



CASE STUDY | REVELSTOKE LEVERAGES COVID-19 TO BUILD COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

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While the impact of COVID-19 has been swift and intense, Revelstoke, BC has mobilized its response to the pandemic in an innovative way. The community's Collective Impact initiative, *Vibrant Revelstoke*, has identified an opportunity for change within the crisis. Stakeholders across government, business, public, and non-profit sectors have rallied around shared goals of affordability and connection. Together, they leverage each other's efforts to support the greater good, build resilience, and revamp local programs, policies and systems.

OVERVIEW

At Vibrant Revelstoke's 2019 Top 100 event, two immediate priorities emerged for the Collective Impact initiative to take forward – Affordability for All, and Strong Neighbourhood Connections. The social and economic instabilities that COVID-19 has triggered have pressed the community to rally around these very same priorities.

Recognizing opportunity within the crisis, Revelstoke's municipal leaders, business champions, non-profit changemakers, and concerned citizens have all mobilized to ensure that everyone is able to meet their basic needs, and that everyone can access critical opportunities for connection.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Vibrant Revelstoke is a Collective Impact initiative that works towards the common goals of Affordability for All and Strong Neighbourhood Connections.
- Municipal leaders, business champions and non-profit changemakers, and concerned citizens have all mobilized around these shared goals to respond to COVID-19.
- Revelstoke is mitigating affordability challenges by ensuring that vulnerable populations and front-line workers are able to access safe shelter, free transportation, healthy food, and reliable childcare.
- The community is creating strong neighbourhood connections by sharing reliable information, connecting isolated families and seniors and supporting students to access computers.

ABOUT VIBRANT REVELSTOKE: AFFORDABILITY FOR ALL

Vibrant Revelstoke was launched in 2019 to tackle the community's complex affordability challenge.

The Collective Impact initiative has rallied around the principle that large-scale social change requires organizations to coordinate their efforts and work towards clearly defined goals.

SETTING THE STAGE

While COVID-19 has impacted the entire Revelstoke community, residents that were already experiencing affordability challenges have been disproportionately affected. Small and medium businesses, that just a month ago were thriving, have had to shut down. Individuals that were precariously employed have now found themselves out of work. More people than ever are relying on an already stretched social sector, and potential triggers compromising mental health have escalated. More than ever, residents are turning to community resources, services and supports to meet their basic needs, including for shelter, food, transportation, childcare, and social connection.

VIBRANT REVELSTOKE: AFFORDABILITY FOR ALL

Vibrant Revelstoke: Affordability for All, was launched in 2019 to tackle the community's complex affordability challenge. Building on Revelstoke's strong history of collaboration, the group has adopted a Collective Impact approach, and has rallied around its guiding principle, that in order to create lasting solutions to social problems on a large-scale, organizations need to coordinate their efforts and work together around clearly defined goals.

At the group's 2019 *Top 100* event, two main immediate priorities emerged: the ever-present need for affordability; and the growing need for stronger neighbourhood connections. Incidentally, the social and economic instabilities that COVID-19 has imposed have pressed the entire community to address these very same priorities.

The joint actions of individuals working towards collective goals, such as restoring health, social and economic systems, are prime examples of Collective Impact – a framework for change that requires stakeholders to work together.

Recognizing opportunity within the COVID-19 crisis, Revelstoke's municipal, business, public and community stakeholders are forging ahead to shift programs and policies, and to restore and revamp local health, social, and economic systems. People have begun to mobilize in truly amazing and innovative ways, in the interest of the greater good.

Amidst public- and private- sector closures, income insecurity, and physical isolation, one thing has remained certain – the need for connection and sharing. As *Vibrant Revelstoke* has reflected on their current reality, the need to keep sight of the following two goals has become clearer than ever:

- Maintaining affordability as residents experience deepened COVID-19-related challenges.
- Keeping the community connected, compassionate and supported, amidst a new normal of physical distancing and the breakdowns of social networks.



