

Nelson: Community Profile

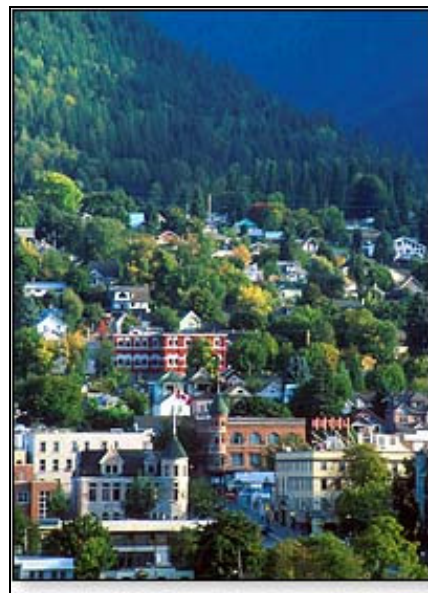
Written by the Nelson CARES Society with Measuring Up at 2010 Legacies Now

Nelson, British Columbia is a city that embraces community, accessibility and inclusion. It is not only a community steeped in history, it is also a place where change occurs for the betterment of all individuals. We are a community that recognizes growth and works hard to collectively stick up for each other and the values we stand for. It is easy to understand why Measuring Up has been so successful in Nelson, B.C. The community embraces inclusion and we are proud of the many projects we have started and completed during our time with Measuring Up. We are confident our community sets a unique example for other communities to use as a guide for success.

The key to our success is our well-developed Measuring Up Committee that was brought together in the spring of 2008. The committee gave individuals from many different sectors a chance to communicate and assess the situations around Nelson regarding accessibility and inclusion. The committee discussed and came up with a well-defined outline of our community's barriers and offered another well-defined outline of suggestions to overcome those barriers. These suggestions provided our committee and our community with a clear base for Nelson to develop the projects that were put in motion. The Nelson CARES Society received \$15,000 in funding from the 2010 Legacies Now Measuring Up Fund in 2007, and another \$20,000 in funding in 2008.

As mentioned, Nelson is a very community-minded city, so a public call-for-proposals was used to foster community involvement in the project development phase. It is extremely important to have community awareness developed around the issues of accessibility and inclusion, and the public call-for-proposals opens the doors to any individuals, businesses and organizations to get involved in the Measuring Up initiative. These proposal applications were evaluated by the committee's jury and projects were selected for completion.

Our projects span the four goals of Measuring Up: economic participation, support services, community contribution, and access to information. We are very proud of the diversity of our projects and the fact that they span the entire framework of Measuring Up. We have created a guide for employers, called "Why Hire People with Disabilities? Support for Employers." We have helped fund the building of a wheelchair ramp and wheelchair lifts in three different locations around Nelson. Lastly, we funded a Retail Training Program at a local store. During the last few months of 2009,



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www.city.nelson.bc.ca/





we went out into the community and celebrated the many supporters of community inclusion, particularly the businesses and organizations that offer so much to persons with disabilities.

Our projects offer sustainability and promote community awareness, ensuring that more places of business and organizations will also continue to support and promote accessibility and inclusion. Our community continues to grow and learn, but is in the right direction so that the terms “inclusion” and “accessibility” become part of an everyday language and an everyday reality.

Introduction to Community

Nelson is in a part of British Columbia that has raw beauty and wild surroundings. When travelling to Nelson, one has to purposefully go there, instead of just happening upon it on the way through the province. Nelson is located on the West Arm of Kootenay Lake, at the Junction of Highway 3A and Highway 6. It is approximately eight hours from Vancouver, B.C. As the city is located in B.C.’s interior and on a lake, Nelson is a mecca for outdoor enthusiasts. Nelson provides adventure for anyone interested in sailing, skiing, biking, hiking, camping, mountaineering and sunbathing. The winters are known for deep powder on the ski slopes and the summers are known for sun-filled, hot days.

Nelson is a unique and historical town in the heart of the Kootenays. Nelson has a population of just under 10,000, and is proud of its small-town feeling, with city-like amenities. The City of Nelson was incorporated in 1897 after a rush of people came to the area in search of silver and gold. Now, when one visits Nelson, it is like a trip back in time. Historical buildings preserve years of history and charm. The city streets are busy, but do not take away from the quiet, relaxed and pleasant atmosphere. Nelson is a strong, supportive community, which prides itself on thriving, locally-owned businesses and home-grown values. Volunteerism and activism are also popular, which gives the city a feeling of togetherness and unity.


