

# Gap Analysis of Bow Valley Sports and Recreation Facilities and Services

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## Executive Summary

In late 2018, the Council received approval from the Province of Alberta for its grant application to conduct a “gap analysis” of sports and recreation facilities and services in the Bow Valley; recommend which of the gaps will make a difference to the quality of life in the valley; and recommend who can best address each of the gaps. Due to capacity challenges in 2019, the project was deferred until 2020.

Given the COVID-19 restrictions associated with face-to-face meetings and workshops for most of 2020 the Council decided to obtain information from Bow Valley residents via two on-line surveys followed by a series of virtual workshops. Information collected from the on-line surveys, including comments, were combined with relevant notes from the virtual sessions and compiled to create overview documents for 26 sports and recreation activities in the Bow Valley.

Respondents, in general, stated there are a sufficient number/availability of facilities in the Bow Valley and they are of sufficient quality. However, limited access to school gymnasiums, lack of indoor and outdoor pickleball courts in most municipalities, competition for allocation of prime-time arena ice, affordability of some sports, interest in a field house/multi-sport complex, challenges attracting immigrants and new residents, concerns about competitive vs. recreational programs for children, and need for more collaboration between municipalities were among a longer list of specific comments provided by respondents and participants.

There are three glaring gaps in the voices of respondents to the on-line survey and virtual sessions. The Council did not receive sufficient input from Stoney Nakoda residents, the 18-24 years of age cohort, nor new residents to the Bow Valley. The Council will undertake further consultations to better understand their perceptions regarding the provision of sport and recreation facilities and services in the Bow Valley.

The Council reviewed several national guidelines on sport and recreation for communities and the current recreation master plans for the towns of Canmore and Banff. The Council does not see a gap in terms of the recreation master plans meeting national guidelines. However, the Council does question whether the plan outcomes are being communicated to residents and user groups in a consistent fashion.

The Council makes 12 recommendations to address the gaps in the provision of sport and recreation facilities and services in the Bow Valley. They include: better collaboration among the Bow Valley municipalities, stronger agreements with schools regarding use of their facilities, optimize use of some municipal facilities in their “off-season” (e.g. ice arenas) for other types of sport and recreation programming, examine the feasibility of building/renovating facilities when the community’s needs cannot be met, improve access to public transit for participants,

help smaller clubs and associations learn from each other and provide more integrated support to ensure everyone has the opportunity to participate and feel welcomed.

## 1. Introduction

The Bow Valley True Sport and Recreation Council (the Council) was created in July 2015. It is a registered not-for-profit organization under the Province of Alberta, *Societies Act*. The mission of the Council is to: promote sport and recreation services for residents; keep an eye on the state of sport and recreation in the Bow Valley; provide and facilitate physical literacy programming; and celebrate the contribution of individuals to sport and recreation in the Bow Valley.

In late 2018, the Council received approval from the Province of Alberta for its grant application to conduct a “gap analysis” of sports and recreation facilities and services in the Bow Valley; recommend which of the gaps will make a difference to the quality of life in the valley; and recommend who can best address each of the gaps. The grant application was supported by municipal officials from Improvement District No. 9 (ID9), Town of Banff, Town of Canmore and the MD Bighorn. Additional financial support was provided by the Wim and Nancy Pauw Foundation via the True Sport Foundation.

The Bow Valley region, for the purposes of this report, encompasses the municipalities of ID9, Town of Banff, Town of Canmore, MD Bighorn (Townships 24 and 25 in Ranges 8, 9, and 10), Kananaskis Improvement District and the Stoney Nakoda Nation. It has a total population of over 28,000 people based on 2016 Federal Census data.

Over the past 10-15 years considerable efforts have been made by municipal officials in Banff and Canmore to explore how these two municipalities can work together to provide a more comprehensive set of services (e.g. public transit) for the two town’s residents. In terms of public transit, this has been extended to ID9 with further discussions underway to include MD Bighorn and beyond. A larger regional approach to coordination of services (e.g. solid waste management) already exists. A thorough assessment of the provision of sport and recreation facilities and services in the Bow Valley has never been undertaken.

Due to capacity challenges in 2019, the Council requested and received an extension to complete the described work.<sup>1</sup> This was further extended by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 which required the Council to revise its consultation process with Bow Valley residents.

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1. Review of existing municipal planning documents relevant to sport and recreation and compare to existing “national frameworks and community checklists”.

The Council conducted a review of the municipal recreation planning documents for the towns of Canmore and Banff. There are no equivalent documents available for ID9,

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<sup>1</sup> The Council requested an extension on December 31, 2019 and it was accepted on January 13, 2020.

MD Bighorn, Kananaskis ID or the Stoney Nakoda Nation. The Council then compared these plans to the Canadian Recreation and Parks Association (CRPA), Canada Sport for Life (CS4L) and True Sport Foundation guidelines and checklists for communities.<sup>2</sup>

## 2.2. Create on-line survey for Bow Valley residents.

Given the COVID-19 restrictions associated with face-to-face meetings and workshops for most of 2020 the Council decided a more appropriate method to obtain information from Bow Valley residents was to conduct two on-line surveys. One survey was targeted at “experts” associated with sport and recreation activities.<sup>3</sup> The second survey was open to all Bow Valley residents. Both surveys were advertised through an email blast to the Council’s subscribers, social media, local newspaper article and the Council’s website. The surveys were conducted in November 2020. A copy of the surveys and results can be found in Appendices A & B. The Council also took the opportunity with these surveys to explore several subject areas that were not directly related to our analysis of facilities and programs. The Council believes that information will assist us in future work associated with sport and recreation in the Bow Valley.

A copy of the survey results was provided to sports and recreation officials with ID9, Town of Banff and MD Bighorn for their information.<sup>4</sup> Follow-up discussions took place with officials from the same three municipalities in early January 2021.

## 2.3. Conduct virtual workshops

As part of the on-line surveys, participants were invited to participate in follow-up virtual workshops to help the Council better understand the information from the survey and enable both experts and community members to provide further commentary on sports and recreation facilities and services. The sessions were conducted using Zoom software. Each session was 60-90 minutes in length and sessions were scheduled for mid-day and evening time slots to accommodate potential participants. The participants were provided with questions to ponder prior to the sessions. All sessions were moderated by members of the Council and notes were taken and sessions recorded for the purpose of confirming the discussion.<sup>5</sup>

Five expert sessions were conducted between March 16-18, 2021. The sessions were organized to bring together related sports and recreational activities where possible. For some sessions additional participants were invited to attend who had significant experience in one or more of the sports to be discussed. Four sessions for the general public were offered later between March 23-25, 2021. An additional series of one-on-

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<sup>2</sup> See References for a complete list of documents reviewed.

