



**NORTHERN BC
YOUTH TALENT RETENTION
ROUNDTABLE**

REPORT 2022

**iCUBED
SUMMIT
NORTH**



FROM THE ICUBED SUMMIT TO THE ROUNDTABLE

On March 2nd, 2022, we hosted the 2nd annual Youth Retention Roundtable as a lead-up to the 2022 iCubed Summit for high school students across BC.

Representatives joined us from government, school districts, industry, economic development offices, local organizations, non-profit organizations, and entrepreneurs; all interested in helping youth find opportunities in our rural and remote communities.

Our focus was all about youth retention, creating more diversity, and fostering innovation in Northern BC. We had the pleasure of facilitating panel interviews with some of the collaborators we have had the privilege to work with this past year.

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

We extend a special thank you to Darlene McIntosh (Elder from the Lheidli T'enneh), Gerri Sinclair (the Innovation Commissioner), Brittny Anderson (Special Advisor to the Premier on Youth), and Felicia Magee (Northern Development Initiative Trust) for helping us open our day.

The day after this event, we hosted our annual iCubed Summit for youth across BC. This year we had over 1000 students register with their classes to attend. Thank you to all our sponsors, partners, and speakers for making this happen!



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students registered with their classes, plus another 70+ adults watched!	classes from Gr.9-12 participated in the activities, listened to speakers & learned with us!	different communities from all over Northern BC, & Central Interior Okanagan.



THE INTERVIEWS - DEKLAN & SANDRO



Deklan Corstanje (Economic Development Manager for the City of Terrace) and Sandro Bravo (Economic Development Officer for the City of Prince George) joined us for a panel interview before we moved into roundtable groups. Both organizations have partnered with us to focus on entrepreneurship and developing the growth mindset in youth. They are both champions of the YELL Canada Entrepreneurship 12 program and the iCubed Summit event. We discussed the projects they have been working on and also why entrepreneurship remains so important to both communities.

SANDRO BRAVO - CITY OF PRINCE GEORGE

Sandro shared about the success of Prince George's "Titan's Den". A few years back, a gap was identified of there being a lack of seed funding for local start-ups. Which created the idea for the Titan's Den (Similar to the popular CBC show Dragon's Den). It initially began as 1-night event with 9 applicants, 5 pitches, and \$10,000 given to entrepreneurs in Prince George.

It quickly grew, requiring a larger venue and hosting more competitors. The City of PG is now looking into additional networking events both before and after the Titan's Den event to promote new connections among the Prince George community. Lots of people in the community want to give back; the City is now looking at how to best bring people from the past, people interested this year, and those interested in future years into the same room; to lead growth of this event well into the future.

A "Young Professionals Network" (under the age of 45) is also in the planning stages, where they intend on hosting networking events every quarter. The target start date for this is April 2022.

THE INTERVIEWS - DEKLAN & SANDRO

DEKLAN CORSTANJE - CITY OF TERRACE

During the last 2 years, the YELL entrepreneurship class has sold out in the City of Terrace. Terrace considers itself approximately 2 years behind Prince George in the development stage, and has been carefully going through the community, looking for gaps in how to support entrepreneurs. With 98% of BC businesses being comprised of small to medium enterprises, and entrepreneurs at their helm, being able to better foster a start-up culture and foster growth from within is extremely important.

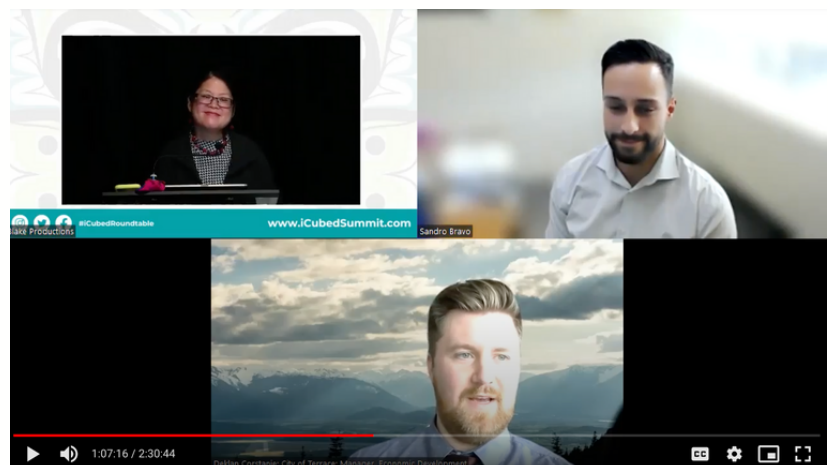
Although Terrace is a fairly industrial town (lots of gov and employee/employer type businesses in the community) entrepreneurship is still prevalent. Terrace city council recognizes the importance of fostering entrepreneurship in the community and is including this in their strategic plan.

Their goal is to establish and continue to build Terrace's position as a regional hub (economic and cultural) and growing the local culture with a progressively younger population. Providing support to new businesses as they start in town, identifying issues, filling gaps, and connecting businesses to each other all strengthen the economy and culture. It will be extremely important over the next few years to improve lifestyle and quality of life for residents while creating some jobs along the way.

One of the main pieces in the City of Terrace strategy right now is entrepreneurship. Working together with other business support agencies across the country to add more tools to the toolkit for entrepreneurs looking to start up and scale-up is a process Deklan says has been very exciting.

Fostering entrepreneurial culture and the spirit of taking people from concept and budding idea to the next step is really important. We have lots of well-paying jobs in the region (which is great) but there is also a secondary inherent benefit: that well-paying jobs create well-paying customers which benefits other businesses too.

The city of Terrace has a huge group of people who want to give back, almost an unofficial club of entrepreneurs and business owners. Deklan's relationship with businesses across various sectors has provided him with an unexpected amount of support. He has been inundated with responses to help anytime he asks people to champion new entrepreneurs and youth involvement.



THE INTERVIEWS - JOSH CALLAHAN



JOSH CALLAHAN - CO-FOUNDER & PRINCIPAL AT OUTFRNT

Joshua Callahan is an entrepreneur located in Whitehorse, Yukon and UNBC alumnus. In January 2020, he started a business development agency, OUTFRNT, with his business partner, Andy Dai. OUTFRNT provides entrepreneurial programming services to organizations as well as business and leadership coaching to participants and founders. The team currently provides coaching and advisory support for IncubateNorth, Yukon University's business incubation program.

Josh shared with our group what he has seen that works when it comes to retaining youth:

At the end of the day, an entrepreneur needs people to connect with and not everyone has the fortune of having a partner. Creating an environment that is approachable and open is achieved purposefully through several tactics: checking biases (conscious or unconscious) to prevent derailing trust, extending empathy, put yourself in the shoes of someone who is 9 or 40 years old, if they are coming to you, chances are they are hesitant (it may even be their first time asking for help), and the third part (and perhaps most important) exercising the skill of listening. This means not just being quiet but asking important questions, following the 80/20 rule. When working with entrepreneurs, asking good questions and providing an environment that is safe and approaching where they are comfortable allows them to spill open. Youth entrepreneurs that feel trust, that feel support, are less scared and open up to change and opportunity. Removing the fear from the problem being solved allows courage to surface and helps them move forward.

"Retaining youth entrepreneurs requires an approachable environment, with trust, that is open: great listening, checking biases and using empathy."

This is important to all youth, not just youth entrepreneurs. For us at OUTFRNT, to be able to engage with youth, the open listening and trust piece is the first step, being helpful, supportive and checking biases is another step.

Josh also shared about Yukonstruct and the innovation centre in Whitehorse:

Yukonstruct is an incredible innovation centre, café, board flex room, The Makerspace, mixed with co-working, permanent offices, and corporate offices with a storefront. Not everyone chooses entrepreneurship, so it is important to have spaces that youth feel safe in. Yukonstruct: is a cohesive space under one umbrella where the university, Non profits, entrepreneurs, community members and businesses alike convene. If people don't know what to do, they wander into space for inspiration. The NGO community in Yukon is now looking to identify additional synergies such as those at Yukonstruct.

THE INTERVIEWS - JOSH CALLAHAN

JOSH CALLAHAN - CO-FOUNDER & PRINCIPAL AT OUTFRNT

Before Yukonstruct, everything was siloed. everyone was their own organization competing for funding with their own mandate. The new director, Jared Slip, came into the coworking side and drove change. He took the co-space center, reached out to maker space and asked, “why aren’t we together?”.

They developed the idea of being under the same roof and went to several different champions/advocates in the community. Ranj Pillai, Minister of Economic Development, really drove the initiative. He was a huge champion and brought in everyone he could from his network to make this a reality.

You need a community champion and someone initiating at ground level to really get the ball going. We are still a little siloed (and silos exist) but what made Yukonstruct work is that leaders removed their egos and together they championed at the highest level possible to get the buy-in of diverse community members and organizations. It wasn’t just entrepreneurs but also remote workers, non-profits, corporations, and even a crown corporation in the same building. This allows Yukonstruct to operate sustainably.

Retaining youth is a huge issue for Northern BC and the Yukon alike, can you explain more about your bespoke model of support?

In Jan 2020, the first OUTFRNT client was Yukon University seeking more information regarding stakeholder engagement for a business incubator that the Yukon government had asked them to look into/investigate. The idea was that the community isn’t necessarily large enough to be a tech incubator or an Agri incubator (due to the nature of the size of the community and market opportunity- not everyone can be a software company in Whitehorse). But there remained a prevalent similarity: that people want to grow and have an impact.

We spend 3 hours with entrepreneurs prior to their even joining the OUTFRNT program and conduct a strategic planning & 360-degree assessment. By focusing on listening, we can better understand the business and where they are at. From day one until the 12-18 month window, when they leave, everyone knows exactly how their coaching is structured and exactly what they are working towards. Everyone’s goals are different. Everyone has an opportunity to develop as a leader/manager; with the common theme being that everyone has to deal with people. Beyond the HR/Leadership factor built into the incubator, the process is further customized to each business. They may not know the answer, but they know the problem – asking questions and being a good listener allows them to talk it out (which tells me which path can I send them down, which door can I open for them). Knowing someone is in their corner and it’s not just them going on this journey alone is a tremendous help.

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 prompted.

After having 15 minutes to discuss each question, the groups rejoined the main room to share what was discussed in the breakout rooms. This happened two different times with the following two questions:

1. What else can help to retain youth and build a sustainable rural economy?

2. What ideas, actions, or questions come up after hearing Josh's interview?

EVERYONE ON THE ZOOM CALL

BREAKOUT ROOMS - 6 with other people

HOW IT IS GOING TO WORK

1. **Quick Intro** (Your Name & Company)
 2. **Roles** - Notetaker, Timer, Moderator
 3. **Discussion** - Answer the question

5 minutes warning to come back.

Notetaker to email notes to northyellcanada.org

Place "X" if you can't join a group

#iCubedRoundtable www.iCubedSummit.com

1:20:40 / 2:30:44

RESPONSES TO QUESTION 1

What else can help to retain youth and build a sustainable rural economy?

- More programs like Hubspace and events like the iCubed Summit support those starting their own businesses in the North
- More programs (such as grants from government, financial assistance, etc) to assist those looking to start their own business in the North.
- Providing greater access to resources that attract people that want to live in the North and rural areas - arts, activities, restaurants - attractions to bring them here
- Support the launch of those initiatives with resources, and partnering/fostering partnerships with organizations who already have feet on the street in the communities
- More affordable housing and a greater supply of housing. There is also a need to advertise the opportunities available (good-paying jobs, affordable living).
- Selling the North - selling the perks of living here, slower lifestyle, greater support, and other opportunities.
- Lifestyle - amenities, things to do, places to live.
- Professional mentorship for those who are entrepreneurial-minded (Titans Den, other programs), etc helps individuals pursue their career/professional interest of starting their own business and remaining in the region.
- Housing - we need more housing in rural BC.
- Newcomers - We need to create more opportunities for them to make connections within Northern BC communities - whether they are entrepreneurs or workers, there is a need to help them to build relationships.
- Rural communities have a tough time retaining the same amenities as larger centers. Young people move away. providing them adequate opportunity to be part of community or something bigger than they are while they are in the community brings them back - foster an enjoyable community they think fondly of when they consider where to start a career/family etc. Deklan had to leave his hometown (Terrace) for education, and went to Prince George for his degree. But he has come back. We need to create experiences that create ties between youth and their communities; brain drain before is an important piece. Economy and entrepreneurship are connected and there is a need to support young adults with entrepreneurial efforts. Youth feel they part of something bigger when they have the support of adults. That support indicates they are welcome in the community and included, and this imprints in their minds. With these efforts, when they are looking to settle, their community is on their shortlist. Also, creating services/products that improve quality of life in the community is necessary.
- We want youth to have deep roots but large wings; to go and experience new things, but we hope they return and bring back new experiences and ideas to their home community. This can be encouraged early - entrepreneurship classes in high school. Opportunities where children grow and become part of other aspects of community life is important too: school, work, volunteer bubbles. They help them become interconnected with their community. A foundational understanding of this integration should encourage them to go, experience new things and bring them back, contribute to the economy - hopefully in the north.