Why Nelson Became Involved in Measuring Up

Nelson is a place where people care about others. It is apparent in the many clubs and organizations that support community involvement. Measuring Up was launched in Nelson through Nelson CARES Society after City Council endorsed the Measuring Up Initiative. Council was aware of Measuring Up through 2010 Legacies Now and was supportive of the concept of accessibility and inclusion.

The Process Nelson Followed to Implement Measuring Up

Once funding was received, Deb Kozak, Nelson CARES Society’s Career Development Services Coordinator at the time, coordinated the Measuring Up process, by first organizing a Measuring Up Committee. Establishing a committee was instrumental in





the success of Measuring Up as a whole! The development of the committee was done by following the suggestions from the Measuring Up Guide.

Deb Kozak was (and is) a very well-known and respected community member. Currently, Deb Kozak is on City Council, and an active resident of Nelson. Through her guidance and strong community connections, she established a list of individuals from a wide variety of groups and areas who may have been interested in participating on the committee. Deb knew she needed representatives to be not only citizens with disabilities, but to be from various sectors of Nelson, such as Chamber of Commerce, local businesses, seniors' community, school district, service providers and the citizens of Nelson. Many of these people she knew personally, but the key to a dynamic, successful committee is through the various and diverse sectors selected.

Deb's development of the Measuring Up Committee in Nelson is an excellent example for other communities to follow, especially with regards to who to contact for possible interest in a Measuring Up committee. Here is an example of organizations and types of sectors one may want to explore as potential Measuring Up committee members:

- Members of City Council;
- Chamber of Commerce, Lion's Club or Rotary Club executive members;
- Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB);
- Community Living British Columbia;
- Educators - namely, special education teachers or administrators;
- Local community foundations or trusts, such as Columbia Basin Trust;
- Senior citizens association;
- Locally-owned businesses, particularly ones that may currently employ or are connected to individuals with disabilities;
- Service providers from mental health, employment agencies, support care; and
- Community members with disabilities.

The committee itself was approximately 22 members strong, including business owners, educators, seniors, service providers and people with disabilities. The diversity of the committee is representative of the diversity of Nelson, proving the city's desire to be accessible and inclusive to people with disabilities. Once the possible committee members were identified, a letter was sent out as a formal invitation. The letter clearly outlined the commitment and invited the individual to determine if he or she would like to commit to the Measuring Up Committee. The committee met in early spring of 2008, initially following the guidelines of the Measuring Up Guide to assess the current situation in Nelson, and then to set priorities and develop criteria for project submissions.

The members, if they agreed to participate in the committee, were expected to attend three to four meetings, have their names in local media accompanied by a photo, and have their names included in a final report. The meetings would occur during a three-to-four-month period and were outlined as follows:





Meeting One

- Introduction of the project and presentation of community achievement levels.
- Group work to analyze achievement levels.

Meeting Two

- Setting community priorities.
- Setting project criteria and measures of success.


Meeting Three

- Establish a jury for project proposals, following project criteria and measurements of success.

These initial steps, such as a clear, detailed letter, are crucial in forming a successful committee. Clear, concrete outlines of what was to be expected provided the committee members with an understanding of what their commitment would entail. As well, the commitment would be for a relatively short period of time, but would have lasting results and make the committee members feel like there would be success and something tangible would happen from their dedication. Even now, after their commitment is done, the Measuring Up Committee members are interested in current Measuring Up progress, as they know their initial work set up a strong base that we used in selecting our projects.