IN IT TOGETHER: COLLABORATION ACROSS SECTORS

In response to the COVID-19 crisis, municipal leaders, business champions, non-profit professionals, and local citizens have all stepped up to serve the community's most vulnerable, to ensure that everybody is able to meet their basic needs, and that each person can access critical opportunities for connection.

Municipal Leadership

The City of Revelstoke provides leadership and backbone support for Vibrant Revelstoke through its Social Development Committee and Coordinator. Through COVID-19, the City is sharing [reliable information](#) through municipal updates, including 'holding the line' messaging prior to the Easter long weekend. Mayor Sulz, who co-chairs Vibrant Revelstoke's leadership roundtable, is also broadcasting personal weekly YouTube video updates to lend appreciation and encouragement to the response, and to bring the community together under a shared understanding that we are all in this together.

Business Champions

Revelstoke's Chamber of Commerce is compiling and sharing reliable information on federal and provincial supports for local businesses through their website and online sessions. They are also maintaining an online list of open local businesses, including community, grocery, financial, health and wellness, transportation, and legal services. Many of Revelstoke's local essential businesses, including grocery stores, have designated morning shopping hours for elderly and immune-compromised residents, and are offering delivery services. Revelstoke Delivery is also providing community-wide deliveries, and the community's local distillery, Monashee Spirits, was one of the first in Canada to start producing hand sanitizer.

Non-Profit Changemakers

A large, local non-profit, Community Connections (Revelstoke) Society is supporting basic needs, particularly around food security. They have aligned local food bank and food recovery programs and have adapted programming to accommodate social distancing and safe sanitation, expanded to daily rather than weekly service, and have opened up eligibility.

The Women's Shelter Society is playing a key role in ensuring that women facing domestic violence are able to access shelters with their children, as well as providing emotional support for both men and women in the community. A range of non-profit organizations are also coordinating their responses to support the community's growing emergency mental and emotional health support needs, particularly for seniors and vulnerable populations through phone trees and email check-ins.

Revelstoke's Community Futures and Fab Lab Society have contributed financial support to the Idea Factory, who in collaboration with the local health authority, medical practitioners, and community volunteers, are applying 3D printing technologies to prototype and mass-produce low-cost, partly-reusable face shields for emergency and medical staff. Community Futures has also put together a framework for emergency loans to support local businesses that includes temporarily suspending payments.

“The impact of COVID-19 has been swift and intense and has stopped the world in its tracks. Unnerving as it may be, perhaps a shock like this is just what was needed for us to pause and truly give thought to what isn't working, and what has to change.”

Citizen-Led Innovations

With Revelstoke's Community Response Network (CRN) taking the lead, a group of Revelstokians have come together to connect volunteers who are ready and able to provide support for those in need. While the primary mandate of the CRN is around the goal of ending adult abuse and neglect, the network has leveraged the passion of local community members, agencies, governments and businesses to increase supports for the City's most vulnerable. Through COVID-19, many Revelstoke residents have been looking for ways to support their neighbours. This network connects those in need – notably seniors and the disabled – with volunteers, who support them with grocery and other deliveries as well as other activities like dog walking.

“An unprecedented opportunity now stands before us, to leverage this crisis to create a more resilient and compassionate Revelstoke.”

ADDRESSING GOAL #1: AFFORDABILITY FOR ALL

Vibrant Revelstoke's Action Teams are monitoring the community's response to COVID-19 and are identifying opportunities to support affordability across a number of issue areas. Here are a few examples:

- **Shelter:** BC housing is working with local organizations to cover hotel costs and provide immediate access to safe spaces for people who need to self-isolate. Populations served include front-line healthcare workers who have children at home, women and children fleeing domestic violence, and individuals experiencing homelessness.
- **Food Security:**
 - Community Connections' food recovery and food bank are meeting increased demand for food by aligning services and resources, expanding food provision to five days per week, and opening eligibility to anyone in need.
 - Local non-profits are supporting shelter initiatives by providing food hampers, grocery delivery, and mail collection.
 - The Food Security Coordinator is working to bring food vendors online, support kids who had been accessing school breakfast programs, and enact safe protocols for farmers markets and community gardens.
 - Local initiatives are also working to create online local resources and support residents with garden, seed-sharing and urban farming opportunities.
- **Transit & Transportation:** BC Transit, including handyDART, an accessible, door-to-door shared transit service for people with disabilities, have been made available free of charge. HandyDART is also delivering pre-ordered food hampers to vulnerable adults three days per week.
- **Early Childhood Development & Child Care:** Revelstoke's Child Care Society is supporting front-line healthcare and other essential service workers to adapt the delivery of childcare services to meet safe sanitation protocols and continue to deliver childcare services through COVID-19.
- **The Listening Team** is actively exploring online options to ramp up and collect stories from people living with intensified affordability challenges. There is a feeling that the pandemic has exposed existing vulnerabilities and now is the time to hear and learn from people with living experience.

ADDRESSING GOAL #2: STRONG NEIGHBOURHOOD CONNECTIONS

Amidst a ‘new normal’ of physical distancing, here are a few examples of how Revelstoke is keeping the community connected and ensuring that no one gets left behind.

- **Sharing of Reliable Information:**
 - [RevelstokeLife.ca](#) serves as the community’s one-stop-shop online health and social services directory, while the Chamber of Commerce is maintaining a current [list of open local businesses](#).
 - Physicians from the Selkirk Medical Group have been sharing [reliable COVID-19-related information](#) on their website since the pandemic began, and are providing community updates through their Facebook page.
 - Community Futures is helping people to navigate federal and provincial supports, in order to connect them to benefits that they are eligible for.
- **Support for Seniors:** The Revelstoke Hospice Society is reducing isolation for seniors in the community through a [quarantine phone chain](#), where volunteers make regular calls and have meaningful conversations with isolated community members. They are also connecting residents of long-term care homes to safely [play tic-tac-toe](#) with community volunteers through windows.
- **Connecting Students:** Revelstoke’s school district and Community Connections are supporting families that don’t have computers at home by providing access to iPads for online learning. Telus is offering free internet for those that were previously on their \$10/day low-income family program.

“Now is the time to work together (but apart!) to ensure that our community and our country become better able to withstand crises of all kinds in the future. The more we do now, the better off we will be tomorrow.”

CONCLUSION

The Revelstoke community recognizes the severity of the COVID-19 pandemic and has gained an understanding that we are in this for the long haul. Amidst anxiety and uncertainties, Vibrant Revelstoke has found a silver lining – an opportunity to do things differently. A prime example of Collective Impact in action, the group is working to leverage the crisis as a motivator for sectors, organizations and individuals to come together to realize community change.

The community is coming together in truly amazing ways, as local government, business, the public sector, non-profits and citizens mobilize around the shared goals of affordability and connection. The need is spurring innovation, and emerging local responses are building community connection and resilience. Revelstoke has found that it is neighbourhood and community connections that anchor and build resilience in the face of uncertainty and change.

Revelstoke's unfolding response involves all parties committed to the greater good to move forward together to restore and revamp health, social and economic programs and systems, thus building the foundation for stronger relationships that will last well beyond COVID-19's lifespan.

READ MORE

- [Learn more](#) about Vibrant Revelstoke – Affordability for All
- [Sign up to join the conversation](#) and to receive email updates from Vibrant Revelstoke
- [Read Lisa Cyr's article](#): *Leveraging COVID-19 to Create a More Resilient Community*
- [Read Vibrant Revelstoke's Top 100 event report](#)
- [Read Getting to Impact](#)

“The path to change is not about working harder or getting more funding. It's about shifting our paradigms and approach to building a movement for deep and long-lasting community change.”

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