

# Understanding the Early Years West Kootenay

This research report highlights important community and neighbourhood information related to early child development in the West Kootenay region of south central British Columbia. The availability, affordability and access to key community resources for children and families create a positive and enriched environment for

child development. The information in this report represents a snapshot in time and enables people to make evidence based decisions for the future. This community mapping study has revealed important demographic and socio-economic information about this region. The following points represent some key findings of the research. Readers are invited to view the full report available at [www.wkearlyyears.ca](http://www.wkearlyyears.ca).



## Executive Summary

### As of 2006 in the West Kootenay:

- ◆ The overall population was approximately 62,000 people. Young children ages 0-6 years represented approximately 6.3% of the total population (3930 children).
- ◆ There were approximately 640 Aboriginal children ages 0-9 years in the Regional District of Central Kootenay and the Regional District of Kootenay Boundary.
- ◆ In most neighbourhoods, fewer than the provincial average number of residents were faced with moving house. A large proportion of residents owned the dwelling in which they resided. The lowest rate of home ownership and the highest housing prices were found in Nelson.
- ◆ 12.4% of adults ages 25-64 years did not have a high school diploma. The rate of high school non-completion varied considerably from a low of 6.3% in the Rossland/Warfield neighbourhood to the high of 23.8% in the Salmo neighbourhood.
- ◆ The average unemployment rate was 7%. Unemployment rates ranged from the lowest rate in Nelson at 5% to the highest in Salmo at 11%.
- ◆ Median family income differed by more than \$30,000 from the highest income neighbourhood to the lowest income neighbourhood. The highest income neighbourhoods also had the highest percentage of adults ages 25-64 years with at least a high school diploma.
- ◆ Nelson had the highest rate of lone parent families at 22%. The Kootenay Lake neighbourhood had 115 single fathers raising young children, the largest number of single fathers in the region.
- ◆ The majority of programs and services for children and families are located in the larger communities of Trail, Castlegar and Nelson. Families living in more remote areas have limited access to services and are faced with challenging and costly travel.
- ◆ In smaller communities efforts are being made to co-locate community services in centralized “hubs” in order to reduce the cost of service provision as well as recruit and retain service providers.

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## Summary of West Kootenay Neighbourhood Characteristics in 2006

Source: Statistics Canada, 2006.

West Kootenay Neighbourhood	Total Population	Total Child Population (0-6 years)	Childcare Spaces (licensed, license not required, group, pre-school) <i>Source: CCRR</i>	Proportion of Home Owners	Adults (ages 25-64) without a High School Diploma	Unemployment Rate	Median Family Income	Proportion of Lone Parent Families
Kootenay Lake	8,635	515	18	82%	18%	8%	\$51,762	12%
Slocan / Thrums	6,650	505	41	84%	22%	7%	\$45,662	15%
Nelson	9,445	665	144	64%	17%	5%	\$57,184	22%
Salmo	2,615	185	30	80%	33%	11%	\$42,872	14%
Arrow Lakes	4,465	215	28	82%	26%	10%	\$49,716	12%
Rosland/ Warfield	5,340	375	71	86%	15%	7%	\$74,077	12%
Beaver Valley	4,935	290	43	86%	21%	6%	\$66,705	12%
Trail	7,265	365	104	73%	23%	6%	\$58,141	15%
Robson/ Thrums	4,130	275	18	86%	24%	6%	\$66,105	14%
Castlegar	8,905	540	167	81%	23%	7%	\$67,452	13%

The UEY West Kootenay Initiative is a three year project to empower communities with evidence to make responsive program, policy and investment decisions to give their children the best possible start. The information gathered during this project is further meant to complement other research findings, such as the Early Development Instrument (EDI) that measures early childhood vulnerabilities. In addition the Community Research Report will identify children's developmental readiness for school and parents reactions/attitudes to providing opportunities to maximize that development. The EDI will be completed again in the West Kootenay in 2010 and will allow the correlation of socio-economic data, demographic data and availability of programs and services with the EDI results. UEY West Kootenay is funded by the Government of Canada's Understanding the Early Years Initiative. The Kootenay Boundary Community Services Co-operative is the project sponsor, Helen Lutz is the author and numerous individuals have contributed. Please direct inquiries to Val Mayes, UEY Project Coordinator at 250 352-6786. The full report is available at [www.wkearlyyears.ca](http://www.wkearlyyears.ca).