The first couple of meetings were extremely important to the success of Measuring Up. The committee began to analyze the four pillars of Measuring Up and what the community's achievements were at each level. Each group made notes of their discussions and established areas of focus for Nelson in the aspects of accessibility and inclusion. The initial assessment of the community's achievements gave the committee a base from which to establish a set of community barriers, and recommendations for the community that may fit into possible Measuring Up projects. The committee identified the following barriers to be particularly considered in the context of Nelson:

- Attitudes;
- Access to public information;
- Rigidly-defined hiring and workplace practices (Example: lack of job redesign or modified hours);
- Inaccessible environments/structural barriers (Examples: lack of parking spaces for people with disabilities, no ramps, small bathrooms, narrow doorways, out-of-reach telephones and water fountains);
- Workspace barriers (Example: work stations and filing cabinets);
- Fragmentation of services and supports;
- Lack of sign language interpreter services;
- Inaccessible special equipment;
- Inadequate and unaffordable housing; and
- Limited transportation, etc.



The committee also came up with the following recommendations, which were particularly helpful in determining project criteria, or areas of focus for the project selections:

- Create employer incentives;
- Develop a strong business case for employers to hire people with disabilities;
- Develop and use employer networks;
- One-stop shopping for information/resources - coordinate services and provide training for service providers;
- Awareness campaigns - accurate portrayals;
- Improve communication between employers/industry and service providers and people with disabilities;
- Develop a labour market/employment resource package;
- Provide workplace-based training for persons with disabilities;
- Promote workplace supports;
- Create flexible and appropriate jobs;
- Improve transportation;
- Create better housing choices;
- Develop emergency preparedness; and
- Create fully accessible and inclusive environments.


How Projects Were Chosen for Action

The committee had set up some great ideas for possible Measuring Up projects. The trick for any community is identifying key areas of need in the community, and then finding someone to put the project in motion. The committee chose to use a public call-for-proposals to solicit project ideas for Measuring Up funding. Committee members wishing to facilitate a project were encouraged to submit a proposal.

The choice to use a public call-for-proposals was to further extend the community awareness around Measuring Up, and accessibility and inclusion. It is very important to have an aware community, and the use of a call-for-proposals system shows us that our community is becoming more and more aware of the issues of accessibility and inclusion. The first call-for-proposals resulted in one application, but the second call-for-proposals resulted in six applications. The awareness around accessibility and inclusion is growing!

A public call-for-proposals was presented to the community in spring 2008, and in June of 2008, a project was selected. A second call-for-proposals was submitted in spring 2009, and in June 2009, four projects were selected.

The first project, selected by the Measuring Up Committee in 2008, was a guide for employers to use for employing people with disabilities. It is clear that this project connects with the recommendations list. Not only does this guide develop a strong



business case for employers to hire people with disabilities, it is a comprehensive employment resource guide. Kootenay Career Development Society also provided funding in-kind to complete the project, which was under the direction and development of Beth Hargreaves. The guide provides detailed information for employers to use in developing their hiring process and job descriptions, as well as helpful tools to use when creating a supportive atmosphere for new employees. In April 2009, the guide was published: “Why Hire People with Disabilities? Support for Employers.” It is available in print, but also online at www.kcds.ca/.

In 2009, the Measuring Up Committee selected three physical accessibility projects. Nelson Municipal Library and The Kootenay Kids Society were awarded funding to assist in the purchase of a wheelchair lift in the renovation of their buildings. Both projects are set to begin in fall of 2009, with a completion date of 2010. Kootenay Co-op Radio was also awarded funding to complete the addition of a wheelchair ramp. The ramp will be fully completed by fall 2009. These three projects clearly connect with the committee’s recommendations to have fully accessible environments. Nelson is often an inaccessible place to get around because of steep hills or buildings with many stairs, and particularly tough to access if one uses a wheelchair or has a stroller. The buildings, particularly in the downtown core, are heritage buildings, which were constructed during a time when wheelchair ramps or universal design were not required.


The final project that was selected by the Measuring Up Committee in 2009 is a Retail-Training program for people with disabilities. The WIN Store, in Nelson, was awarded funding to pilot a project that would provide a two-week training program to individuals. The program is an excellent opportunity for many individuals, particularly individuals with developmental disabilities, to work in the retail sector. The program is also connected directly to the recommendations of the committee to develop a workplace-based training program for persons with disabilities.

Steps for Completion

Nelson is an extremely creative and involved community. Once the committee had a summary made of where the community needed focus, and had some recommendations, they felt that community members needed to be the ones putting forth a project. The first public call-for-proposals resulted in the proposal put forward by Beth Hargreaves and Kootenay Career Development Society (KCDS). Beth was a committee member as well, so she knew what the committee had recommended and could see how her employer, Kootenay Career Development Society, could utilize the funds well and produce a valuable product.