<sup>3</sup> Experts were defined as coaches, association executives, technical officials, board members/directors, etc.

<sup>4</sup> The Town of Canmore representative retired during this period and there was a short gap in knowing who to contact in the interim.

<sup>5</sup> Participants were advised that the sessions would be recorded but would not be made public.

one sessions were conducted for “experts” who were unable to attend the earlier sessions. A complete list of all sessions conducted is included in Appendix C.

#### 2.4. Consolidate material from on-line surveys and virtual sessions.

Information collected from the on-line surveys, including comments, were combined with relevant notes from the virtual sessions and compiled to create an overview document for each of the 54 sports and recreation activities in the Bow Valley. An evaluation of each overview was conducted by two members of the Council.

Members of the Council met in April 2021 to prioritize the key points of the evaluations. The prioritized points were then compared to the national checklists identified in Section 2.1 and the relevant municipal recreation plans.

#### 2.5. The Council then provided a draft of this report in May to municipal officials from ID9, Town of Banff, Town of Canmore and MD Bighorn for their review and comments.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1. Comparing community recreation plans to guidelines from national sport and recreation organizations.

- 3.1.1. The recreation master plans currently in place for the Town of Canmore (2016) and the Town of Banff (2015)<sup>6</sup> are high level strategic documents. Both are comprehensive and included significant public consultation in their development. They touch on most aspects of the checklists and guidelines provided by the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association (CRPA), True Sport Foundation, Active Alberta and the Canadian Sport for Life (CS4L) but do not strictly follow the latter in terms of assessing sport and recreation in either community.

As part of the consultations around Banff’s Recreation Programs and Services Master Plan (2015), it states that *“Most Banff residents recognize the need to travel to other Bow Valley communities to access recreation programs and services – Most respondents to the community survey agreed that it is reasonable for Banff residents to travel to Canmore to access recreation programs and services that might not be available in Banff.”* Respondents to the Canmore Recreation Master Plan also noted the importance of considering regional communities in the development of recreation activities and associated facilities in the Bow Valley.

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<sup>6</sup> There are three Town of Banff reference documents: Recreation Programs and Services Master Plan (2015), Recreation Facility Master Plan (2013) and Banff Recreation Grounds Redevelopment Plan (2015).

3.1.2. The Banff Recreation Facility Master Plan (2013) provides a good assessment of facilities in the Town of Banff but also considers facilities provided by Parks Canada and the Town of Canmore.

3.1.3. The Banff Recreation Grounds Redevelopment Plan (2015) is a more focussed plan that is currently being implemented as a series of projects including: picnic tables up-grades 2017, skatepark 2017, ball diamond fencing 2018, shelter repairs 2019 and playground 2019. This plan and the accompanying capital improvements included additional consultations with user groups.

### 3.2. On-line Surveys administered by the Council

The two surveys administered by the Council were not intended to be statistically significant. A random sampling of residents was beyond the scope of this project. Rather their purpose was to provide a general impression of how experts and community residents perceived the quality and quantity of facilities and services available in the Bow Valley.

There were 54 sports and recreation activities reported by participants. Several leisure recreation activities were extremely popular such as hiking, walking, mountaineering/scrambling, canoeing, stand-up paddle-boarding, kayaking and back-country skiing. Despite their popularity, there were few to no additional comments about the state of facilities or programming offered about these activities. There were also a number of sports and recreation activities where there were a limited number of survey respondents and little to no commentary on facilities and programming. Due to the lack of comments from both groups of sports and recreation activities, they have not been evaluated further by the Council.

#### 3.2.1. Expert Survey (see Appendix A for complete details)

A total of 72 experts completed the Expert Survey. Hockey and biking/cycling officials accounted for 25% of respondents. Of the total respondents 50% were board members of their club/association followed by coaches, instructors or administrators.

Over 73% of clubs and associations used the facilities in Canmore or offered programs in that community. Programs were offered and/or facilities were used in all Bow Valley municipalities to some extent.

Aside from the “Train to Win” Sport for Life classification of programs, over 50% of all respondents noted their club / association participated in the other programs: Awareness and First Involvement, Active Start, FUNdamentals, Learn to Train, Train to Compete, Train to Win, and Active for Life. About 75% of clubs



and associations reported that they not only target “youth” but also “active adults”.

Over 65% of all experts responded that they worked with children as young as six years of age to people over 55.

Generally, organizations who had their own facility and personnel were pleased with the quality of the facility, training for staff/officials and state of equipment. Over 15% had concerns with the size of their space.

For those organizations who relied on a space provided by another party, over 20% of respondents stated that the space was not suitable in size.

Over 70% of respondents stated that their club / association adhered to safe sport policies such as: bullying, harassment, emotional misconduct, physical misconduct, concussion and injury prevention/management.

Over 30% of experts responded that they strongly disagree or disagree that their organization receives or has adequate funding for facility space.

When asked what do the experts see as success of their sport and club/association over 85% stated “participation” and “return participation”. Rentals, podium performance, hours available and sign-up procedures were not seen as measures of success.

Experts responded that the greatest barriers to success of their sport or club/association were: facilities (55%), cost (40%), hours available (37%) and public awareness (27%).

### 3.2.2. Community Survey (see Appendix B for complete details)

A total of 474 people responded to this survey. Female respondents represented 53% of the group. Parents were permitted to complete the survey for children under the age of 18. Close to 25% of all respondents were 17 and under. The largest age group responding to the survey were between 55-64 (17%) and the smallest group responding to the survey were between 18-24 years of age (less than 2%).

Over 65% of all respondents were from Canmore, 26% were from Banff, 7% from MD Bighorn and 2% from ID9. There were no respondents from Kananaskis ID nor the Stoney Nakoda Nation.

When asked how long the respondents had lived in the Bow Valley, over 54% stated 15+ years, over 11% stated 10-14 years and 20% stated 5-9 years.

Over 86% of all respondents stated that the best way to describe their involvement in sport was as a recreational participant. This was followed by 31% who described themselves as a parent of a recreational participant. Over 27% identified as a competitive participant and 22% described themselves as a parent of a competitive participant. Respondents could choose more than one category of response, consequently totals for this question can exceed 100%.

