programs focus on psychological and self-fulfillment needs. Priorities include safe spaces for socializing, artistic expression and connecting with dedicated organizations.

The Youth Project (YP), a non-profit organization, exemplifies these efforts by providing support, programming, and education for 2SLGBTQIA+ youth under 25 province-wide.

Limited scan of existing services, spaces and events

Queer-led/Queer-inclusive spaces	• Wonderneath, MacPhee Centre, HeArt, Power House, Queer Creatives Space, Cape and Cowl, North Grove, YMCA, Game Knight, HalCon, Discovery Centre, Halifax Public Libraries, Glitter Bean, St Andrews Church
Queerness plus projects	• WaGE-funded support at YP for queer BIPOC by Rae and Calendula • WaGE-funded Youth Advisory Council pilot through Gender Affirming Care Nova Scotia • Public Health Agency of Canada funded Queer Black mental health support at YP by Kay Mac • YP and South House collaborate for "Crip Club" for disabled queer individuals • Rainbow Refugees supports 2SLGBTQIA+ refugees • Ahrthyh Arumugam, 2SLGBTQIA+ Youth Coordinator at YWCA
Queer/Pride events	• Halifax Pride youth programming, including a youth dance • YP Summer Camps: Seahorse (for 2SLGBTQIA+ youth) and Coyote (for trans youth)
Healthcare	• Halifax Sexual Health Clinic supports queer sexual health, trans healthcare and mental health care • Trans Closet Project: collaboration between NS Sexual Health and YP • NS Guidelines for Gender Affirming Care updated for reduced barriers • Some pharmacys offer testosterone injections and safe space • YP's Gender Affirming Garment Program

U – Unstable (challenge thinking):

The challenges faced by 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals are evident in deficiencies related to basic needs like safety, shelter, warmth, food and healthcare. Disproportionate housing insecurity, disability, food insecurity and mental health issues prevail, impacting crucial life skills. Limited access to inclusive spaces, especially for disabled individuals, poses challenges. Physical spaces, even when accessible, may not be safe for queer and trans people. Disabled students, in particular, face intersections of queerness and disability, affecting their sense of belonging. The lack of mandatory support for 2SLGBTQIA+ youth in the public education system leads to higher rates of discrimination. Outdated policies and insufficient funding contribute to this issue. Existing youth spaces often exclude those under 12, creating a programming void for early developmental years. Additionally, there is a shortage of support for 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals over 18, impacting healthcare, employment, social opportunities and resource access. Addressing these challenges is required before focusing on fostering creativity and play.

Barriers to fulfilling basic needs

Health care	• Queer-specific healthcare is underfunded • informed consent model challenges • letters of readiness take a long time and are expensive • gender-affirming surgeries require travel out of the province • gender-affirming garments are hard to attain and keep • hormone injection supplies expensive
Food security	• limited food support hours (open during school time) • barriers at food banks (ID, discrimination/safety concerns) • inadequate school food programs •no dedicated food literacy programs
Housing	• lack of sufficient population data • higher rates of poverty and homelessness • lack of queer-specific shelters • safety challenges with existing shelters • gin support programs (specific requirements) • impact hinders daily functioning
Accessibility	• intersection of queerness and disability • inadequacies in accessibility standards • impact on mental health • burden on disabled youth • limited information on accessibility • limited safe spaces

E – Endeavour (possibility thinking)

Future endeavours should:

Embrace a holistic perspective, recognizing the interconnectedness of challenges faced by 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals. This approach should consider emotional, mental, socio-cultural, economic, historical and institutional factors.

Foster equitable support, adopting an anti-racist, trauma-informed approach, incorporating harm reduction principles and promoting inclusivity. This ensures that support and services are provided equitably to all members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community.

Include 2SLGBTQIA+ youth and community, allowing them to lead and provide essential insight and useful, wanted solutions. This approach fosters not only survival but flourishing.

Prioritize the basic needs of the 2SLGBTQIA+ youth community, aligning plans with existing Strategic Priorities outlined in the Youth Services Plan, ensuring coherence and effectiveness in addressing community needs.

E – Elusive (contingency thinking)

Existing services face limitations due to challenges like insufficient data, underfunding, outdated policy and the lack of dedicated support for 2SLGBTQIA+ youth. Immediate attention is crucial, requiring ongoing discussions and proactive steps from government, healthcare, education and community services. Community consultation and participation are advised, with a call for leveraging existing data and involving active youth committees to advocate for action.

R - Reflect and replenish (planting seeds for the future)

This report highlights strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and obstacles for 2SLGBTQIA+ youth in the Halifax region. The QUEER analysis highlights existing positive contributions but exposes critical gaps, emphasizing the urgency of addressing basic needs disparities. The intersectionality of queerness with disability and other identities calls for generalized support and tailored assistance. Looking ahead, the entire municipality must adopt a holistic, youth-led approach, prioritizing support for queer and trans youth. Collaboration with the provincial government is essential for affirming and safe support for all 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals. Establishing a genuinely inclusive environment is imperative for a fair and functional municipality, resonating as a collective responsibility. Fostering inclusivity is vital for the health and prosperity of everyone, ensuring a legacy of understanding and support for future generations.

Conclusion

The following recommendations are limited by the scope and timeline of this project and are proposed as an initial call for further research and action by Parks & Recreation’s Youth section employees. This work must be expanded and improved upon with consultation and collaboration from diverse voices within the 2SLGBTQIA+ community.

INSTITUTION/SECTOR	RECOMMENDATIONS
Municipal government	• conduct an environmental scan of existing data/resources • targeted survey for 2SLGBTQIA+ youth • workshops on 2SLGBTQIA+ identity and trauma-informed practices • consultation with the 2SLGBTQIA+ community • acknowledge the benefits of supporting the 2SLGBTQIA+ community which will comprise at least 25 per cent of the municipality’s population as younger generations enter the workforce
Programming	• inclusive curriculum design for all ages • multigenerational queer events • inclusive policies for addressing 2SLGBTQIA+ discrimination
Facilities	• free hygiene and queer safer sex products in public spaces • training for front line staff on how to support queer youth
Food security	• identify youth spaces and programs where snacks or refreshments could be provided
Accessibility	• conduct facility accessibility audits • post public information about accessibility of community spaces • increased funding for inclusion support workers • recognize universal impact of disability; promoting access benefits all individuals, regardless of current abilities The care that we set up for our community today is the care that will support us ALL in the future



Conclusion and next steps

This report highlights several youth programs and events that have taken place within the municipality. The feedback received from the youth at virtual and in-person engagement events was positive. This shows the positive impact that the municipality and its partners are having on the youth in communities throughout our region.

Next steps:

1. continue to provide an annual information report to the Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee (CPED) regarding trends, issues, best practices and actions taken with respect to youth programming
2. continue to work with staff, partners and youth to implement and evaluate the Youth Services Plan
3. continue with the implementation and support of youth-dedicated spaces
4. implement the final year of the Youth Services Plan
5. begin collecting statistics and information for the next Youth Services Plan