The development of the guide, “Why Hire People with Disabilities? Support for Employers,” was left to Beth Hargreaves’ discretion, but she did touch base with the Measuring Up coordinator to outline the progress of the guide. In February of 2009, Beth met with Alison Roy, Measuring Up coordinator for 2009, and presented an outline of the production and the launch of the guide within the coming months. Beth





announced the publication of the guide in April of 2009 and the guide can be found on KCDS's web site at www.kcads.ca. In addition, a public relations initiative was developed to promote the guide to local employers. The guide provides employers and service providers with a thorough overview of hiring persons with disabilities.

In 2009, when we reconnected with the committee, and wanted to do another set of projects, we sent out a public call for proposals again. Initially, a reconnection was made with the Measuring Up Committee. They suggested that all local non-profit organizations, clubs, and other community groups be contacted personally and told of the goals of Measuring Up. They also suggested a public call for proposals in the media. The presence out in the community was extremely successful. Different groups and individuals were able to call or contact the Measuring Up coordinator directly. Meetings were arranged and the coordinator could discuss ideas and provide insight into how to apply for the funding.

When all the proposals were in, the committee's jury had six projects to assess. Surprisingly, not all the projects were asking for the full amount of funding, so we were able to provide funding to multiple projects. The committee was extremely excited to have many projects on the move, and to touch on more of the recommendations of the committee.

Each project had a different process for completion. The committee determined the projects based on community needs and the goals of sustainability in the community. Following the same process that was done with the application from Kootenay Career Development Society, the application included a step-by-step guide for the submission of a project proposal and included a section on how the project would have an impact on the community in a tangible way. The completion of a large renovation project, such as the Nelson Municipal Library's expansion project, requires a lot of work and time, but our contribution to the lift is a key component to making the library fully accessible into their basement. Similar steps for completion will occur with Kootenay Kids Society as they wait for further funding to move the project entirely forward. The Kootenay Co-op Radio had organized a building committee to get the wheelchair ramp completed, and had everything in place for completion once funding was granted. Within a short period of time, the ramp was done, save a few extra additions.

Outcomes - Observed and Anticipated

Each project that has been selected by the Nelson Measuring Up Committee has different anticipated outcomes. It is easy to anticipate that if a building becomes universally accessible, it becomes a widely-used facility by all community members and visitors. We know that many of the services in our community are highly used, such as the local library or the Kootenay Career Development Society. A place like the Kootenay Co-op Radio can anticipate more volunteers participating in their programs and activities. One of their Board members has mobility barriers, so now she will be able to easily enter the building and participate in the happenings at the radio station. Similar outcomes will be observed at The Kootenay Kids Society and so on.





The development and publication of the Employer's Guide from KCDS has a number of different outcomes that we anticipate will happen, and have happened already. First of all, a complete training package will soon be available for employers to use when hiring someone with a disability. The guide is available at the offices of KCDS, but also online for more than just local, Nelson employers to utilize. The guide can be used for years to come, especially the helpful worksheets and guidelines for job descriptions and task lists. Statistics may change, but tools like these can be used over and over. We anticipate that the guide will contribute to the number of people with disabilities finding and maintaining employment in our community.

The retail-training program is a project that we hope to see continued from year to year, because of the success and partnerships that will be developed over time with local agencies and other retail businesses. Our anticipated outcomes would include:

- Increased confidence in the individual delivering the program, but also in the participants;
- Increased understanding of presentation and work-readiness skills;
- A recognized program in the community so that individuals with disabilities receive a credible foundation of skills;
- A transfer of employable skills to other work-settings in the community; and
- Improved employability of people with disabilities.

Sustainability Strategies


All but one of the projects are sustainable on their own. We are excited that we have chosen projects that will stand the test of time.

The processes of sustainability for the Employer's Guide are the following:

- It is folded into an existing, stable program (Employment Assistance Services at Kootenay Career Development Society);
- The guide will be shared with other service providers in the Nelson area;
- The information will be available online at www.kcds.ca;
- No more funding is required now that the guide is complete; and
- Minimal updating of content is required.