Respondents were asked to select which sports and recreational activities they normally participated in (pre-COVID-19) over the course of a year. The top 10 activities were: biking/cycling (77%), hiking (74%), skiing (65%), walking (52%), fitness (47%), cross-country skiing (46%), skating (42%), swimming (38%), golf (32%) and yoga (32%). Respondents could select more than one activity.

A series of questions were posed to respondents regarding the facilities and services/programming in their local community and in the Bow Valley. As expected, respondents noted that the number and availability of facilities, the quality of facilities, the sufficient number of programs and services and the quality of those programs and services were always rated higher for the Bow Valley as a whole vs. the local community.

There were 34% of respondents who did not agree that there was a sufficient number of facilities in the Bow Valley compared to 54% who agreed that there were sufficient facilities. Over 60% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that facilities in the Bow Valley were of sufficient quality compared to only 18% who disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement.

Similar results were noted about the sufficient number and availability of programs and services and the quality of services. Of particular note is that 59% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the services and programming in the Bow Valley were of sufficient quality.

A series of questions were posed to respondents based on the True Sport Foundation's community principles: recognize sport as a valuable community asset, champion ethical conduct, promote inclusion, strengthen connections, support excellence, foster healthy active lifestyles, create a safe and welcoming environment and celebrate contribution. For all of these statements, 67 – 78% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed with each principle except "promote inclusion" which was only agreed or strongly agreed to by 60% of the respondents.

### 3.3. Virtual Sessions

- 3.3.1. As part of the on-line survey, respondents were given the option to leave their name and contact information if they wished to participate in virtual sessions that would take a more detailed look at some sports and recreation activities. Over 120 community survey respondents and 38 experts were subsequently invited to a series of virtual sessions as identified in Appendix C.

The notes from those virtual sessions, plus comments provided from the on-line survey have been consolidated along with the on-line information to present an overview of 26 selected sports and recreation activities out of the 54 recorded. See Appendix D for details.

## 4. Discussion

Although the methodology for this project required some major changes due the public health restrictions associated with COVID-19, the Council was pleased with the interest expressed by Bow Valley residents in participating in the Gap Analysis project. Respondents thanked the Council for conducting this research and are interested to see what recommendations arise from the work. The majority of respondents were active sport and recreation users and their input and passion were clearly evident. Many of the comments received as part of the on-line survey and virtual sessions were similar to earlier public consultation efforts conducted by the municipalities in the development of their Recreation Master Plans in 2015 and 2016. This suggests that some of the issues and challenges of providing sport and recreation facilities and services remain unresolved.

There are also some new “gaps” that also need to be considered. Unfortunately, the closure of all indoor gymnasiums and the closure/partial re-opening of fitness/yoga studios, ice rinks and swimming pools has made it more difficult to determine whether some of the new issues will disappear when these facilities are able to safely reopen and clubs and sports associations and drop-in programs begin again in earnest.

### 4.1. Gaps in survey respondents

There are three glaring gaps in respondents to the on-line survey and virtual sessions. The Council did not receive sufficient input from Stoney Nakoda residents, the 18-24 years of age cohort, nor new residents to the Bow Valley.

The Council is keen to work with the Bow Valley Immigration Partnership to get a more comprehensive response to new resident’s perceptions about sport and recreation opportunities and gaps. The Town of Banff is currently conducting a consultation process on the Fenlands and the Council was advised that it would be best to delay reaching out to new residents until that has been completed. Further the Council

believes that a more robust relationship with this group is warranted given the need to tackle challenges with inclusion, affordability and hesitancy to participate in traditional Canadian sport and recreation activities.

The Council did not have success engaging the 18-24 years of age cohort during the on-line survey but will follow-up with two young adult networks: Canmore Young Adults Network (CYAN) and BanffLife. One or two virtual sessions may help to better understand the wants and needs of Bow Valley young adults regarding sport and recreation activities.

The Council will continue to reach out to residents of the Stoney Nakoda Nation and will solicit assistance from other not-for-profit groups and organizations currently working with the Stoney Nakoda community. The Council recognizes that certain protocols are necessary when consulting with Indigenous groups and these will be respected.

Given the continued presence of COVID-19 in the Bow Valley, it is anticipated that this consultation work with all three groups may take 12-18 months to complete.

#### 4.2. Comparing existing recreation plans to national guidelines

Following the Council's review of several national guidelines on sport and recreation for communities and the current recreation master plans for the towns of Canmore and Banff, it is evident that there is a perceived gap here but it is less an issue of content than style. The plans were approved by their respective town councils over five years ago and they included significant input from the public. Both plans are very strategic and address most if not all of the national sports and recreation organizations' guidelines/checklists. Consequently, the Council does not see a gap in terms of the recreation master plans meeting national guidelines.

However, the Council does question the value of the plans in helping the municipalities make decisions around the provision of sports and recreation facilities and programs/services. There is an intention in the plans to become more "outcome" focussed but it is difficult to determine if the municipalities have been able to respond in a robust fashion to the community about progress being made on achieving the outcomes and how they compare to similar-sized communities.

There appears to be a "something magic happens" step(s) between the master plans and the day-to-day operations. One exception to this hierarchy of recreation planning is the Banff Recreation Grounds Redevelopment Plan. It flows from the town's recreation master plan and has been implemented through a series of projects over a multi-year period. Smaller capital projects do not likely warrant that approach but they can be lost in the annual town budgets and council deliberations. The Council suggests that the towns of Canmore and Banff consider conducting an annual briefing of

proposed sports and recreation projects and adjustments to programming to a multi-stakeholder group of sports and recreation users. There may also be a need for a neutral third-party or intermediate to work with user groups where there are contentious issues. The Council is willing to consider that role.

#### 4.3. Bow Valley approach to sport and recreation

Given the comments from participants about their strong agreement regarding the availability and quality of regional facilities and services, the Council encourages greater collaboration between all of the Bow Valley municipalities in recreation planning at an operational level. There are undoubtedly economies of scale to consider vs. the challenges of meeting local community needs, transportation and of course governance questions. Many clubs and associations already acknowledge the need to draw participants from the entire Bow Valley vs. one smaller community. The Council believes there are missed opportunities associated with allocation of facility space, scheduling, awareness and promotion, registrations and other operational matters.

There may also be some value in considering a single Bow Valley sport and recreation organization with municipal responsibilities, similar to ROAM transit or the Bow Valley Waste Management Commission. This would certainly be useful in demonstrating the cooperative nature of Bow Valley communities and might help reinforce and provide a stronger rationale for the need to upgrade a facility or build a new one that would serve the larger regional community. Nevertheless, the Council believes the first step should simply be better collaboration at the operational level.

#### 4.4. Agreements with school boards and others

Like all municipalities in Alberta and across Canada, there is a need to access school gymnasiums, sport fields and other spaces in order for Bow Valley municipalities to find suitable spaces for the provision of sport and recreation. The Council is aware that joint-use agreements do exist between the Canadian Rockies Public Schools (CRPS) Division and the towns of Canmore and Banff and the MD Bighorn but the details of access, rental costs, weekend use, etc. are not clear and are subject to operational decisions that can impact longer term scheduling for community groups and drop-in programs. The Council is aware that the Town of Banff made a significant financial contribution towards the Banff Elementary School gymnasium. Well-equipped gymnasiums also exist at Our Lady of Snows Catholic Academy and schools in Morley although the Council is not aware of any agreements between those schools and Bow Valley municipalities.

Many users, pre-COVID-19 were already frustrated with the lack of gymnasium space for hard-court sports such as basketball, volleyball, badminton and pickleball. The COVID-19 pandemic restrictions have exasperated that situation with many

respondents wondering why there is no municipally owned indoor hard-court spaces<sup>7</sup>. The Council believes that a portion of the demand for hard-court spaces can be met through existing school facilities but wonders if the existing agreements could be renegotiated or created where none exist.

The Town of Banff has an agreement with the Banff Centre for use of the swimming pool at the Sally Borden Centre. Based on comments from potential pool patrons, it appears there are missed rental opportunities and operational efficiencies that could benefit users and the Banff Centre. The Council encourages further discussions to explore a better agreement.

#### 4.5. Key Themes

##### 4.5.1. Inclusion

As noted in the on-line survey results, respondents stated that further work is needed here to ensure that all community residents feel welcome in joining a particular sport or recreational activity. Respondents identified many different barriers, here are a few of the reasons cited: their culture is unfamiliar with that sport or activity; parents are not involved in that activity so they are unlikely to support their children or volunteer; and the sport is very competitive with little to no beginner or recreational stream.

The Council posed this question to many clubs and associations during the virtual sessions. There was no sport or recreation group that had demonstrated making significant progress in ensuring that “inclusion” was happening.

##### 4.5.2. Affordability

Both the on-line survey results and the follow-up virtual sessions noted that several sports are expensive, either from an equipment purchase (hockey, alpine & Nordic skiing and mountain biking) or due to expensive registration fees which often cover coaching salaries, facility rental space and travel outside the Bow Valley. Respondents noted that equipment swaps do happen but were more challenging in 2020 due to the pandemic. Equipment does get significantly more expensive for alpine and Nordic ski racers and competitive mountain bikers. Jumpstart and KidSport programs are available in the Bow Valley along with generous funding from the Wim & Nancy Pauw Foundation for a variety of sport related activities. Nevertheless, for many families in the Bow Valley the costs to participate in some sports are beyond their financial capability and they have difficult choices to make.

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<sup>7</sup> The Town of Canmore recently created two indoor badminton / pickleball courts at the Canmore Recreation Centre. They will be available once COVID-19 restrictions are lifted.

#### 4.5.3. Accessibility

The Council noted many comments about the challenges of having to drive from one community to another to participate in games and practices. This is due in part to a sport or activity not being available in their local community (e.g. Little League baseball is only happening in Canmore). The travel issues apply to both children and adult's programs. The greatest challenges are for residents in the smaller communities of Lake Louise, MD Bighorn and the Stoney Nakoda Nation. Although ROAM public transit has expanded, it does not serve all communities in the Bow Valley. After school programs are well subscribed in the towns of Banff and Canmore but become problematic for children who are taking a school bus to and from their home. There was a comment stating that some school sports did have a late bus to help athletes get home after practices/games.

Several coaches and club volunteers mentioned that they are unable to take children home after games or practices due to insurance challenges. This is an issue that should be addressed at the club/association level. Any discussion around this however should follow all necessary child protection requirements.

Although some sport and recreation facilities have been upgraded to remove physical barriers for residents with mobility and cognitive challenges, most Bow Valley facilities are not totally accessible. Several outdoor facilities / play areas do not have proper parking, access paths or washrooms. Improvements in barrier-free access benefit all users.

Allocation of time for the use of ice arenas and school gymnasiums was raised by nearly all indoor participants and user groups. One participant noted that accessing ice time on a weekday is never difficult before 3:45 pm. Access to school gymnasiums must first meet school sport and recreation priorities. Consequently, municipal activities must work around those schedules.

As noted in the on-line survey results, there is insufficient indoor sport and recreation space for many activities (e.g. volleyball, basketball, line dancing, badminton, etc.). One glaring example of this is pickleball. This activity is becoming increasingly popular in the Bow Valley and across North America and there is only one municipal indoor court in the Bow Valley at the Canmore Seniors Centre, with two more just completed at the Canmore Recreation Centre. There was a small drop-in program at a Canmore school gymnasium but the COVID-19 restrictions closed that venue.

There was a small but passionate group of comments concerning access to facilities (e.g. tennis courts, Elevation Place climbing wall and pool, and hiking trails). This group of respondents noted that popular areas were overcrowded with visitors. The Council also received comments about the potential for more

sport tourism development via tournaments, races, swim meets, etc. This was seen as an approach in the tourist shoulder seasons to increase revenue to offset the costs of operating facilities.

#### 4.5.4. Recreation vs. Competitive Activity

Much has been written about the relationship between recreation and sports. “Science, research, and decades of experience all point to the same thing: kids and adults will get active, stay active, and even reach the greatest heights of sport achievement if they do the right things at the right times. This is the logic behind the Long-Term Development Framework.”<sup>8</sup> Unfortunately, the promotion of this framework requires greater attention on the part of coaches and club/association officials and the Council. To be clear, the Council supports the framework but a more concerted effort is needed to demonstrate that only a small slice of the framework applies to participants actively pursuing the “podium pathway”.

The Long-Term Development Framework elaborates, “The Awareness and First Involvement pre-stages engage individuals in sport and physical activity, they must be aware of what opportunities exist and when they try an activity for the first time it is critical that the experience is positive.

The Active Start, FUNdamentals, and Learn to Train stages develop physical literacy before puberty so children have the basic skills to be active for life. Physical literacy provides the foundation for those who choose to pursue elite training in one sport or activity after age 12.

