

**FCSS Asset Mapping:
Highlights & Recommendations
Public Release**

February 23, 2013

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1.0 Introduction

The Ponoka Family and Community Support Services (FCSS) Asset Mapping project was initiated to map Town and County of Ponoka assets, empower the community, bring about positive change and create sustainability for future generations. It was designed to gain insight into the community's current situation, gauge what is working well, identify gaps, and create a vision for improvement.

The Asset Mapping project involved four components:

1. **Service-Provider Asset Determination Survey:** Local agencies and organizations were surveyed to collect information about their programs, human resources and buildings and other physical assets, and whether they have been unable to fulfill any recent requests for services, programs etc. (e.g. because they lacked the resources to do so).
2. **Ponoka and Area Service and Facility Survey:** A survey was distributed by mail to households in the Town and County of Ponoka to gain insight into public opinion on local programs, service and facilities, their strengths, and where improvements might be needed.
3. **Ponoka Youth Survey:** A survey was distributed to grade 9-12 students in the Town and County of Ponoka to gain insight into the views of youth on leisure activities, problems and concerns, and sources of information and support.
4. **Newcomer Interviews:** Interviews were conducted with newcomers to Canada to gain insight into their experiences in various areas (e.g. employment, education and housing).

This report provides a summary of findings from the Service and Facility Survey, the Youth Survey, and the Newcomer Interviews. Response rates of the Service-provider Asset Determination Survey to date are provided, however the collection and compilation of data is ongoing and the findings will be presented at a later date.

2.0 Service-Provider Asset Determination Survey

2.1 Response Rates

Surveys were distributed to 91 agencies and organizations; of these, 28 returned completed surveys, including:

- Social agencies (9);
- Service clubs (1);
- Health and wellness organizations (4);
- Churches (1);
- Adult sports and recreation organizations (1);
- Youth sports and recreation organizations (10); and
- Arts and culture organizations (2).

3.0 Community Survey Highlights and Recommendations

3.1 Response Rates and Demographics

A total of 3,928 surveys were distributed by mail to households in the Town of Ponoka and Ponoka County. Of these, 175 surveys were completed for a response rate of 4.5%. One-half (47%) of respondents were aged 35 to 64 years. Seniors (aged 65 and older) comprised 40% of the sample and of those, a slight majority (59%) was 75 years or older. Three-quarters (79%) of respondents were female, with males most underrepresented in the young adult (18-34; 5%) and senior (65+; 17%) age categories. The majority (61%) of respondents had an annual income between \$40,000 and \$80,000; were married or living common-law (69%); owned their own home (88%); and had lived in Ponoka more than 15 years (68%).

3.2 Importance of Programs, Services & Facilities

Recreation

Respondents were asked to indicate whether a variety of programs, services and facilities were important to themselves personally or to someone they knew. Recreation facilities (e.g., the arena, Aquaplex) were important to the vast majority of respondents (93%) across all age groups.

Youth Programs

Respondents were asked to indicate the importance of youth programs generally, and of the Ponoka Youth Centre specifically. A slightly larger share felt youth programs in general were important (82%) than felt the Youth Centre was important (79%). Compared to older adults (ages 35-64), younger adults (18-34) were much more likely to view youth programs *in general* as important (91% versus 75% of older adults) and somewhat more likely to consider the Youth Centre to be important (81% versus 73%).

Specialized Supports & Services

The Ponoka Adult Learning Society and employment-related services were considered important by 75% and 72% of the sample, respectively. Least important programs and services were Parent Link (56%), Neighbourhood Place (58%), Champion Centre (64%) and County of Ponoka Literacy Society (65%). While these low ratings could reflect the specialized nature of the services (e.g. they are not used unless needed), they could also indicate a lack of knowledge about these more specialized programs and services. For each program or service, respondents were given the option of choosing “don't know”. About one-quarter of the sample did not know whether Ponoka Parent Link and Ponoka Neighbourhood Place were important (25% and 22%, respectively). Nearly three in ten (29%) respondents aged 18 to 34 did not know whether Healthy Families was important.

3.3 Improving Programs, Services & Facilities

Respondents were asked an open-ended question about how existing programs, services and facilities could be improved. Seventy-five individuals responded with a total of 129 recommendations. They were also asked to identify programs, services and facilities currently not available in Ponoka but considered important. Seventy-four individuals responded with a total of 97 recommendations.

Recreation

About one-third of responses to each of the two questions pertained to recreation. Among the most common were recommendations to develop a “multiplex” facility housing multiple sport, culture and recreation facilities/programs; upgrade existing recreation facilities; increase the variety of cultural and recreational programming; expand the walking trails and address the

problem of dogs off-leash on the trails; and lower the cost of recreation programs, services and facility usage. Several respondents also expressed an interest in an indoor walking track.

The results provide clear indication that recreation programs, services and facilities, along with their upkeep and improvement, are of importance to the community. While new facilities and improvements to existing ones are beyond the scope of FCSS, improving the accessibility and affordability of quality recreation programs and services, particularly among vulnerable or disadvantaged populations and across the age spectrum, may be within the FCSS mandate.

Several responses highlighted the importance of the walking trails and included recommendations for improving the trail systems, including its expansion and addressing concerns about dogs being let off-leash.

Social and Community Support Programs and Services

Nearly one-in-five recommendations pertained to improving or increasing social and community support programs and services. Recommendations included expanding the number and type of lifelong learning opportunities; increasing employment services and low-income housing options; and raising awareness of available services and supports, including supports for women in need of emergency shelter.

A few recommendations pertained specifically to the services offered by FCSS.

Town of Ponoka

Some respondents made recommendations about services offered by the Town of Ponoka. These included improving and expanding the recycling program; enforcing sidewalk snow-shoveling bylaws and providing more benches around town (to make it easier to walk around Ponoka for fun and fitness); increasing downtown revitalization efforts (e.g. reducing the number of vacant buildings); and ensuring the Town website is up-to-date.

Services for Seniors

Several responses pertained to services for seniors. These included providing more and better quality programs, services and facilities for seniors generally and more housing options, more information about Home Care, and more transportation options specifically.

Information

Survey respondents identified a need for better access to information about programs, services and facilities, as well as better information-sharing across local agencies and broader distribution of the Ponoka News.

Recommendations

1. FCSS might consider taking the lead in strengthening inter-agency relationships, for example by helping to build the membership of Ponoka's inter-agency network (and helping to ensure it is inclusive of all sectors) and taking steps to identify and address barriers to participation in the network.
2. FCSS might help build capacity within the inter-agency network for information sharing (e.g. how do agencies currently share information with one another and with the public; are any of these methods particularly effective and if so, can they be adopted by other agencies?).
3. FCSS could work with the Ponoka News to enhance the newspaper as a vehicle for distributing information about local programs, services and facilities (e.g., FCSS could consider sponsoring a weekly section). FCSS could also share the survey findings with the Ponoka News and highlight the concern that the paper is not being delivered to all areas.
4. The survey results highlighted the fact that information should be distributed in ways that are appropriate for the intended audience. Information aimed at younger audiences (e.g. parenting information) may be effectively distributed online, but older residents may have limited access to the Internet / fewer computer skills and may be more likely to access information about relevant programs/services through mail-outs or in-person presentations. FCSS might raise awareness of this among local agencies, and offer to help agencies develop modes of information-sharing that are most appropriate for their intended audience.
5. FCSS might consider coordinating, hosting and/or funding in-person (and possibly multi-agency) information sharing sessions (e.g. presentations or conversations) to provide information about local programs, services and facilities to targeted population groups in places they gather. For example, FCSS could coordinate a multi-agency information sharing presentation (or perhaps

designate a spokesperson) to provide information of interest to individuals at the Ponoka Drop-in Centre or the Rising Sun Clubhouse on a regular (e.g., monthly) basis. This not only serves as a means of conveying information, but can also help strengthen the lines of (two-way) communication generally and help raise the profile of FCSS in the community.

Commerce

One of the most common responses to the question of how existing services could be improved pertained to the lack of shopping options in Ponoka. Increasing the number and variety of stores, as well as ensuring all businesses were wheelchair accessible, were the primary recommendations.

Youth Programs

A few responses concerned youth programs, with respondents indicating a need for before-school care and increased funding for school field trips and teachers.

Additional recommendations pertaining to youth are provided below, in the section summarizing the results of the Ponoka Youth Survey.

3.4 Sources of Information

The survey included questions about how respondents access information about programs, services and facilities. Nearly all (98%) cited the Ponoka News as a main source of information; 94% cited word of mouth; and 80% said they phone the agency or facility when they need information about programs, services and facility usage. The Ponoka News and word of mouth were the most important sources of information across all age categories.

Websites were least often cited as important sources of information. This may reflect the older age demographic of the sample, though comments were also made that websites are often not up-to-date and this could deter their use.

Respondents were asked to indicate where they thought information should be available, and the most common responses were posting information in public places, such as posters or brochures in grocery stores and in places people gather, and distributing information by mail.

4.0 Youth Survey Highlights and Recommendations

The Youth Survey sought input from local teens on how they spend their free time; barriers to participating in activities they feel they would enjoy; things they worry about or experience problems with; the adequacy of information available to them; and the quality of life in Ponoka. The results of this survey and recommendations are presented in this section. Results are presented for the entire sample and by gender and place of residence (Town of Ponoka, Ponoka County, and Other Communities).

4.1 Response Rates and Demographics

An electronic version of the Youth Survey was made available to students attending Ponoka Composite High School, St. Augustine's School, Ponoka Christian School, Crestomere School and Mecca Glen School. A paper survey was distributed to students attending Ponoka Outreach School, and was available at the Ponoka Youth Centre. The survey was promoted through social media (Facebook) and word of mouth. A total of 164 surveys were completed. Of these, 61% were completed by students at Ponoka Composite High School; 21% by students at St. Augustine's School; and 18% by students at Ponoka Outreach School. No surveys were submitted from students at the remaining schools.

Total Sample Demographics

Males and females were equally represented (49% and 51%, respectively). There was roughly equal representation across grades, with 22% of the sample comprised of grade 9 students, 30% of grade 10 students, 21% of grade 11 students, and 27% of grade 12 students. One-half (53%) of the sample lived in the Town of Ponoka, and one-quarter (26%) lived in the County of Ponoka (e.g. on a farm or acreage). The remainder reported living in a community other than Ponoka.

Demographics by Place of Residence

Of youth living in either the Town or County, 67% resided in Town and 33% in the County. Of the Town and County sample, 54% was male, and respondents were roughly equally distributed across grades. The majority attended PCHS (71%), followed by St. Augustine's (22%) and Ponoka Outreach School (7%).

The sample residing in the Town of Ponoka was comprised nearly equally of males and females (53% and 47%, respectively) and was distributed fairly evenly across grades 9 through 12, though grade 11 students were somewhat underrepresented, comprising 17% of the sample. Students were most likely to be attending PCHS (64%), followed by St. Augustine's (27%). Few students attended the Outreach School (9%).

The sample residing in the County was slightly more likely to be male (57%) and in grades 11 (36%) and 12 (32%), with grade 9 students the most underrepresented (10%). A large majority attended PCHS (84%) followed by St. Augustine's (13%). Just 3% attended the Outreach School.

Of the respondents indicating that they resided in another community, the majority were female (67%), though males were also well-represented. More than half were grade 9 and 10 students (63%), though one in five (21%) respondents was in grade 12. The majority attended the Ponoka Outreach School (62%), followed by PCHS (24%) and St. Augustine's (14%).

4.2 How do Youth Spend their Free Time?

Employment

Employment is a common activity among the youth of Ponoka. Nearly half of those surveyed are working (47%) and of those, about one-in-ten are working 20 or more hours per week (15%). While males are slightly less likely than females to work (53% compared to 43%, respectively), those that are working are more likely to be working 20 or more hours per week (22% of employed males compared to 8% of employed females).

Notably, these percentages include data from youth residing in other communities. When looking only at youth in the Town or County of Ponoka, the share of respondents working is even higher, with 59% of the Town and County sample employed and of those, 16% working 20 or more hours per week. County youth are somewhat more likely than Town youth to work (68% versus 54%, respectively), although Town youth are more likely to work 20 or more hours per week (21% compared to 10%, respectively).

Volunteer Work

One-third of youth surveyed reported doing volunteer work either regularly or on occasion. Females are slightly more likely to volunteer than males (35% versus 30%, respectively), and youth residing in either the Town or County of Ponoka are more likely to volunteer than their counterparts living in other communities (37% versus 24%, respectively). Youth residing in the County are as likely as those residing in the Town to volunteer (36% and 37%, respectively).

Leisure Activities

A series of questions explored how youth spend their free time, what activities youth are not participating in but would like to, and possible barriers to participation.

Respondents were asked to list their three favourite ways of spending free time; 388 valid responses were collected and are summarized in Table 1 below. The table shows that youth most enjoy individual and/or team sports, socializing with friends, electronics-based entertainment (playing video or computer games; going on the Internet), and pursuing hobbies or interests, such as reading, music, mechanics/building and art.

Table 1: Favourite ways of spending free time

	% (100)	N (388)
Sports (team/individual)	25	97
Socializing with friends	21	81
Video or computer games, Internet	18	69
Hobbies and interests	16	62
Watching TV / movies	6	25
Spending time with family	4	16
Working (paid job or at home)	3	12
Other	7	26

Youth were then asked whether they feel they spend enough time doing the one activity they enjoy the most and if not, why not. Most youth feel they spend enough time doing what they most enjoy (84%), and males and females are equally likely to feel this way (82% and 83%, respectively). Youth residing in the Town however are much less likely than County youth to feel they spend enough time participating in their favourite activity (76% versus 97%, respectively). Of youth residing in other communities, 81% stated they spend enough time doing their favourite activity.

Overall (total sample), youth who do not feel they spend enough time doing their favourite activity are most likely to attribute this to a lack of free time (73%), with females more likely than males to report lack of free time as a barrier (49% versus 39%, respectively). Location is another factor, with 36% of respondents attributing their lack of participation to the lack of availability of the activity in or near their place of residence. Males and females were equally likely to cite this reason. Cost was cited as a reason for not participating as much as desired by 28% of the sample, with males slightly more likely to report this (17% versus 14%, respectively). Finally, one-quarter of youth who do not spend enough time participating in a favourite activity attribute this to having no one to participate with (24%), and males and females were equally likely to choose this reason.

Results for this question did not differ by place of residence; youth residing in Town, County and other communities were about equally likely to cite lack of free time as the main barrier, followed by location, cost and no one to participate with.

In another question, youth were given a list of leisure activities and were asked to indicate whether they participate in each. If they did not participate, they were asked whether this was by choice and if it was not, they were asked to provide reasons for not participating. The data show that youth are most likely to be spending their leisure time watching movies at home¹ (87%); spending time with friends (82%); playing video, computer or electronic games (80%); and going to the movie theatre (76%).

Activities youth are least likely to engage in include participating in the arts (e.g. drama, music, drawing; 36%); going to cultural events (e.g., live theatre, festivals; 32%); and visiting a

¹ Due to an oversight by survey developers the option of “watching TV” was not included in the list of activities, though this activity was captured in other questions.

museum, art gallery or other cultural facility (14%). However, many indicated that these are interests they would like to pursue. While just 14% of youth surveyed visit cultural facilities, 40% of those who do not presently do so indicated that they would like to start. Of those not attending cultural events, more than one-quarter (28%) would like to do so, and of those not participating in the arts, one-fifth (21%) would like to start. Females were more likely to want to participate in the arts (22% versus 16%) and visit a cultural facility (43% versus 33%), but the share of males wanting to participate in these activities was also noteworthy and males were, in fact, slightly more likely than females to indicate that they wanted to attend a cultural event (30% versus 25%). When the data pertaining to interest in arts and culture were analyzed by place of residence, this interest was found to be particularly high among residents of other communities (with 48% expressing an interest), but interest remained high among Town (37%) and County (39%) youth.

While less than one-third of youth take courses outside of school (31%), 36% of those not taking courses expressed an interest in doing so. This figure was higher among females (44%) than males (28%). Nearly one-quarter of the total sample (23%) would like to take an exercise or fitness class, and this is reflective of both males and females. This figure is slightly higher among youth of other communities (33%), but also reflects the interests of youth residing in the Town (25%). Youth residing in the County, however, are much less likely to want to take an exercise or fitness class (16%).

Less than one-in-five youth reported that they participate in activities at the Ponoka Youth Centre (17%). Of those not participating, nearly one-quarter (23%) expressed an interest in doing so, and females were twice as likely as males to want to participate (29% versus 14%). Youth residing in other communities were the most likely to express this interest (40%) followed by youth residing in the County (23%). Youth residing in town were the least likely to want to start going to the Youth Centre (16%).

The results presented so far have distinguished between youth living in the Town of Ponoka, Ponoka County and other communities. It is also useful to present the combined Town and County youth data, as this will provide a clearer picture of the activities Town and County youth, as a group, are most interested in pursuing. The results excluding data from youth residing in other communities are presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Activities Town & County youth would like to start participating in

	Town & County (%)
Visit a museum, art gallery or other cultural facility	37
Take courses	36
Go to a cultural event	30
Work out	28
Take exercise or fitness classes	22
Participate in other physical activities for fun and fitness	22
Participate in the arts	20
Attend spectator sporting events	19
Participate in individual sports	19
Attend the Youth Centre	19

There are some interesting differences between Town and County youth. County youth are more likely than their Town counterparts to want to start:

- Going to the movie theatre (23% versus 13%);
- Hanging out with friends (16% versus 8%); and
- Going to the Youth Centre (23% versus 16%).

Town youth, on the other hand, are more interested than County youth in participating in:

- Team sports (19% versus 7%);
- Individual sports (21% versus 13%);
- Exercise / fitness classes (25% versus 16%);
- Working out (36% versus 13%);
- Other physical activities (26% versus 13%); and
- Taking courses (42% versus 23%).

These findings suggest that County youth are lacking opportunities for social interaction, while Town youth may benefit from more structured or organized activities focusing on self-improvement.

In a final question on leisure activities, youth were given a list of clubs and organizations and were asked to indicate which, if any, they were currently registered in. If they were not registered, they were asked to specify whether this was because they did not want to participate, or wanted to participate but were unable. The majority of respondents were not registered in any of the programs listed, which included church youth groups (16% participated); Ponoka Cadets (11%); Big Brothers / Big Sisters (10%); 4-H (9%); and Scouting and Guides programs (3% and 2%, respectively).

The majority not participating indicated that they preferred not to. However, 12% of the sample would like to participate in Big Brothers / Big Sisters and 12% in 4-H as well. Reasons for not participating (in all programs) included lack of knowledge or resources (e.g. respondents were interested in 4-H but did not live on a farm) and lack of time. Just two respondents cited cost as a barrier and one cited transportation. There were no notable gender differences or differences by place of residence.

Leisure Activities: Summary and Recommendations

To summarize, the results suggest that:

- Youth are most likely to spend their leisure time participating in sports, socializing with friends, playing electronic games or using the Internet, and pursuing hobbies or other interests.
- Most youth feel they spend enough time participating in the leisure activities they most enjoy, though Town youth are least likely to feel this way.
- To the extent that youth feel they do not spend enough time doing what they enjoy, they are most likely to attribute this to a lack of free time. Lack of free time may be due in part to employment; while Town youth are slightly less likely than County youth to be employed, those that are employed are more likely to be working 20 or more hours per week.
- Lack of opportunity to participate in favourite activities in or near Ponoka, cost, and having no one to participate with are also barriers to participating in favourite leisure activities. These barriers are experienced by males and females and by youth living in the Town and the County.

- While many youth participate in hobbies, including those of an artistic or expressive nature, many would also appreciate opportunities to participate in the arts, attend cultural events and visit cultural facilities. In fact, more than one-third of youth surveyed who do not already spend their leisure time in these ways would like to start doing so.
- Few youth take courses outside of school, but one-third of those not doing so would like to start. This interest is particularly strong among females and youth residing in town.
- Less than one-in-five youth attend the Youth Centre, but nearly one-quarter of County youth and 16% of Town youth not attending would like to start. Females are particularly likely to want to start attending the Youth Centre.
- Comparing Town and County youth, County youth are lacking opportunities for social interaction, while Town youth are largely interested in greater opportunities to participate in structured / organized activities focusing on self-improvement / learning.

4.3 Opinions

Youth were asked to indicate whether they agreed with a series of statements reflecting opinions on how they spend their time (e.g. I'm bored a lot of the time), and on dealing with problems, sources of support, and access to information on a variety of topics. The results are discussed in this section and are followed by recommendations.

Activities

Respondents indicated whether they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements about activities, including whether they feel there is enough to do in Ponoka, whether there are enough places to hang out with friends, whether they are bored a lot of the time or usually find things to do, whether the activities they like to do are affordable, and whether they spend enough time with family and with friends.

Most youth agreed that there are “not enough places to hang out with friends” (82%), that they are “bored a lot of the time” (68%), and that there is “not enough to do” in Ponoka (79%), though the majority also reported that they usually find “something fun to do” with their free time (84%). These findings suggest that teens are filling their free time, but perhaps not in ways or in places that they consider ideal. Over half (64%) strongly or somewhat agreed that the “stuff I really

want to do is too expensive.” Asked if they feel they spend enough time with their family and with their friends, 86% felt they spend enough time with family and 71% with friends.

For the most part, males and females held similar opinions. They were equally likely to feel that there is not enough for teens to do in Ponoka; that they are bored a lot of the time but that they do usually find something to do with their free time; and that they spend enough time with their friends. However, males were more likely than females to feel that the activities they would most like to engage in are too expensive (69% versus 58% of females), while females were more likely than males to report that “there are not enough places to hang out with my friends” (87% versus 76%, respectively).

Analyzing the results by place of residence, it was found that youth residing in other communities are more likely to feel they are bored a lot of the time (81%, compared to 71% of Town and 55% of County youth), and are much less likely to feel that they spend enough time with their friends (52% compared to 81% of Town and 73% of County youth). They were, however, also more likely to report that they usually find fun things to do with their spare time (91% compared to 81% of Town and 84% of County youth).

When the responses of youth residing in other communities were removed from the dataset, it was found that more than three-quarters of youth residing in the Town and in the County agreed that there is not enough to do in Ponoka and that there are too few places to socialize with friends, but also agreed that they usually find something fun to do with their spare time (Table 3, below).

Table 3: Statements that greater than 75% of Town and County youth agree with

	Town (%)	County (%)
There’s not enough to do in Ponoka	84	77
There are not enough places to hang out with my friends	84	77
I usually find something fun to do with my free time	81	84
I spend enough time with my family	83	97

Table 3 also shows differences between Town and County youth. Town youth are more likely than County youth to feel that there is not enough to do in Ponoka and that there are too few places to socialize with friends. County youth, on the other hand, are more likely to feel that they usually find something fun to do and that they spend enough time with family. Comparing Town to County youth, the only other statement for which there was a notable difference (that is not included in the table above, which shows statements for which there was 75% agreement or more), concerned the cost of activities; 71% of County youth felt that activities in general are too expensive, compared to 60% of Town youth.

Problems / Support

Youth were asked whether they agreed with a series of statements describing problems or concerns that teenagers may have, as well as sources of support they feel are available to them. The responses were generally positive, with 76% of the total sample indicating that for the most part, they feel they have someone to talk to when they have a problem, and 79% indicating that they know how to get the information they need to help solve a problem.

Still, one-third of the sample (33%) indicated that they often have problems with family members and 28% indicated that they often have problems with their parents. One-quarter (25%) reported often having problems with their friends; more than one-quarter (28%) worry about violence at school or in the community; and 20% reported that other kids or their peers have been mean to them recently. In addition, 37% felt they spend too much time alone, and 19% felt they spend too much time with friends. While these figures do not represent the majority of youth, they are large enough to warrant attention.

Males and females were similar with respect to some items, including whether they often have problems with teachers, feel they spend too much time with their friends, and feel that when they have a problem they have someone to talk to or can get the information they need.

However, males were more likely than females to report that they:

- Often have problems with friends (28% versus 20% of females), parents (29% versus 23%) or other family members (38% versus 27%);
- Feel other kids or their peers have been mean to them recently (26% versus 13%);
- Worry about violence at school or in the community (29% versus 22%); and
- Feel they spend too much time alone (50% versus 25%).

Compared to youth residing in Town or the County, those residing in other communities were more likely to report that they often have problems with parents (33% versus 24% of Town and 26% of County youth) and with other family members (45% versus 33% of Town and 26% of County youth). Conversely, Town and County youth were more likely to report that other kids have been mean to them recently, and that when they have a problem they feel they have someone to talk to or can get the information they need (Table 4, below).

Table 4: Statements that youth agree with by place of residence

	Town (%)	County (%)	Other Communities (%)
Other kids / my peers have been mean to me recently	24	16	10
When I have a problem I have someone to talk to	86	81	50
When I have a problem I know how to get the information I need	86	87	63

Looking just at Town and County youth, it is notable that they were about equally likely to report that when they have a problem, they have someone they can talk to (86% of Town and 81% of County youth agreed) and can get the information they need (86% of Town and 87% of County youth agreed). However, some issues are much more significant to Town than to County youth, including:

- Spending too much time alone (41% of Town versus 23% of County youth);
- Having problems with friends (25% versus 19%);
- Spending too much time with friends (24% versus 13%);
- Having problems with other family members (33% versus 26%);
- Kids / peers being mean to them recently (24% versus 16%); and
- Worrying about violence (29% versus 19%).

The only issue of substantially greater concern to County than to Town youth was that they are more likely to report having problems with teachers (23% versus 13%, respectively).

Information

Respondents were asked whether they feel there is enough information available to them on a variety of topics. The top three areas where teens felt there was not enough information available were:

- Dealing with sexual orientation (40%);
- Coping with addictions of adult(s) around you (38%); and
- How to be less shy or more confident socially (37%).

Closely following these were information needs in the areas of:

- Dealing with relationship issues;
- Time management;
- Dealing with emotions / how you feel;
- Improving communication skills / being able to talk to people better;
- Dealing with violence / bullying / intimidation;
- Money management;
- Getting help for drug or alcohol abuse; and
- Dealing with problems at work.

For most items gender differences were not apparent; 30% or more of both males *and* females indicated a lack of information or help in the areas of:

- Dealing with sexual orientation issues;
- Coping with addictions of adult(s) around you;
- Time management;
- Dealing with relationship issues;
- How to be less shy or more confident socially;
- Dealing with emotions / how you feel;
- Money management;
- Getting help for drug or alcohol abuse; and
- Dealing with sexual health issues.

However, 30% or more of males, but not females, reported a lack of information or help in the areas of dealing with violence / bullying / intimidation (36%) and getting into better shape or losing weight (32%). Thirty percent or more of females, but not males, felt there was a lack of information or help in the areas of:

- Finding a job while in school or over the summer (33%);
- Dealing with problems with friends (32%);

- Dealing with problems at work (36%); and
- Improving communication skills / being able to talk to people better (39%).

When the results were analyzed by place of residence, it was found that youth residing in other communities were more likely than their Town and County counterparts to experience a lack of information or help in the areas shown in Table 5 (below).

Table 5: Lack of information/help by place of residence

	Other Communities (%)	Town (%)	County (%)
Problems with work	40	28	29
Dealing with drug / alcohol abuse	40	25	36
Violence / bullying / intimidation	40	26	36
Problems with friends	35	23	29
Problems with school	35	22	23
Finding a job	33	27	29

However, in most cases more than one-quarter of Town and/or County youth also identified a need for information or assistance in each of these areas. Other community youth were less likely than Town and County youth to have needs in the areas of career planning, post-secondary education, time management, peer pressure, and fitness.

Notably, in 18 out of 21 areas, County youth were more likely than Town youth to identify a lack of information or assistance. The only areas in which Town youth were more likely than County youth to identify gaps in information / assistance concerned dealing with peer pressure, coping with the addictions of adults around them, and dealing with sexual orientation issues. However, information / assistance needs in these areas were also reported by a large share of County youth.

Overall, youth residing in the Town and/or the County expressed a need for information and/or assistance in the following areas:

- Sexual orientation issues;
- Dealing with the addictions of adults around you;
- Time management;
- How to be less shy / more confident socially;
- Sexual health;
- Relationships;
- Dealing with emotions;
- Money management;
- Dealing with problems at work;
- Peer pressure;
- Communication skills;
- Fitness;
- Drug and alcohol abuse; and
- Violence / bullying / intimidation.

Summary and Recommendations

To summarize, the results suggest that:

- While youth generally find something fun to do with their free time, both Town and County youth feel there is not enough to do in Ponoka and many are bored much of the time.
- Just under one-third of the total sample felt they do not spend enough time with their friends; County youth are much more likely to feel this way than Town youth.
- Youth, and female youth in particular, would appreciate having more places in which they can socialize with their friends.
- Together, these results suggest that youth are finding ways to fill their free time, but perhaps not in ways or in places that they consider ideal.
- The majority (64%) of youth feel that the activities they would most like to do are too expensive. Males are more likely to feel this way than females, and County youth are more likely to feel this way than Town youth.

- For the most part, both Town and County youth feel they have someone to talk to when they have a problem and many feel they know how to get the information they need to help solve a problem.
- Still, a significant share of the sample often has problems with parents and other family members, has problems with friends or has experienced unkind treatment from peers, worries about violence at school or in the community, and feels they spend too much time alone. These problems are particularly significant for males and for youth residing in Town.
- Asked whether there is enough information or help available on a number of topics, youth generally stated that information and assistance is lacking. The greatest information needs were in the areas of sexual orientation, coping with the addictions of adults around them, and social skills development (e.g. becoming more confident / less shy).
- Males are particularly interested in information or assistance in the areas of dealing with violence / bullying / intimidation and getting into better shape or losing weight. Females are particularly interested in information or assistance in the areas of finding employment, dealing with problems with friends and/or at work, and improving communication skills.
- Information / assistance needs were generally more pronounced among County than Town youth.

On the basis of these findings, the following recommendations may be made:

1. Youth are resourceful and capable of finding ways to spend their free time. However, much of their free time appears to be spent participating in entertainment-based (and perhaps often solitary) activities, such as watching movies or playing video games. The results also indicate that boredom is an issue, and that teens would like more places to socialize and access to a greater variety of interesting (and affordable) activities.
2. Youth residing in the County may be particularly lacking in opportunities to socialize, and it may be useful to expand the range of after-school activities available to youth, with an emphasis on activities that provide opportunities for social interaction.

3. County youth were also more likely to feel the activities they would enjoy are too expensive. While the activities to which these feelings pertain are unknown, it is recommended that financial barriers to youth activities in general be reduced wherever possible (particularly given that 64% of youth in general feel the activities they would most like to do are too expensive).
4. Youth require information and support in the areas of sexual orientation, coping with addictions of adults around them, and social skills development.
5. Youth may require additional support in dealing with problems with family members and friends.
6. Youth may require additional support in dealing with violence (real or perceived) at school and in the community, and in dealing with / responding to unkind treatment by peers.
7. To address the issue of information needs more generally, community should consider developing, or helping to develop, an inventory of information sources available to youth to identify what is already available and to help identify and address gaps.
8. In addition to increasing the supply of information in ways that are accessible and appropriate, community should ensure mechanisms are in place to support teens as they access and utilize the available information. In other words, providing an informational brochure or pamphlet may not be enough.
9. Convey the information needs identified in this research to those who provide services and supports to youth and encourage them to engage in programming activities to increase the flow of information in these areas.

4.4 Lifelong Learning

Youth were asked whether they would be interested in learning about a variety of topics. The top three areas of interest of the total sample were:

- Outdoor activities (e.g., hunter training; survival; 78%);
- Computers / technology (70%); and
- Creative arts (drama; making art; creative writing; 69%).

Areas in which at least half of the sample expressed an interest were:

- Finances / money management;
- Sciences;
- Nutrition / healthy eating;
- How to build healthy relationships; and
- Video game or other game design.

The top areas of interest by gender are presented in Table 6 (below).

Table 6: Top areas of lifelong learning interest by gender

Males	Females
Outdoor activities (91%)	Nutrition / healthy eating (83%)
Computers / technology (69%)	Creative arts (81%)
Finances / money management (67%)	Fashion, hair, make-up (78%)
Trades (66%)	Sciences (75%)
Videogame or other game design (60%)	Computers / technology (73%)
Sciences (60%)	How to build healthy relationships (71%)

The vast majority of males were interested in opportunities to take courses related to the outdoors. Notably, females were interested in the traditionally male-dominated fields of science and computers/technology. This finding is positive and efforts should be made to cultivate these interests. Females were more interested than males in creative arts (81% versus 57%), fashion (78% versus 7%), nutrition (83% versus 48%) and relationship building (71% versus 59%), while

males were comparatively more interested in game design (60% versus 44% of females), trades (66% versus 31%) and outdoor education (91% versus 64%).

When considering the total sample with the data broken down by place of residence, the interest in some of the topic areas may reflect the interest of youth in other communities above that of youth in the Town or County. Areas of interest for which this may be the case are presented in Table 7 (below).

Table 7: Lifelong learning interests by location of residence

	Other Community	Town	County
Computers / technology	86	71	53
Game design	76	52	30
Sciences	76	64	63
Creative arts	91	71	47

While youth residing in other communities may account for a larger share of interest in these areas, in most cases the majority of youth residing in the Town and the County would also appreciate opportunities to pursue lifelong learning in these areas.

Some differences were observed between Town and County youth, with Town youth expressing a stronger interest in computers / technology (71% versus 53%), game design (52% versus 30%) and creative arts (71% versus 47%). County youth on the other hand expressed a much stronger interest in agriculture (57% versus 24%) and trades (70% versus 38%), and a slightly stronger interest in money management (73% versus 68%) and outdoor pursuits (87% versus 74%).

Summary and Recommendations

To summarize, the results suggest that:

- The vast majority of males surveyed would be interested in opportunities to take courses related to the outdoors.

- Four out of five females surveyed would be interested in opportunities to take courses in nutrition / healthy eating and the creative arts.
- Roughly two out of three males and nearly three-quarters of females surveyed expressed an interest in taking courses in computers / technology.
- Three-quarters of females surveyed are interested in taking courses in the sciences. Just 60% of males are interested in doing so.
- County youth expressed a stronger interest in courses related to agriculture and trades, while Town youth expressed a strong interest in computers / technology, game design and creative arts.

On the basis of these findings, the following recommendations may be made:

1. Efforts should be made to increase opportunities for youth to take courses in the above-mentioned areas. Courses should be affordable, conveniently located, and should be offered at times and on days (and for durations) that accommodate the busy schedules of young people.
2. Courses of greater interest to County youth or to Town youth should be marketed especially (though not exclusively) to those populations.
3. The interest expressed by females in the sciences and in computers / technology should not be overlooked. Females should be encouraged to pursue these interests and opportunities to do so should be readily available.
4. Community should convey the areas of interest to those providing services and supports to youth and encourage them to engage in programming activities to increase the opportunities available in these areas. For example, the Ponoka Youth Centre could assume some responsibility for initiating or enhancing programs in these areas.

4.5 Quality of Life in Ponoka

Youth were asked to rate the quality of life for teenagers in Ponoka. The results for the total sample were mixed, with just over one-half (58%) rating the quality of life as “good” and one-fifth (19%) rating it as “poor.” Just 3% rated it as “very good” and 6% rated it as “very poor.”

A greater share of Town youth rated the quality of life in Ponoka as good or very good (67% versus 60% of County youth), and a greater share of County youth rated it as poor (30% compared to 16% of Town youth). Females expressed greater dissatisfaction with the quality of life in Ponoka than males, with 53% rating it as good (vs. 62% of males) and 25% rating it as poor (vs. 14% of males).

Respondents were asked an open-ended question about what they would change about Ponoka. A total of 63 valid responses were collected and of these, about half (48%) were changes having to do with more opportunities for youth (“more to do;” n=30) and another 14% of responses were changes having to do with more recreational facilities (n=9). Other responses pertained to improving Town Council (n=7), increasing social support (n=7), and more shopping (n=5).

4.6 Youth Survey Overall Summary and Recommendations

Summary

The Youth Survey has provided valuable insight into ways youth spend their free time; activities youth would like to pursue and barriers to doing so; issues of concern and the availability of information and support; and the quality of life in Ponoka. Because the results of the survey will be used to make informed decisions in the interests of youth residing in the Town or County, the discussion of findings will be limited for the most part to those concerning Town and County youth.

Ponoka’s youth tend to be active. Nearly six-in-ten are working and many are working 20 or more hours per week. Over one-third are volunteering, either regularly or on occasion. Still, the majority feel they spend enough time participating in leisure activities, which center largely around sports, spending time with friends, going on the Internet or watching movies at home, playing video/computer games, and engaging in hobbies and other interests. Youth who do not

feel they spend enough time doing what they enjoy are, however, most likely to attribute this to a lack of free time. Cost is another barrier to participation in desired leisure activities, particularly among males and those residing in the County, as is having no one to participate with.

Despite keeping busy, the survey clearly showed that youth feel Ponoka offers limited opportunities for engaging in desired leisure activities. Many youth would appreciate opportunities to participate in the arts, attend cultural events and visit cultural facilities, and opportunities to take courses outside of school, work out, and take exercise or fitness classes. Many County youth would like more opportunities to socialize with friends, and youth in both Town and County would like more places in which to socialize.

A series of questions provided insight into problems or concerns that youth may have, as well as sources of support they feel are available to them. Responses were generally positive, with more than three-quarters indicating that they have someone to talk to or can get the information they need to help them solve a problem. Still, a number of issues became apparent. Many youth feel they spend too much time alone, and many reported having problems with parents, other family members and friends. Many worry about violence at school or in the community, and about one-in-five feel peers have been mean to them recently. Interestingly, youth residing in Town were more likely than those in the County to indicate that these were concerns for them, and males were more likely than females.

The survey also provided insight into the adequacy of information available to youth. Overall, the results indicated that youth feel there is not enough information available on a variety of topics, though County youth were somewhat more likely to feel information was lacking in most areas compared to Town youth. For both County and Town youth, the greatest need for information was in the area of sexual orientation, coping with the addictions of adults, and social skills development (e.g. becoming less shy or more confident socially). In addition, males expressed a need for information or assistance in dealing with violence, and getting into better shape, and females expressed a need for information in the areas of finding employment, dealing with problems with friends and/or at work, and improving communication skills.

With respect to the lifelong learning interests of youth, the vast majority of males would be interested in opportunities to take courses related to the outdoors, while females would appreciate opportunities to take courses in nutrition / healthy eating, the creative arts and relationship-building. Notably, females were also very interested in the traditionally male-

dominated fields of science and computers/technology, and County youth expressed a strong interest in agriculture and trades.

The survey concluded with questions about the quality of life in Ponoka and what youth would change about Ponoka if they could. Youth clearly do not view the quality of life as “very good,” although a slight majority believe it is “good.” County youth and females were more likely than Town youth to rate the quality of life as “poor,” though the reasons for this are not apparent from the survey data. If they could change anything about Ponoka, the majority of youth would create more for youth to do, including more recreational facilities.

Recommendations

1. Although youth find ways to fill their free time, they would appreciate more opportunities to participate in a greater variety of activities. Specifically, opportunities should be expanded in the areas of:
 - a. Arts and culture
 - b. Physical fitness; and
 - c. Lifelong learning.
2. Opportunities should be expanded for females to participate in the traditionally male-dominated areas of science and computers / technology.
3. Leisure opportunities should be designed and delivered in ways that are most appropriate for youth and minimize barriers to participation. Specifically, they should be:
 - a. Affordable;
 - b. Offered in locations that are convenient to youth who may not have easy access to transportation; and
 - c. Offered at flexible times and on a variety of days to accommodate the busy schedules of youth.
4. Youth spend much of their time engaged in entertainment-based and often solitary activities, and a significant share of youth reported that they feel they spend too much time alone. Opportunities to engage in social interaction should be expanded, and could be designed around the areas of interest noted above (arts and culture; physical fitness; lifelong learning). Youth residing in the County are particularly interested in having

greater access to opportunities for social interaction, and barriers to County youth participation should be identified and reduced.

5. As a means of expanding opportunities for youth (recommendations 1-4), Community might consider working with youth groups and organizations (e.g. Ponoka Youth Centre, church youth groups) already providing youth programming to help them build capacity to offer more opportunities for youth and reduce barriers to youth participation. For example, community could help build capacity for groups/organizations to organize and ensure the affordability of excursions to cultural facilities and events in urban areas; offer arts-based programs; offer fitness / exercise opportunities; and provide lifelong learning opportunities.
6. Youth identified a number of barriers to participating in activities that they would find enjoyable. It is recommended that community work with those providing youth programming to ensure they:
 - a. Address the barrier (real or perceived) of a lack of free time by designing and delivering programs and activities that are not time-intensive (e.g. that can be completed in an afternoon or an evening, and that are offered at a variety of times);
 - b. Address barriers associated with location; activities available only in larger urban centres may be brought to Ponoka on a smaller scale, or trips to the city to participate in urban activities may be arranged;
 - c. Address barriers associated with cost, through subsidy programs for individuals or by securing grants to offset the cost of programming or activities for all participants; and
 - d. Address barriers associated with “having no one to go with” (lack of social capital or connectedness) by ensuring programs or activities include ice-breakers and other ways of connecting participants who may not know each other and/or may be hesitant to engage because of shyness etc.; raise awareness of this barrier among program/activity providers and emphasize the importance of marketing programs/activities in ways that are inclusive of all youth.

7. Youth should be provided with support in dealing with:
 - a. Isolation (spending too much time alone);
 - b. Problems with parents, family members and friends; and
 - c. Violence / intimidation (real or perceived).

Consider agency partnerships to ensure support for dealing with isolation, interpersonal conflict and other concerns of youth is provided in ways that are accessible, appropriate and acceptable to youth.

8. Information needs should be addressed. An inventory of available information sources should be compiled and reviewed for adequacy, and youth should be provided with greater access to information in the areas of:
 - a. Sexual orientation;
 - b. Dealing with addictions of adults around them;
 - c. Social skills development;
 - d. Dealing with violence / bullying / intimidation; and
 - e. Getting into shape / losing weight.

In addition to increasing the supply of information, community should ensure information is delivered in ways that are easily accessible to teenagers and in formats that are appropriate and appealing to youth.

5.0 Newcomer Interviews Highlights and Recommendations

5.1 Introduction

In-depth interviews were conducted with 'newcomers' to Canada (individuals arriving in Canada within the past two years). The purpose of the interviews was to learn about newcomers' experiences in the areas of employment, housing, transportation, education, access to health care, social interaction, recreation, social support and quality of life.

The newcomer interview portion of this asset mapping project should be considered a work-in-progress. Recruitment challenges made it difficult to identify and contact newcomers to Canada, and despite posting recruitment notices at the local fast-food restaurants, where newcomers to Canada are known to work, and despite working with the County of Ponoka Literacy Society to identify potential interviewees and contacting newcomers known to the project team, two adults

and two youth were interviewed. The project team plans to continue efforts to recruit newcomer interviewees, and as interviews are conducted the findings will continue to inform decision-making and planning by FCSS.

Key learnings from the interviews are presented below and the section concludes with a series of recommendations.

5.2 Response Rates and Demographics

Twelve newcomers to Canada were identified as potential interview participants. Eight were unable to be contacted, and four agreed to participate in the interview.

5.3 Challenges

English as a Second Language

Interview participants reported that limited English language proficiency has had a major impact on their ability to adapt to life in Canada. They have found reading and writing in English to be difficult, but stated that understanding spoken English has been the most challenging. Despite learning English in school in their country of origin, pronunciation has presented a significant challenge.

Limited English language proficiency also had an impact on their ability to find employment. One interviewee described the impact of her limited English language proficiency on her ability to improve her employment prospects. She stated that she would like to pursue further education to gain the qualifications to work in her field, but that she did not feel she had sufficient English language proficiency to do so. Even finding information on how to pursue further education was felt to be an insurmountable barrier.

Limited English language proficiency has also had an impact on the interviewee's ability to fit into the mainstream community, and is felt to have had a negative impact on their quality of life. The interviewees described wanting to increase their social interaction and social connectedness, but holding back from participating in social activities and community events because they felt they lacked the English language skills necessary to communicate effectively / engage in social interactions.

Lack of English language proficiency was also felt to have had a negative impact on the interviewees' mental health / sense of well-being.

One youth also noted that he would like to go to university, but worries that his grades will not be high enough because his limited English language proficiency negatively affects his academic achievement.

The fourth interviewee, rated her English language skills as a 3 or 4 out of 10. She reported having occasional difficulty understanding customers at work, particularly when they spoke quickly. She did not consider her English language skills to have improved since arriving in Canada; she had not participated in ESL classes or tutoring at the time of the interview, though she expressed a desire to do so.

Social Isolation

Social isolation also emerged as a key theme. The interviewees reported that they spend most of their time engaged in solitary or family-oriented activities (reading, watching TV, going on the Internet, playing computer games) rather than participating in social activities or activities outside of the home. Asked "Would you like to belong to groups or clubs, or go out and do things with other people?" one interviewee replied "I would but I don't because it is hard when you can't speak the language or understand English very well."

Contributing to their sense of social isolation is Ponoka's lack of community representation from their native country, as well as uncertainty about the social norms for initiating social interaction. The family came from a large urban centre in their country of origin, and reported having difficulty meeting people in Ponoka and knowing how to connect with others:

...where I come from, it was a large city, and if you wanted to do something, play sports or go out, there were always people around. Here it is very difficult to know how to meet people. It isn't polite to just go to where they live (2nd interviewee).

The interviewee's reported wanting to connect with people from their country of origin, but felt powerless to do so, as there isn't anyone from their home country in the area and they prefer not to travel to the city (e.g. Edmonton) to meet people ("it's a long way to go").

The fourth interviewee reported a sense of social isolation due in part to her inability to acquire Internet service at home (due to restrictive policies of Internet service providers). She felt she would be more likely to pursue activities, such as take courses, if she had easier access to the

Internet. When needing to access the Internet, the interviewee stated that she uses the Wi-Fi provided at a local business. She also reported doing “nothing” in her free time (“just staying home” and “grocery shopping”) and feeling bored much of the time. She indicated that she has not made friends, and that she does not socialize with co-workers because they generally do not have the same days off. The interviewee would like to connect with other newcomers from her country of origin, in order to socialize and practice her English language skills.

Lack of Information

The interviewees felt they had specific information needs but perceived a lack of information or an inability to access existing information within the community. Information needs in the areas of employment and education were particularly great. One of the respondents expressed an interest in finding employment outside of the current industry he was involved in. However, he felt it was not possible to do so because he did not have information about the other types of jobs that may be available to him, and he did not know where to access this type of information. The interviewee also expressed a need for information on financial assistance to attend university, but said he felt he would not be able to find the information he would need.

The fourth interviewee has accessed information at the public library and has received help from the Employment Centre for developing a resume, but she was also provided with websites to explore career information and employment opportunities and is largely unable to do so because of lack of Internet access. She would also like information about how to resolve conflicts with her employer, but does not know where this information might be obtained.

Financial Well-Being

The newcomers were asked about their sense of financial well-being. Although the interviewees were working and did not feel challenged to meet the expenses of everyday life (food, shelter etc.) they expressed concern about not having enough money to go to university. Asked what having more money would mean to them, one of the youths replied:

“I guess there would be less pressure about going to university. I wouldn’t have to worry about how I’m going to pay for it. There’s a good chance I won’t go because of money.”

The fourth interviewee reported that limited financial resources have had an impact on her ability to find safe, suitable housing.

Housing

Three of those interviewed did not experience problems with housing; they arrived in Canada as Family Class immigrants and were provided with housing by the adult interviewee's Canadian husband. The fourth interviewee, however, reported that the rental accommodation arranged for her was unsuitable as there were not enough bedrooms for the number of occupants. The interviewee was unfamiliar with the reputability of the various rental properties in Ponoka, and because few accommodations were affordable, she chose housing occupied largely by dysfunctional residents. The interviewee worried for her safety and moved out. She now lives with colleagues from work in more suitable accommodation.

Transportation

Three of the interviewees had, at the time of the interview, been successful in obtaining Alberta drivers' licenses and a vehicle and did not report having any transportation problems. The fourth interview participant, however, reported having no means of transportation within town other than walking, and would like to get a bike. A greater concern, however, is the lack of public transportation to places outside of Ponoka; she would like to visit a friend in another community, but is unable because there is a lack of convenient public transportation options. As a result, she reported that she often feels "trapped" in Ponoka.

Employment

One interviewee reported having some conflicts at work, She would like to resolve these conflicts but does not know how. She would also like to pursue other lines of employment, but feels she lacks the qualifications to do so.

5.4 Supports

In addition to providing insight about the challenges of being a newcomer to Canada, the interviews revealed a number of sources of support that the interviewees have successfully accessed.

One interviewee reported that she participates in the ESL tutoring provided by the County of Ponoka Literacy Society. While she feels this has been helpful, she also feels that one hour per week is not sufficient, and that she would like to participate in English language training more

frequently and would like to learn English in a variety of settings, including social settings. The fourth interviewee also expressed an interest in ESL classes or tutoring.

Both youth interviewees have been able to obtain Driver's Permits. They attribute their success in passing the driving tests to the fact that they were able to obtain a copy of the Driver's Guide in their home language. When asked whether they have experienced any challenges with transportation in Ponoka, all of the interviewees stated that they had not.

Three interviewees attributed much of their success in adapting to life in Canada to the support and assistance provided by a teacher at the youths' school. While no formal supports were available at the school to help the students adapt, the interviewees reported that a teacher voluntarily provided much-needed assistance in helping the youth with their English and helping their parent secure employment. The youth interviewees expressed gratitude for this individual, and felt she was very influential in their ability to adapt to life in Ponoka/Canada.

The fourth interviewee reported that despite difficulty adjusting to the language and climate, she feels she has adjusted to life in Canada, in part because she has telephone contact with her family back home and takes things "day by day." Asked what would make adjusting to life in Ponoka easier, she reported that knowing someone in the community would be very helpful.

5.5 Summary

In-depth interviews with newcomers revealed both challenges and successes in adapting to life in Canada. Limited English language proficiency has had a negative impact on the youth interviewees' confidence in their ability to perform well in school, which is a source of stress. For the adult interviewee of the family, limited language skills created challenges for finding employment and are perceived as a barrier to pursuing job training / further education. For all interviewees of the family, limited English language proficiency is perceived as restricting their ability to access necessary information, and contributes to social isolation. While the youth are exposed to English in school, the adult interviewee has few opportunities to practice English. The fourth interviewee also expressed an interest in participating in ESL classes or tutoring.

All four interviewees' experience in Canada appears to be typified by social isolation, with a significant amount of free time spent at home. It is also apparent that the interviewees would like

to be more socially engaged, but uncertainty about social norms, limited English language skills, a lack of transportation to visit friends outside of the town, a lack of other newcomers (e.g. from their country of origin) with whom to socialize and for one interviewee, lack of access to the Internet, present substantial challenges.

Information needs were reported by all interviewees in the areas of education and employment. One interviewee identified a need for information about Ponoka, including what businesses and support services are available and where they are located. Information about housing options would also likely have facilitated the transition to life in Ponoka for this interviewee.

Financial concerns were raised with respect to the affordability of adequate housing and post-secondary education. Transportation within town was identified as a problem by the interviewee without a vehicle.

A source of support identified by the family of interviewees was ESL tutoring, although a need was identified for more frequent ESL training and exposure to English language in social settings. Access to a multilingual Driver's Guide was instrumental in helping some newcomers overcome transportation barriers, and having a Canadian spouse helped one adult interviewee access health care and housing. Much of the success experienced by the family of interviewees was attributed to the (voluntary and informal) support of a teacher at the youths' school. One support identified by the fourth interviewee was regular phone calls to family back home.

Asked how life in Ponoka could be improved for newcomers, the fourth interviewee suggested newcomers should be connected with someone upon arrival who can provide an orientation to the town, including businesses and services available.

6.0 Limitations and Next Steps

6.1 Limitations of the Project

Together, the surveys and interviews have provided a wealth of information which can help inform decision-making and action planning in the months and years ahead. Nonetheless, there are some notable limitations of the data which should be kept in mind.

The asset mapping phase sought to identify strengths and challenges of local agencies and organizations. While a good number of surveys were submitted to FCSS, it is recognized that this information-gathering exercise is incomplete and that further efforts must be made to collect information from agencies and organizations that have not submitted surveys or submitted incomplete surveys. Further efforts will also be made to process the data and ensure it is available in a useful format.

The results of the Community Survey provided insight into the importance of programs, services and facilities, as well as some barriers to their use and some gaps in what is available. While the findings will inform priority-setting and decision-making by FCSS, it should be kept in mind that the views of some population sub-groups were not well represented, including young adults (aged 18 to 25) and persons and families experiencing low-income or other conditions of disadvantage.

The results of the Youth Survey provided insight into the activities, opinions and needs of teenagers in Ponoka. Again, while the findings will inform priority-setting and decision-making by FCSS, the views of some students were not well represented, including youth who are home-schooled and youth attending rural schools (although they were given the option of participating).

Finally, the Newcomer Interview data is limited by the fact that only four interviewees participated and some were related. Efforts to interview other newcomers are presently underway and the findings will be added to this report as they become available.

6.2 Next Steps

It will be important for FCSS to build on the momentum generated by this project by identifying areas for action in the short, intermediate and long term. Developing an Action Plan may be a valuable 'first step.' An Action Plan would in itself serve as an 'early win' in addressing gaps and reducing barriers as it would provide structure and guidance, and could act as a mechanism for increased accountability. The recommendations presented throughout the report could serve as a foundation for developing an Action Plan.

It will also be important to ensure mechanisms are in place for monitoring and evaluating the impact of the decisions made and actions taken by community over time. To this end, FCSS is

encouraged to explore ways of garnering feedback from stakeholders, including other agencies, service providers and community members, in the short- and long-term (e.g. through ongoing, informal consultation with stakeholders in the short term and replication of this asset-mapping project in the longer term).