RESPONSES TO QUESTION 1 CONT.

- As we see connectivity increase, we should support the ability for youth to embrace digital world and give them the ability to "teach up." Creating a sense of responsibility and autonomy in the life they have.
- It is important for folks to gain perspective from outside their community. In a small town, natural business progression is to move to Vancouver. From a business standpoint this makes sense. Korea has been hyper-focused on one city but has successfully decentralized. Amenities are a key factor. Youth need to have the things available that allows them to live happily. Connectivity is there, less so in the digital sense, but more as an affiliative world around you. There is a need to offer products and services out of rural bases.
- It is important for youth to have spaces to show up and have leadership opportunities and to be their authentic self (creating spaces where they can thrive), and more opportunities for potential-building in young individuals. People want to be in places they can grow and learn. Mentorship is key in developing youth and creates more opportunities for others to learn and grow from their communities.
- New ways of connecting (zoom) with youth is great, but there is no true replacement for face-to-face networking. Partnerships with Coast Mountain College and CNC help connect individuals with learning resources. COVID has caused business struggles currently, and a lack of retention.
- Connectivity is very important, and businesses can do more work if they have reliable connectivity.
- Remote communities need business development/entrepreneurship education in high schools in order to inspire youth to come back to their communities.
- Increase class exposure - bring more programs into schools.
- Bring the Yell Canada program and smaller modules (2 weeks modules) to classrooms earlier in High school, but also in post-secondary, and even University.
- Fostering relationships with large organizations and getting out of our own way allows us to work better together.
- Working more closely with the School Districts on educating Youth on career and business opportunities in their communities.
- Co-op programs: Rolling out these types of programs out to more industries.
- Early education and exposure to different career paths, bringing more awareness to students earlier in their education journey. Better communication and marketing.
- Insurance career opportunities for all education levels.
- Create more opportunities for businesses to move North. Land is a huge asset that the North can take advantage of.

What else can help to retain youth and build a sustainable rural economy?

RESPONSES TO QUESTION 1 CONT.

- More initiatives like YELL Canada.
- Greater focus on Economic development, Walkable Cities, and Sustainable Bio-communities.
- Create more diverse opportunities for new and innovative industries. BC is home to many.
- Ensure there are meaningful employment opportunities.
- Accessible transportation is huge for youth.
- Gaps - wide variety of trades training for youth.
- Sustainable food-chain and food security.
- There is a need to design employer benefits that appeal to youth.
- Walkable, livable downtown and affordable housing.
- Promote travel and tourism in the North.
- Help companies recruit youth into business, connect youth to businesses in the North so they understand the opportunities available.
- Connect youth to community and networks that enable them to realize they are part of a greater, supportive community - that they are not alone.
- Ensure all youth feel the community is welcoming to them, they have a place in the community, they will be supported in the community and connected. That who they are, and their identity are recognized.
- Create more opportunity to connect with youth both in online communities, in community spaces - where youth are at so they can identify with opportunities in the North, and see themselves building a life in the North.
- There is a need to market the North to youth and young adults not only already in the North but those who are in "expensive" areas of Canada like the Lower Mainland and the Okanagan. Youth and adults in those locations have an affordability crisis - they are priced out of the real estate market & the cost of living has sky-rocketed. Attract those who are passionate about the lifestyle found in the North along with the career opportunities here.
- Ensure that all rural and remote communities have access to high-speed connectivity and telecommunications so they may work where they live - many companies in tech or that are tech-enabled have gone to remote working but without access to world-class connectivity, talent cannot stay in rural and remote communities.
- Promote awareness of all the types of careers, companies, and opportunities. This is lacking - even for most adults and those already in a career (including teachers and advisors to youth). More exposure and education are needed for youth to discover career paths that will excite them and be able to see the possibilities for pursuing a career where they live in the North.



What else can help to retain youth and build a sustainable rural economy?

RESPONSES TO QUESTION 1 CONT.

- Facilitate lower-risk entrepreneurship opportunities for youth, such as “business incubators”, that allow youth to gain business/entrepreneurship skills/experience without bearing the full challenge/risk of starting a new business – see article - <https://www.castlegarnews.com/news/young-entrepreneurs-take-over-management-of-creston-mini-golf/>
- Workers (trades, manufacturing, insurance) and many youth leave Northern communities to pursue academic studies in fields such as medicine, legal, engineering, etc. Businesses can begin to engage youth in high school when they are still in the early planning stages of their “careers”, so they can understand what other opportunities exist in their own communities.
- Highlight the range of opportunities available – e.g., a mine is not just “people digging in the ground”.
- Identify the long-term career pathways available, from entry-level to senior levels.
- Highlight the on-the-job training or local academic training programs available. This could be part of school programming or activities that can be done on pro-d days.
- Create opportunities for youth to network – particularly with entrepreneurs that are more similar in age range (i.e. 30 vs. 60), as this will allow youth to more easily visualize how their lives could lead them to that point.

What else can help to retain youth and build a sustainable rural economy?



RESPONSES TO QUESTION 2

- The co-working space model was difficult for Prince George.
- Spoke about partnerships with community futures to do this type of program in Vanderhoof.
- Is there a way we could leverage corporate sponsorship in Prince George in collaboration with government funding to make co-working more feasible?
- Working in silos. Whitehorse and Yukonstruct seem to have been able to overcome this.
- It may be easier to network in rural areas, as there are fewer key players and fewer conflicting events (so key players run into each other more often).
- Even still, this can be a challenge in rural areas. Why was Whitehorse able to succeed?
- Core of government support and all the resources attached to Yukonstruct being based in Whitehorse.
- Whitehorse as the hub for the entire province; everyone moves through there.
- How do you create something sustainable in a rural community? Typically, initiatives may be linked to a specific individual. Often if that individual leaves, the initiative suffers/dissolves.
- A solution may be to link initiatives to well established, sustainable organizations that are geographically linked to a region - for example, Selkirk College or a school district. Make it part of the institutional fabric. This may also enhance its visibility/reach.



What ideas, actions, or questions come up after hearing Josh's interview?

CLOSING

In the closing, we invited people to reflect on what they learned from today's gathering. Here are some of the answers:

- I learned about the success of Yukonstruct and leave here today ready to put more work into Sprout Kitchen Food Hub to see it and the businesses within it to thrive!
- I learned early exposure & education is key!
- Connecting to youth where they are at, ensuring they feel part of the community and have support & opportunity in the North to reach their dreams.
- Key takeaway: Continuing to invest in early entrepreneurship will play a major role in retention in our northern communities!
- My takeaway - focus more on youth recruitment and retention through innovative ideas to keep youth engaged.
- Interesting to hear about how businesses are looking for opportunities to engage directly with youth in high school as a method for improving understanding of career opportunities and filling workforce needs.
- I learned about an array of opportunities and initiatives available in the North and will leave here ready to continue to collaborate with existing organizations and people to encourage and engage our youth in work in the north.
- Thank You for the invite, a great session! I think if we continue to build our partnerships and increase branches of YELL, the north has huge potential for growth. Good to see so many talented individuals today.

Thank You!

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 one day we will have more time and resources dedicated to gathering again. Our 2hr roundtable was just a taste of what is possible.

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

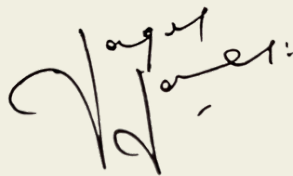
THANK YOU

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.

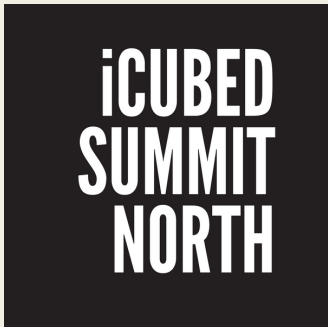
Please don't hesitate to connect with us at any time to discuss ideas or learn about possibilities for how you or your organization can support the programs we are helping to facilitate in our region.

With Gratitude,



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