The Train to Train, Train to Compete, and Train to Win stages provide elite training for those who want to specialize in one sport and compete at the highest level, maximizing the physical, mental, and emotional development of each athlete.

Active for Life stage is about staying physically active through lifelong participation in competitive or recreational sport or physical activity.”

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<sup>8</sup> Canadian Sport For Life, January 2013



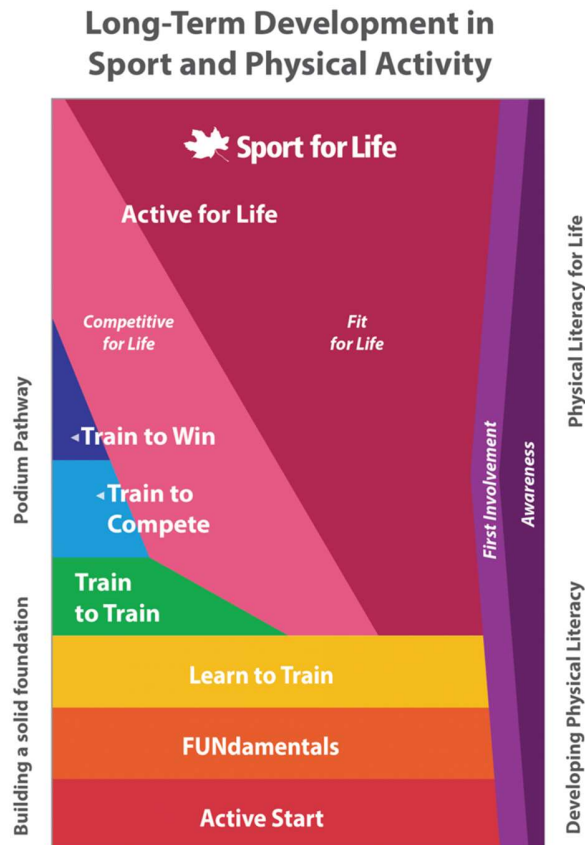


Figure 1. Long-Term Development Rectangle

Many children participate in the Active Start, FUNdamentals and Learn to Train stages as they develop their physical literacy skills. However, as they reach their teenage years, other priorities and interests may lead them to pursue other activities although they will likely remain physically active if the right setting is provided. In most cases, that is one that promotes physical activity at a less competitive level where socialization with their peers is more important. A good example of this is the Pond Hockey program offered in the Bow Valley. It provides a “drop-in” type setting that enables participants to enjoy the activity and provide a level of skill development that encourages vs. discourages new comers. Unfortunately, there is no formal relationship with the minor hockey association and the Pond Hockey program needs to secure its own liability insurance. The Council believes that clubs/associations need to provide more

opportunities for this type of programming and municipalities must be willing to provide adequate space in their facilities. It was also noted that Pond Hockey was appealing to athletes competing in other sports.

#### 4.5.5. Request for a field house

A field house is usually described as a large indoor sport and recreation facility that accommodates multiple uses with the ability to easily convert spaces/rooms for different purposes. It could be large enough to include: a 400 metre running track and a turf field large enough to play soccer, rugby, football and athletic events (e.g. high jump and long jump pits). It could also be a smaller facility that can house some or all of the following: an ice rink and/or smaller soccer field, a 25 metre pool, a gymnasium for hard court sports (e.g. volleyball), a shorter running track and other ancillary spaces (change rooms, washrooms, spectator seating, weight room, meeting rooms, etc.).

A recurring comment from many respondents is the need to have a field house in the Bow Valley. As noted in the survey, there is not sufficient indoor municipal facility space to meet the needs of many user groups, including basketball, volleyball, badminton, pickleball, gymnastics, dance, and indoor soccer. There is no consensus on where the facility should be constructed. Designing and constructing such a facility is a multi-million dollar commitment that will require a coordinated approach and financial support by all municipalities, provincial and federal governments, the private sector and possibly other partners. Strong public support by user groups and the general public is also required, not just for the capital costs but perhaps as importantly for the ongoing operating costs. Additional revenues from tournaments and visitor use would likely be needed to help cover these ongoing costs.

The Council received some comments that indoor sport and recreation facilities are not a priority as residents should use the many outdoor opportunities, particularly in the winter, to stay fit and enjoy the region. Other users commented that many residents were not accustomed to winter recreation and preferred indoor activities, stating safety concerns and the need to socialize in a more comfortable setting. There was also an interesting discussion with one group of “experts” who mentioned that many small European communities have a sports and recreation club that brings together all ages to participate in multiple sports over the course of a year. This approach enables the community to share resources and collaborate vs. compete for facility space and programming.

#### 4.6. Specific sports

A summary of the survey results and relevant comments (see Appendix D) and the Council's evaluations of the following sports and recreation activities can be found in Appendix E. Below are the key gaps in the provision of facilities and programming. As noted elsewhere, the Council did not analyze all 54 sports and recreation activities identified by survey respondents, due to few if any comments and/or there were only a few identified participants.

##### 4.6.1. Baseball

- 4.6.1.1. Facilities were rated as satisfactory in Canmore. There are no equivalent facilities in the rest of the Bow Valley.
- 4.6.1.2. The Little League program has good participation but after summer it loses participants to hockey. For a sport like baseball to succeed they need a minimum of 12 participants/team, otherwise it gets difficult to accommodate kids being away.

There is a need for more volunteers to build and sustain the program.

##### 4.6.2. Basketball

- 4.6.2.1. Indoor facilities are all located in schools, although there is a basketball court at the Banff Centre for drop-in purposes. Due to COVID-19, school gymnasiums were not available. Pre-COVID, there were challenges with securing sufficient space for practices and games. Outdoor facilities vary, with some hoops at the incorrect height for certain age groups and too close to obstructions (e.g. curbs in parking lots).
- 4.6.2.2. There are active high school programs, a developmental program, a popular Filipino league and drop-in opportunities. Programs appear to be well-run.

##### 4.6.3. Biking / cycling

- 4.6.3.1. Outdoor facilities for mountain biking are located throughout the Bow Valley. Many respondents believe there is a need for more technical and advanced trails, including for enduro-style racing. Trail construction and maintenance requires more volunteers and/or greater attention from Town of Canmore and the Province of Alberta. Other respondents noted that many trails are too difficult and would like to see more trails on flatter terrain. Road cycling facilities are generally very good. Legacy Trail and Highway 1A are very popular. The former is often very crowded at popular times. Respondents suggested additional bike lanes are needed in some locations.
- 4.6.3.2. Survey respondents noted this was the most popular activity. The Rundle Mountain Cycling Club is well run and has programs for children, youth and adults. Their programs for youth are fully booked. Other cycling related

organizations (CAMBA, Friends of Kananaskis & BV MBA) focus on construction and maintenance of trails. There is concern that a culture of volunteering in the mountain bike community to maintain trails is much weaker than in places such as Squamish and North Vancouver.