Sustainability of all wheelchair accessibility projects is maintained if the construction of the ramp or lift is maintained. The buildings as they stand are now universally accessible, even if the business or organizations leave the building site.

The Retail-Training Program does need more energy to be sustainable. The improvements in personal confidence and the understanding of skills during the program will provide initial sustainability. For continued sustainability of the program, we hope the initial development of the program will provide a base for future funding or partners in the program. Nelson CARES Society hopes to partner with the WIN Store



to build upon their retail training program as they go about developing a retail store, called the Earth Matters ECO Store, which will employ people with disabilities.

Next Steps

Nelson CARES Society is lucky to have coordinated the funding for Measuring Up. Within the Nelson CARES Society, a Supported Employment Program exists and there are plans to utilize the fabulous projects completed by Measuring Up. The Supported Employment Program can place its clients in the Retail-Training Program, or start having volunteers participate at the Kootenay Co-op Radio. Because the program places and supports individuals in the work environment, using and encouraging the use of the Employer's Guide to Hiring People with Disabilities will be a frequent occurrence.

In August of 2009, all projects had received their funding and were hoping to begin their process for completion; some were securing further funding prior to construction, and others were selecting participants for the training program. From September to December 2009, the Measuring Up coordinator concluded the year by recognizing and celebrating accessibility and inclusion in the community. Once again, the community was called upon, but this time to nominate those local gems (businesses, clubs and organizations) that really put in an extra effort to be accessible and inclusive. Once nominations were received, an assessment process began and it was determined whether the organizations measured up or not.

The formal recognition process was an extensive seven-week media and public awareness campaign. Community Living British Columbia (CLBC) joined with Nelson Measuring Up to develop the recognition package. The partnership was inspired by the introduction of a CLBC-supported window decal. Measuring Up joined with CLBC to promote the decal in the community and made it the heart of our community recognition package. Any business or organization that was nominated and recognized, would receive a congratulatory letter, certificate of achievement and a window decal to place in the window. Our seven-week media campaign started with an event recognizing the Nelson Leafs, our local hockey team, who do a number of activities that support community inclusion. At the event, we created awareness around community inclusion, Measuring Up and CLBC's "Start with Hi" campaign. Each week following the event for the Leafs,



Recognition Decal / Nelson CARES Society



a newspaper ad was done in the Express, a weekly paper that is also a supporter of community inclusion and the Supported Employment Program at Nelson CARES Society. The ad would feature a business or organization that supports community inclusion, and explain how that facility supports accessible and inclusive communities.

Community Partnerships

In Nelson, we all feel part of the community, but key partnerships are important. Because Measuring Up was coordinated through Nelson CARES Society, a strong partnership exists between the two. The communication out to the community and Nelson CARES Society board members is vital to the success of Measuring Up and the committee. Deb Kozak, the former Measuring Up coordinator, is now a City Councillor so her partnership is important to us. We hold it as a priority to keep her informed of all Measuring Up happenings and especially invite and welcome her to all events.

The continued communication with KCDS and Beth Hargreaves is instrumental for the success of the Guide for Employers, as well as future projects from Nelson CARES Society. Beth's experience and history with supported employment and hiring people with disabilities is paramount to the success of the ongoing projects of Nelson CARES Society's Supported Employment Program, as well as the successful selection of the Measuring Up projects for 2009.

Key Advice for Other Communities

The first few steps in beginning the Measuring Up process can be daunting. It is so important to reach out for broad-based community support, particularly when setting up a Measuring Up committee. It is also valuable for individuals from different disability groups to be on the committee, as it gives them a platform to talk and discuss issues in the community. Often these different individuals may not have this opportunity to interact with members from different disability groups. Finally, it is very important to establish community awareness around Measuring Up and accessibility and inclusion. Get the word out! Talk to your city council. Use the local media to get the news to the citizens.



Contact Information

For more information on this report or the Measuring Up projects in Nelson, B.C., please contact:

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We would also like to thank the following individuals for their time and effort in completing this report:

Debra Kozak, City of Nelson City Councilor and former Measuring Up Coordinator:



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Beth Hargreaves, EAS Manager and developer of “Why Hire People with Disabilities? A Guide for Employers,” and

Jan Wright, Executive Director, Kootenay Career Development Society:

