


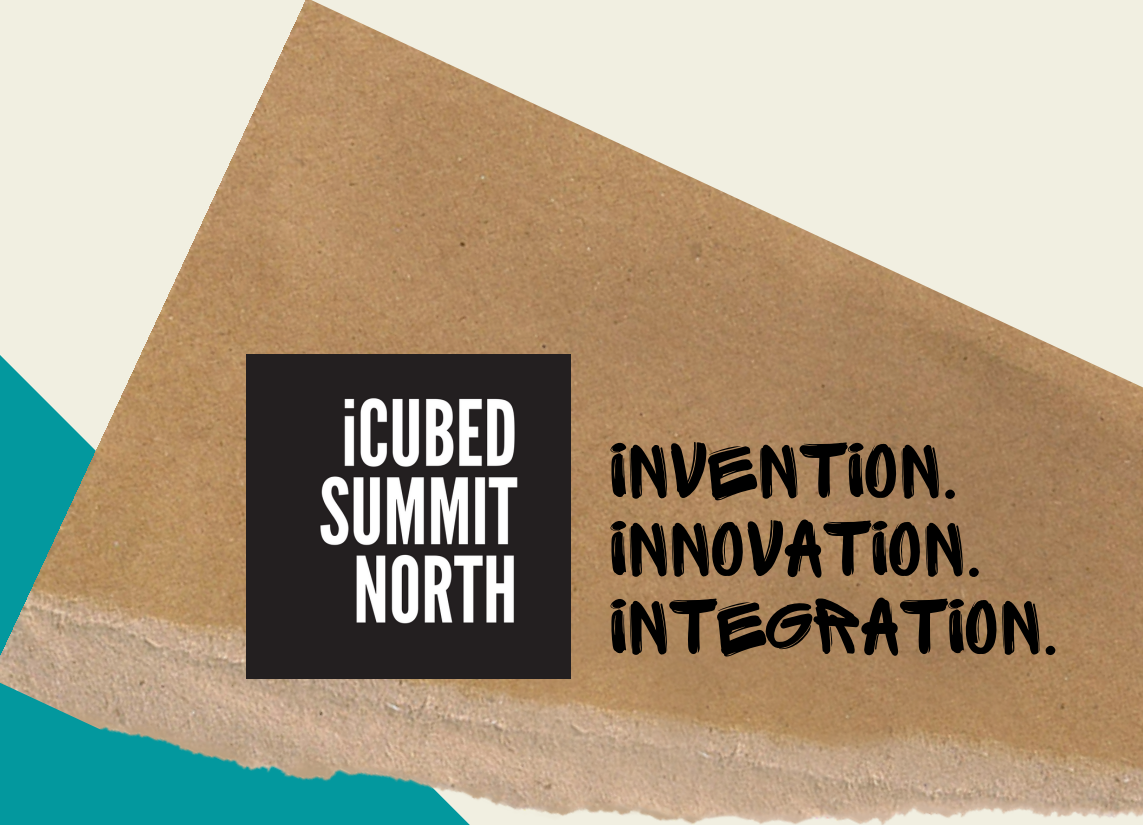


Northern BC Youth Talent Retention Roundtable

REPORT 2021



**iCUBED
SUMMIT
NORTH**



**INVENTION.
INNOVATION.
INTEGRATION.**

FROM THE ICUBED SUMMIT TO THE ROUNDTABLE

What started as a small event in 2017 with 75 students in Vanderhoof from SD91, slowly began to grow over the years to 250 students with plans to move to Prince George and be hosted at UNBC last May. COVID-19 changed those plans and the event was canceled. We set our goal to attract 500 students for a virtual event

This year, we surpassed those numbers with 945 students signing up from all over BC.




To set the stage for the iCubed Summit Virtual Viewing Party 2021, we hosted the Northern BC Youth Talent Retention Roundtable the day before on March 2, 2021.

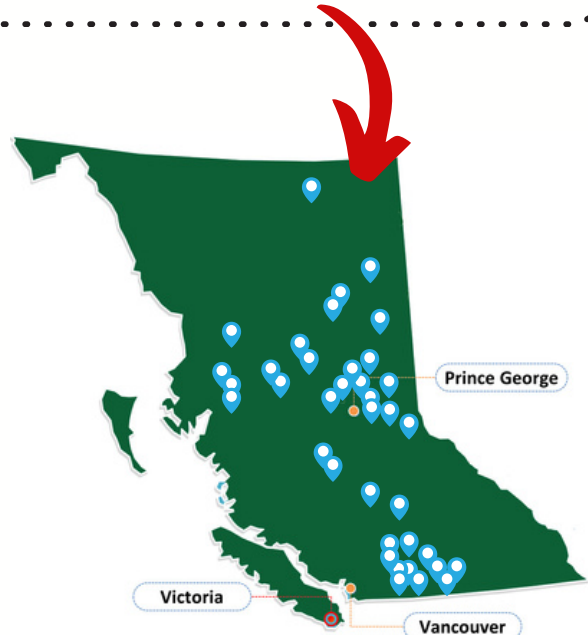
The focus of the discussions was on sustaining and diversifying Northern BC communities through youth talent retention.

We believe long-term economic diversification and sustainable growth in these communities can be significantly impacted through youth involvement and equal access to entrepreneurial skills development. We asked entrepreneurs, community members, and leaders from all sectors to come and share their experiences, insights, and suggestions on how to inspire the next generation.

Thank you to Darlene McIntosh (Elder from the Lheidli T'enneh), Gerri Sinclair (the Innovation Commissioner), and Joel McKay (CEO of Northern Development Initiative Trust) for helping us open our day.



 945 students signed up with their classes, plus another 100+ adults watched to take us to over 1000!	 38 classes from Gr.9-12 participated in the activities, listened to speakers & learned with us!	 16 different communities from all over Northern BC, Central Interior Okanagan & Northwest Territories
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THE HARVEST

This harvest document provides a list of the topics discussed under these questions, notes from the discussions, as well as the comments shared in the closing. As the session was intended to model an environment of sharing ideas, taking risks, and a safe space to fail, no ideas were rejected.

The gathering started in the main virtual Zoom room with the opening statements and welcome. The meeting was then participant-driven as attendees were placed into virtual breakout rooms and met in small groups of 3-5 people to discuss the questions tabled.

After having 15 minutes to discuss each question, the groups would join the main room to share what was discussed in the rooms. This happened three times with these three questions:

1. What are some of the existing resources we have to help retain youth and increase opportunities for diversifying Northern BC?

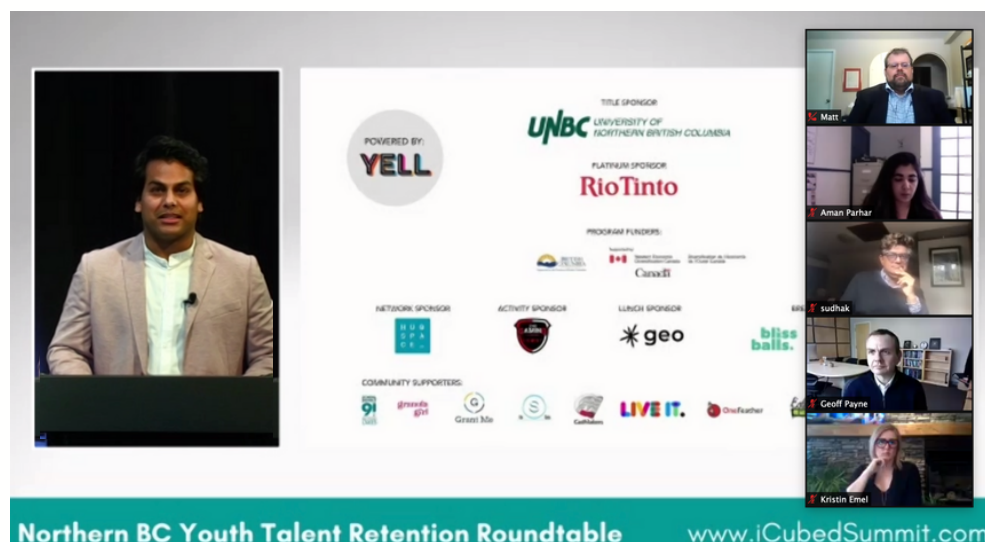
(We are setting the stage for the conversation and mapping the existing community services and resources available.)

2. What are some new ways to increase youth retention and foster innovation for Northern BC?

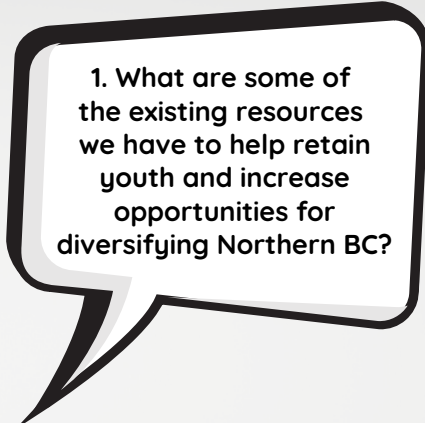
(This discussion is to spark new ideas and find new things to try)

3. What resources do we have already that we could creatively use and apply to some new ideas from Question 2?

(Where might hidden resources be found such as funding, expertise, networks, best practices or success stories that have been implemented in other areas, etc.)



QUESTION 1




1. What are some of the existing resources we have to help retain youth and increase opportunities for diversifying Northern BC?

- Community Futures
- Chamber of Commerce
- YELL Entrepreneurship 12 program
- Junior Achievement high school program
- Ebus – relationships with UNBC and CNC
- Education through University of Northern BC and Ebus and SBBC
- Lots of new regional mining jobs coming online in 2022. Hoping that they will be able to entice youth to stay and get involved in the work and see a real future there.
- Having youth understand that traditional mining and milling jobs are so much more diverse than they may realize and there are many opportunities available in those industries.
- Flexibility in hiring processes for industry to ensure that good candidates will apply for the jobs and stay.
- Innovate BC Programs – Post Secondary Hiring Grants in digital economy (Digital Skills for Youth Program), and University Hiring Grants in tech/innovation related roles (Tech Co-op Grant, and Innovator Skills Initiative).
- Connectivity has made it possible for youth in all regions to participate in working with companies in various locations in the province, via connectivity and increased access. But, would be good if gov would incentivize increasing connectivity to regions in the province that are still lacking this access.
- Discussion around rural versus regional, as there can be unique issues for each group, as there are some larger regional centres that are quite large economically, whereas more rural communities are still very much lacking and need to be prioritized.
- Shift with pandemic has offered using technology with no decrease in productivity
- Employers open to the idea of having employees working remotely
- Opportunities for people to move from the bigger cities to smaller and more remote communities/areas
- Titans Den (City of PG) – Titans got money for no equity to make it as easy as possible – so many ideas don't go beyond the back-of-the-napkin stage. The only requirement is a report-out of how the funds were used. Nearly 10,000 was given out. They are going to re-run it. Existing businesses were not eligible
- Institutional programming to expose undergrads and high school students to existing research & innovation
- Stressful for some to move away from home; can lead to feelings of isolation. Contact North sends advisors to rural/remote communities
- How to enable opportunities beyond the resources sector? Eg. between-institution bridging programs, co-curriculum, etc.

QUESTION 2


- Regional District of Bulkley Nechako: committee on attraction and retention of people. Major update to the website to promote local outdoor recreation.
- We should really focus on taking a regional approach to retention and understanding that we are attracting people to a regional life not specifically to one community and what is good for one is good for all. That communities should be partnering together to achieve this
- Want a more ‘protectionism’ mentality to the trades work in the area. Many skilled trades people leave the region for better opportunities to work elsewhere. Lots of migration of our skilled trades to project work in the USA
- Need more processing plants and want to see that work stay in our country/region instead of sending our resources elsewhere to have them processed
- Need to understand this and find a way to ensure that they can put both career and hobbies mindset forward together. There is a mind shift that youth are not as focused on a career. When asked what they “do” they usually put their hobbies first (sports, fishing, recreation) as opposed to what they do for their work.
- Would be great if youth were made more aware of the different regions of the province and the opportunities that exist in those areas. E.g. Mining, Forestry.
- Better communicate the opportunities throughout our province. And also what careers exist in these areas earlier on in their education trajectory, so they can select courses and internships to gather knowledge in these areas along the way as opposed to doctor, lawyer, teacher, banker.
- Change the rhetoric on the traditional industries to showcase the opportunities that exist. Forestry isn’t exclusively suffering showcase innovative opportunities; Mining isn’t completely bad for the environment it fuels the clean economy.
- A lot of the existing opportunities, the students come in and out for their placement but don’t stay and connect with the community to see why it is a place that they should continue living in the future.
- One idea that was brought to the province was to reduce tuition to draw students into the north for a more legitimate university college program and not just a brief placement, so they can better connect and learn about the community and opt to live in these regions.
- Need to create incentive and story to move to the north, recreation/camping/hiking, but also need to level the playing field on the university/college programs tuition and also on the offerings that are provided from the various programs. E.g. decrease tuition, increase program funding for saying hiring grants.



2. What are some new ways to increase youth retention and foster innovation for Northern BC?

QUESTION 2 CONT.

- Create more jobs/employment opportunities or develop opportunities for people in smaller communities
 - For example: tech companies looking at smaller communities to create jobs (Amazon)
- Lifestyle - Recreation and entertainment opportunities - when people not into outdoors (hunting, fishing etc.,)
- Proper training for bosses who are doing hiring. Needs to start with good leadership
- Cost of living and housing availability
- Need or opportunity to combine/collaborate individual programs that exist. EG. YELL, Futurpreneur, Innovation Challenge, individual components, what about finding a way to put an umbrella over all of those and connect them all together.
- So many different programs that are available to promote entrepreneurs, but there needs to be some kind of database to find those opportunities, now that everything is virtual it may be overwhelming because there are so many options available. Climate Change Action Panel has done something similar to the idea of an umbrella program, just found all the bc climate change groups and started the discussion as a zoom meeting like this one, and developed a structure of a governing body. Similar to the idea of having a program to connect all the scattered resources. Additionally, this would allow us to pool our resources and enhance our ability to create outreach from one unified body to streamlining different resources and eliminating duplicated efforts and directing efforts into the identified gaps in the resources.
- Many resources that are silo'd. Eg. Co-op/summer student programs with various organizations, JDC, Rotary, Yell, Minerva, Junior Achievements. The challenge we feel is that all of these silos don't talk to each other. Need to explore options to integrate
- Explore opportunities to expand the 'co-op' methodology to more education programs.
- Need broader exposure to ideas and opportunities throughout the community; a way to connect individuals to each other.
- Thinking a 'dating app' type initiative. Individuals register as a mentor of sorts, business owners, entrepreneurs, leaders volunteer to be in the database. Students in turn have the option to sign into this app and connect to the professionals within the app. This will facilitate connections to various industries that perhaps aren't well know or understood. Would be a volunteer-type basis. The thought is there are many people within our communities with skills that we may not be aware of (i.e. we all know lawyers.... But, how many of us know the movie producer that lives in town?). Having a database to be able to link these people to youth may be beneficial to the youth in terms of a mentoring type program to help them.



2. What are some new ways to increase youth retention and foster innovation for Northern BC?

QUESTION 2 CONT.

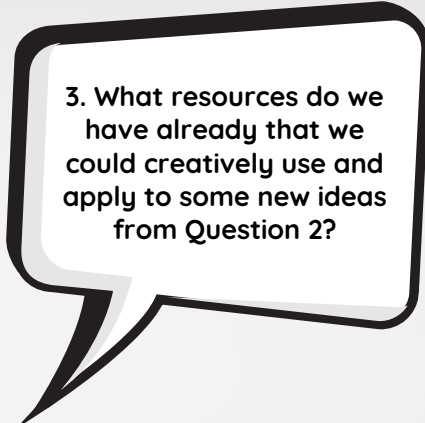
- SFU, Genome BC
- Cluster technology/research/innovation in order to attract best talent in field e.g. animation in Vancouver. Utilize existing assets.
- Community-engaged research. Respond to needs of communities, allow youth to innovate without necessarily having to move away.
- Young people need encouragement to take “it” to the next level. They are past education and training to break out on their own. Find a problem that people have rather than a solution that no one wants. Provide successful examples from people across the North. Build entrepreneurial training into education.
- SBBC worked with a Community Futures (Port Alberni/Clayoquot) on the Great BC Business Sale (which was postponed from last October due to the pandemic) – which had the intention to help business owners who wanted to sell (and their kids weren’t interested in taking over the business) and those folks in the lower mainland who wanted a change of lifestyle/pace.
- Challenge youth to start/own a business. Teach youth how to do simple entrepreneurial opportunities built on their passions. It shouldn’t take a lot of resources other than time and ingenuity. Take advantage of the Internet. Dependent on resources for better Internet access in the North.

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QUESTION 3

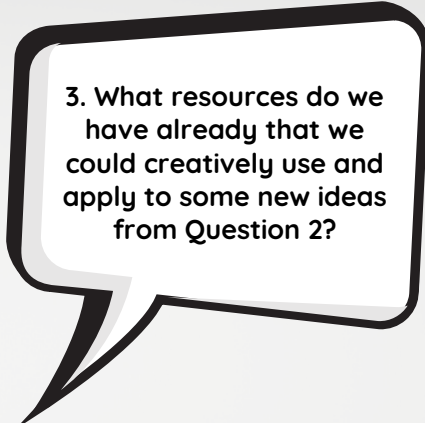


3. What resources do we have already that we could creatively use and apply to some new ideas from Question 2?

- Capitalize on the training opportunities available from Rio Tinto & LNG Canada
- Be flexible with granting opportunities available to ensure that funds distributed make sense regionally
- Community relations and engaging youth as frequently as possible in front of their face.
- One of the greatest resources is the people that we have, professors, deans, etc. Better utilize these people to show what's possible in the regions to breakdown the silos and make the connection on how these various regions and sectors are connected.
- More stories around people, sector opportunities and careers.
- Better collaboration between the regions, less silos, more collaboration.
- Government incentivizing connectivity.
- Decreased tuition and increased programming grants.
- Improving tourism/entertainment/recreational ops in regions, or improved awareness of ones that do exist.
- Tuition debt breaks in other areas beyond doctors and nurses
- Explore those opportunities to engage from the YOUTH perspective - What do they want, what interests them, what is impactful
- Lifestyle Continuum: Northern Lifestyle, northern skills, northern careers. Opportunities for lifestyle jobs. Non-traditional careers. Increase retention. Girls in STEM
- Leadership/team building courses - communicate effectively and "bridge the gap"
- Promote and hire locally/regional/provincial companies and businesses
- Advertise locally/regional/provincial companies and businesses - encourage them to stay in town, city or province. Showcase the opportunities the province has and take advantage
- Need to reduce the stigma around trades work being for the stupid or non-academic folks. Push to make teachers (who are naturally academically minded) to remember this fact and push all of the available opportunities.
- First Nations Technology Council "poised for growth" <https://technologycouncil.ca/> - accessible technology programming in North (Denise Williams)
- Transportation and housing are "big nuts to crack" for the North. Supportive alumni network for new students?
- There are a lot of wealthy individuals who can invest (a la the Titan's Den (Dragon's Den, Shark Tank, etc.) in new ideas. Along those same lines, work with organizations such as Spring Activator and other incubator organizations. Increasing their networks.

QUESTION 3 CONT.

- Reaching out to success stories and sharing those to encourage youth about their potential.
- Using existing education systems (high school, university), etc. to promote entrepreneurial option/path.
- A lot of the jobs/opportunities haven't yet been thought of.
- Youth retention is connectivity. We need robust connectivity. Pathway for ideas, way to connect, share their ideas.
- Another important resource is knowing that there is a space for those ideas that youth have. Many youth go to larger centers thinking it is the only way to spread their wings and follow their passion, but it is important to know that those passions can be cultivated in remote places like northwest BC. EG. SNCIRE, the Skeena-Nass Centre for Innovation in Resource Economics, has been hosting for the last 5 years an event that brings together innovators and entrepreneurs with an early idea to expose them to other innovators, to share ideas, to collaborate, and also to win monetary prizes that can help them develop their idea into a substantial business idea.
- Hubspace in Prince George, promoting accidental innovation, finding where collaborations might come from.
- iCubed Summit event to get high school students in the early stage.
- Another resource is also the process of thinking outside the box. Being exposed to others with creativity to inspire innovation.
- (From a Vancouver person) Vancouver is interested in seeing what is happening up north. For them what makes it difficult to expand outside of the lower mainland is not having the connectivity and network. Its easier now that everything is virtual and you can collaborate across larger distances, but still a greater challenge
- There needs to be an expansion of these conversations with youth regarding what opportunities are available locally.



3. What resources do we have already that we could creatively use and apply to some new ideas from Question 2?

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CLOSING

In the closing, we invited people to reflect on what they learned from today's gathering:

- Raise awareness
- an understanding that this is more than a Williams Lake issue.
- Looking forward to making further connections. BBBS and YELL have some opportunities to grow skills and develop youth.
- Exciting opportunities are there for small, rural and northern communities - I will leave here thinking about how I may collaborate and share resources!
- This opens a conversation for solutions and brings to light that we can all work together to get closer to a solution
- I learned how many people are impacted by the outflow of youth.
- Great to see collaboration and working together to inspire youth!
- Amazing the support across the north and around the province for youth trying to make a go...
- I leave here ready to have a conversation with our local CF and Chamber about the ideas that have been shared today.
- We have the skills and talent right here in BC. Connecting with everyone here and starting to network would be amazing
- I learned there is a north/ south disconnect regarding opportunities.
- When you are working on ecosystem development in your own community you can forget that others are fighting a similar good fight and sharing what you are doing and these other community builders are doing is such a shortcut to success
- I learned those in the South need to listen before coming with "solutions"
- I learned that lots of dedicated individuals are thinking about supporting youth in the region.
- I learned that connectivity is the key to rural communities success to retain our youth. Lack of internet connectivity is an issue across the North.



THE PROCESS

Using group dialogue processes for strategic thinking and collaboration encourages high levels of engagement, personal and collective responsibility, creativity, and relationship building. Our conversation was just the first step and only two hours were dedicated to getting to this stage.

In the future, the specific deliverables will depend on the time available for the session, the quality of the preparation work, support from those who hold decision-making power and influence, and the levels of complexity. We hope that more time and resources can be dedicated to gathering again. Our 2hr roundtable was just a taste of what is possible.

Here are some examples of what can be done with a bit more time:

What's possible in a short session (e.g. half-day)?

Noting hot topics/issues, finding out who else cares about your topic, generating ideas, and building relationships. There is not the time for the mental shift into solution thinking or decisions/action planning.

What's possible in a one day session?

Deeper discussion, noting patterns across the day, noticing shared resources, shared challenges, stronger level of engagement. More ability for self-documentation for co-responsibility and accomplishment and a better sense of the full complex system.

What's possible in a 2 to 3 day session?

Share thoughts about things on day one, then shift into solution thinking on day two. Overnight helps brains to reflect, notice, percolate, and can make the shift into sorting, prioritizing, and action planning on the second day. ***

*** this is our dream one day to host

THANK YOU



Our team will be using this information to help develop our plans for further growth and expansion in the coming years as we continue to build and create a supportive ecosystem, increase equal access to opportunities, and create sustainable economic development through investing in our youth.

It is also our hope that those of you who participated in these discussions will identify opportunities to become involved yourselves. Furthermore, we will continue to reach out for your guidance and involvement moving forward. Thank you for helping us pave the path towards more youth retention and growth of rural and small communities.

Please don't hesitate to connect with us at any time to discuss ideas or learn about possibilities for how you or your organization can support the programs we are helping to facilitate in our region.

With Gratitude,



Sagar Saxena
Founder of iCubed Summit

www.iCubedSummit.com
north@yellcanada.org
778.349.5523

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