Mountain biking and road cycling at more advanced levels requires expensive equipment.

#### 4.6.4. Climbing

- 4.6.4.1. Outdoor climbing takes place throughout the entire Bow Valley. There is a complete range of opportunities for all skill levels. There are indoor climbing facilities in both Banff and Canmore. The facility at Elevation Place is very popular and a popular private sector bouldering facility is also available.
- 4.6.4.2. Programs are offered at all indoor facilities and there are many certified guides and local companies who offer guided climbing trips and instruction. Mountain safety programs are also offered by local companies and guides in conjunction with Alpine Club of Canada and Avalanche Canada.

#### 4.6.5. Cross-country skiing and Biathlon

- 4.6.5.1. There are numerous outdoor trails in the provincial parks and Banff National Park for recreational skiers. The facilities at the Canmore Nordic Centre are aging and no longer meet international standards but continue as the key hub for instruction and training. A provincial grant application has been made to upgrade some facilities at the Nordic Centre. A user fee was implemented for ski trail grooming in the Alberta provincial parks and it was well received by users.
- 4.6.5.2. Cross-country skiing is a very popular sport in the Bow Valley involving young children to active seniors. There is a wide variety of programs, races and loppets and elite level training. There are several ski clubs operating at the Canmore Nordic Centre and are well managed.

Programming for Stoney Nakoda youth is offered by Spirit North. This charitable organization runs a very successful cross-country ski program for Stoney Nakoda youth in conjunction with the Nakoda Elementary School, Morley Community School and Exshaw School. The organization provides equipment, coaching and transportation to and from the Canmore Nordic Centre.

Nordic skiing can be an expensive sport for those participants aspiring to higher levels of competition.

#### 4.6.6. Curling

- 4.6.6.1. The curling facilities in Canmore and Banff are in very good condition. There does not appear to be any issues with lack of space or ice time.
- 4.6.6.2. There are efforts to introduce curling to students and new Canadians. Both curling clubs have active leagues and drop-in opportunities.

#### 4.6.7. Dance

- 4.6.7.1. There are private dance facilities in Canmore and Banff. The Line Dancing group uses municipal and school spaces but it is often hard to get access to these spaces and there is a concern about the costs of liability insurance to use these facilities.
- 4.6.7.2. Dance programs appear to be well organized with strong attendance.

#### 4.6.8. Disc Golf

- 4.6.8.1. There are two disc golf courses in Canmore and both are fine facilities that have many users. There is no course in Banff and respondents noted they are interested in creating a course in Banff and are working with the Town of Banff and Parks Canada officials.
- 4.6.8.2. There are no formal programs for instruction or training noted. This activity could benefit from greater awareness among Bow Valley residents, perhaps via a club or association. It is not expensive and can be enjoyed by individuals and families.

#### 4.6.9. Fitness

- 4.6.9.1. There are several fitness facilities in both Canmore and Banff plus spaces in Lake Louise and Exshaw. Some facilities are municipally owned, others are private and could be stand-alone fitness spaces while others are associated with hotels or other businesses. There are no apparent issues with the number or general quality of facilities in the Bow Valley.
- 4.6.9.2. All stand-alone fitness facilities offer a variety of fitness regimes and one-on-one and group classes. Drop-in programs are also available at locations such as Elevation Place and the Banff Centre.

#### 4.6.10. Football

- 4.6.10.1. Millennium Field in Canmore is the only current field used for football and it is not regulation size. The field at the Banff Recreation Grounds would be suitable for football once it has been upgraded.
- 4.6.10.2. The Canmore Wolverines Football Association and the Canmore Collegiate High School have a successful football program for high school students attending the school. There are no other football programs in the Bow Valley.

#### 4.6.11. Golf

- 4.6.11.1. There are six golf courses in the Bow Valley region. They cater to both local and regional residents. The courses also attract national and international visitors.
- 4.6.11.2. The Canmore Golf and Curling Club and the Banff Springs Golf Course both have programs targeting youth. They have also worked with local schools to encourage children and youth to try the sport. There are active men's and women's leagues. Tournaments and fund-raising events happen at all of the courses.

Green fees and club memberships vary in cost but may be too expensive for many residents of the Bow Valley.

#### 4.6.12. Gymnastics

- 4.6.12.1. There is only one gymnastic facility currently operating in the Bow Valley and that is at the Canmore Recreation Centre. The facility is a bit small based on respondent's comments, primarily because of a walking track that is located in the same space. The Canmore Illusions Gymnastics Club owns all of the equipment. There was a gymnastics club and facility in Banff but it was forced to close due to lack of suitable space.
- 4.6.12.2. The Canmore club has a waiting list and is very popular.

#### 4.6.13. Hockey

- 4.6.13.1. There are indoor and/or outdoor ice sheets with boards in all the Bow Valley municipalities. The indoor facilities are in good shape and are well used during the prime season (September – April). Some respondents noted that if there was more attention paid to flooding some of the outdoor rinks, this could help alleviate the constant battles for ice allocation in the arenas. The Council noted that there is a covered outdoor ice sheet in Lake Louise that is sometimes available for rent to groups outside ID9 although the municipality has limited ice time and resources.
- 4.6.13.2. Hockey is a very popular winter activity in the Bow Valley for all ages. There are a variety of leagues, drop-in opportunities, recreational vs. competitive play, and the Canmore Eagles Junior A club. The Canmore Minor Hockey Association has structured its teams to provide at least two tiers of programming which should be commended. Unfortunately, the pond hockey program is not linked with the minor hockey associations. The Council believes a better relationship here would help broaden the programming and reduce insurance costs for the pond hockey program. Respondents also noted that there remain problems with unruly fans on occasion and this makes it difficult to recruit and retain referees.

The loss of the Banff Hockey Academy in 2020 has meant a significant reduction in ice rental revenues at the Fenlands Banff Recreation Centre

and a need to re-think some of the spaces occupied by the Academy. A separate process, managed by the Town of Banff, is currently underway to determine how best to use the spaces and ice time vacated by the Academy.

#### 4.6.14. Karate

- 4.6.14.1. Respondents noted that the key challenge with offering Karate programs in the Bow Valley is finding sufficient space for their programs. Ideally a dedicated martial arts space would be best but the clubs could share a space with a dance or yoga studio. They also require a space to hang bags and store mats.
- 4.6.14.2. There are several Karate clubs in the Bow Valley and they all appear to be well operated. Karate is an inexpensive sport and is open to all ages.

#### 4.6.15. Pickleball

- 4.6.15.1. Pickleball is a fast-growing activity in North America and in the Bow Valley. There is a major need to provide pickleball courts at indoor locations in Banff and Canmore and outdoor locations in all Bow Valley communities. The few existing facilities do not seem adequate, based on respondent's comments, and there are some safety issues. Town of Canmore municipal officials have advised the Council that two indoor pickleball courts / badminton courts have been created at the Canmore Recreation Centre and will soon be available, pending COVID-19 restrictions being relaxed or lifted. The MD Bighorn is also planning to provide an outdoor court(s). Some larger cities are noting conflicts over access to courts where both tennis and pickleball are played. Many communities are now building designated pickleball courts.
- 4.6.15.2. Pickleball is being enjoyed by many seniors and is a welcoming and enjoyable leisure activity. Costs for purchasing equipment are reasonable and court rental rates appear affordable for most residents.

#### 4.6.16. Rugby

- 4.6.16.1. There are two pitches suitable for rugby in the Bow Valley; one in Canmore and one in Banff. The Banff rugby pitch is due for some major improvements in 2021. The field in Canmore is primarily used 1-2 times / year. The Banff club is working with the Town of Banff on guidance around the field upgrade and the provision of ancillary facilities (washrooms, changerooms, etc.). The field adjacent to the Banff Community High School is also used for practices.
- 4.6.16.2. The Banff Rugby Club appears to be well organized and has a good working relationship with the local municipality and schools. Their program receives guidance and non-financial support from the provincial and national associations. They will be introducing a U13 program (rush rugby) to help teach youth the key components of the game without involving

tackling. This organization appears to be a sound model for a small club doing everything to grow the game in the community.

#### 4.6.17. Skating

4.6.17.1. Power skating and figure skating use the ice sheets in Banff and Canmore and occasionally the outdoor ice sheet in Lake Louise. The facilities are in good shape. Respondents noted that access to ice times is always an issue. There are drop-in opportunities for skating, although the allotted times are not always that convenient.

4.6.17.2. The figure skating clubs in Banff and Canmore appear to collaborate and work together. The programs are somewhat expensive due to ice rental and coaching costs.

#### 4.6.18. Skiing

4.6.18.1. Alpine skiing is an obvious popular winter activity. There are four large ski areas in the Bow Valley and all have a variety of terrain with multiple ski runs and lifts. They are key winter tourist attractions for local, regional and international guests. Ski schools and snow board schools are available at all locations and ski racing clubs are also linked to the ski areas.

4.6.18.2. Alpine skiing is an expensive sport. Respondents have noted that young skiers participate in the sport because they have parents and siblings who also ski or snowboard. There are evidently fewer ski racers coming from Bow Valley communities. This is likely due to the changing demographics of the Bow Valley with a larger percentage of the population unfamiliar with skiing. Introducing Bow Valley youth to skiing is important, as is the promotion of the sport via the ski areas ski schools.

Skiing is a popular adaptive sport for many individuals. Rocky Mountain Adaptive offers programming primarily at Sunshine Village. The program attracts local, regional, national and international participants.

#### 4.6.19. Slo-pitch

4.6.19.1. There are softball/slo-pitch diamonds located in Lake Louise, Banff, Canmore and Exshaw. All of the diamonds are in relatively good shape with proper backstops and playing fields. Drainage challenges at the diamonds in Banff are to be addressed in 2021. The fields in Canmore are busy about five nights/week. The diamonds in Banff are busy on Sundays and Thursday evening. The Banff Recreation Grounds Redevelopment Plan called for the elimination of one field. The Banff Slo-pitch organization is concerned with this decision as it makes it more difficult to organize tournaments and conduct its games given the Sunday schedule.

4.6.19.2. Slo-pitch is usually played by adults 18+. There are men's, women's and coed programs available in the Bow Valley. There is no youth program although tee ball, baseball and softball are similar activities. The Canmore



program appears to operate quite successfully and the Council believes that the program in Banff could benefit from some better communication between town and slo-pitch officials. The Council is prepared to help with those discussions if appropriate.

#### 4.6.20. Soccer

- 4.6.20.1. There are soccer fields in both Banff and Canmore. The field in Banff is being upgraded in 2021 to improve drainage and replace goals.
- 4.6.20.2. Soccer is one of the sports played in the Bow Valley that does attract new Canadians. Although there are some introductory programs offered in the communities there is no regional recreation league. Youth interested in a competitive program must play in the Calgary Minor Soccer Association leagues. The Council believes a summer drop-in or more recreation-oriented program would be appropriate for youth in the Bow Valley. There are very limited opportunities to play indoor soccer in the winter.

#### 4.6.21. Speed Skating

- 4.6.21.1. The Canmore Recreation Centre rinks are used by the Banff Canmore Speed Skating Club. The facility is a good venue. The major issue is allocation of ice time.
- 4.6.21.2. The club is small but well organized. The Council believes that there is a need to make more residents aware of the sport and the club to help it grow.

#### 4.6.22. Squash

- 4.6.22.1. There are only two squash courts remaining in the Bow Valley and they are not in great shape. The courts are at the Rocky Mountain Resort just outside the Town of Banff. Several respondents mentioned the need for squash courts in Canmore.
- 4.6.22.2. The Bow Valley Squash Foundation provides programming for children in the Bow Valley. The program was originally aimed at youth in Morley and there are now participants from Banff as well. There is little to no cost for participants. Transportation for participants to and from Morley is a challenge facing the organization.

#### 4.6.23. Swimming

- 4.6.23.1. There are two 25 metre pools and one 100-foot pool (Banff Springs Hotel) in the Bow Valley with lanes for swimming. The Elevation Place pool has eight lanes and can host swim meets. The Sally Borden Pool in Banff has four lanes. All three facilities have hot tubs and children's pools. There are also several hotels in the Bow Valley with smaller pools that could be used for some introductory swim lessons.
- 4.6.23.2. Swimming lessons, stroke improvement programs are available in Banff and Canmore. The Bow Valley Riptides and Coho's swim programs are well

organized and managed. The Council believes there are opportunities to find collaborative ways of growing the sport in Banff with appropriate access to the Sally Borden pool.

#### 4.6.24. Tennis

- 4.6.24.1. There are outdoor tennis courts in all Bow Valley communities. Most are municipal courts although there are courts at two hotels in Banff. There is an ambitious project to upgrade the Lions Park courts in Canmore but it is contingent on receiving a grant from the Province of Alberta.
- 4.6.24.2. There are two tennis clubs in the Bow Valley with instruction for junior players and adults. Both clubs host tournaments and have leagues and ladders. Memberships are reasonable. Respondents noted that the Canmore Tennis Club lacks a “clubhouse” where players can socialize before and after matches. Like other sports, the social interaction is important to help welcome, grow and nurture a love for the sport.

Tennis is another activity that is supported by Rocky Mountain Adaptive. However, the courts in Canmore need attention. Parking, access to the courts and accessible washrooms are all lacking.

#### 4.6.25. Volleyball

- 4.6.25.1. Like basketball, volleyball participants have limited access to school gymnasiums for practices, games and hosting tournaments.
- 4.6.25.2. There are junior and senior high school teams in both Banff and Canmore and there is also a club in Canmore. Based on feedback from respondents, there is a potential to grow the sport in the Bow Valley but it would need access to more facility space. A drop-in adult league would likely be popular if there was adequate facility space allocated to volleyball.

#### 4.6.26. Yoga

- 4.6.26.1. There are several private yoga studios in both Canmore and Banff along with other options managed by each of the municipalities.
- 4.6.26.2. Yoga is a very popular activity. It appears that the range of options to residents is large and appropriate.

### 5. Follow-up actions by Bow Valley True Sport and Recreation Council

- 5.1. The Council needs to continue consulting with the Indigenous community on the Stoney Nakoda Nation to better understand their needs, the state of their facilities and what programs should be pursued.
- 5.2. The Council needs to engage with young adults in the Bow Valley (ages 18-24) to better determine their views and perceptions around the provision of sport and recreation opportunities in the region. The Council will reach out to groups such as BanffLife and Canmore Young Adults Network.

- 5.3. The Council needs to better engage with recent immigrants, permanent residents and newcomers to the Bow Valley community to better understand their views and perceptions around sport and recreation opportunities in the region.
- 5.4. The Council will work with Bow Valley Immigration Partnership, BanffLife and CYAN to determine how sport and recreation organizations can be more inclusive and welcoming to newcomers and marginalized residents.
- 5.5. The Council will work with clubs and associations to raise awareness of their sport and recreation on the Bow Valley True Sport and Recreation Council website and through collaborations with the Bow Valley municipalities where appropriate.
- 5.6. The Council will work with passionate groups of individuals interested in growing their sport. This could take the form of helping the group create a not-for-profit society or an alternative option may be for the Council to expand its objects and become a home for these smaller groups.
- 5.7. The Council will update its current strategic plan to consider the many comments and information from respondents about the state of sports and recreation in the Bow Valley.

## 6. Recommendations

- 6.1. The Council recommends that the municipal officials responsible for sport and recreation report on the results associated with implementing their relevant plans and the outcomes achieved. This could take the form of an annual briefing of accomplishments and proposed projects to sport and recreation stakeholders in the community. The Council could help organize and host this on a Bow Valley wide basis.
- 6.2. The Council recommends that the municipal officials responsible for sport and recreation collaborate even more in the operational delivery of their programs to improve scheduling, space allocation, program registration, etc.
- 6.3. The Council recommends that the municipalities work with school boards in the Bow Valley to determine if agreements can be fashioned to provide even greater levels of confirmed or guaranteed access to school gymnasiums and other spaces.
- 6.4. The Council recommends that local clubs and associations ask their provincial and national associations to lobby for better access to liability insurance for their activities.
- 6.5. The Council recommends that all municipalities improve access to their sport and recreation facilities for residents with mobility and cognitive challenges.
- 6.6. The Council recommends that all clubs and associations provide more opportunities for participants to access “recreational and/or drop-in programs” not just competitive streams.
- 6.7. The Council recommends that the municipalities collaborate on examining the potential to build a field house in the Bow Valley. The Council is willing to help support such an initiative. In the interim, the Council recommends that the towns of Banff and Canmore examine the feasibility of using the dry floor space of their ice and curling rinks for other recreational purposes during the spring and summer.

- 6.8. The Council recommends that an annual “sport and recreation summit or fair” be supported by the Bow Valley municipalities. The summit/fair would be an opportunity for clubs and associations to promote their activities, raise their profile and provide development training for coaches and administrators. Equipment swaps could be included in the fairs to help reduce the costs of some sports. Should the summit or fair be popular, it could evolve to one for the winter season sports and recreation activities and another for the summer activities.
- 6.9. The Council recommends that municipalities make a concerted effort to provide outdoor pickleball courts in their community, where none currently exist, in the next two years. The municipalities should also examine locations to provide a minimum of one indoor court in a suitable building in the next year, where feasible.
- 6.10. The Council recommends that Town of Banff officials meet with the local Slo-pitch organization to improve communications and create a more productive relationship.
- 6.11. The Council recommends that clubs and associations consider hosting “equipment and gear swaps”, especially targeted for parents who need some financial assistance. Some swaps already happen and are key fund-raisers for clubs (e.g. bike swap for RMCC, cross-country ski swap for Canmore Nordic Ski Club, and ski swap for Banff Alpine Racers). The swaps could be consolidated under “one tent” and include awareness programs and participation by Canmore’s Affordable Services Program, the Banff Access Program, KidSport and Jumpstart.
- 6.12. Volunteers: The Council recommends that the smaller clubs and associations touch base with the volunteer banks in Banff and Canmore to advertise the need for volunteers in a variety of capacities.

## 7. Next Steps

- 7.1. A presentation to municipal officials / elected officials / Canadian Rockies Public Schools outlining the major recommendations arising from the Council’s report will be offered.
- 7.2. A presentation will be created and posted on the Bow Valley True Sport Recreation Council website highlighting the key findings and recommendations with a link to the full report. The Council will send an email blast to all sport and recreation organizations and all “virtual session participants” advising that a summary presentation, and the final report, are available.
- 7.3. The Council will continue consultations with the Indigenous community and Bow Valley Immigration Partnership to fill in knowledge gaps identified in this report.

## 8. Acknowledgements

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