

Introduction

This update to the 2009 Quality of Life report was launched with a public event in March of 2013 in which community members were encouraged to come and give their opinions about quality of life in the Comox Valley and submit ideas on what we should include in the report. The intention was to complete the report in 2013 but a number of factors intervened to prevent this from happening, the most important of which is a systematic underestimation of how much time it takes to create a document like this by volunteers! Another very important consideration was the fact that Statistics Canada kept putting off the release dates for much of the statistical information we required from the 2011 Census and National Housing Survey. First it was June, then it was September, then it was later in September. Most data are now available from the 2011 census, but bits and pieces are still trickling in, especially analytical reports. The fact that we didn't have a mandatory long form census questionnaire this past census (2011) is making the data from the National Housing Survey, the voluntary replacement for the mandatory questionnaire, not quite as reliable. In some cases taxfiler information can fill in some of the blanks.

We've tried to follow the 2009 report as much as possible but inevitably organizations change, like the split of the Comox/Strathcona Regional District into the Strathcona Regional District and the Comox Valley Regional District. That change is turning out to be a positive one, and now it should be easier to log changes in some of our indicators over time. Still, some organizations, including BC Stats, insist on using geography from the 2006 census for its community profiles. They don't separate out the two new regional districts. That can be frustrating. The Ministry of Justice has changed the way it collects crime and policing statistics over the years making it hard to compare them over time. None of this is particularly unusual in the field of community research so we adapt.

We've included in this report the same set of 11 'domains' that we had in the 2009 report but some indicators have been added and some removed. For example in the education domain we removed the francophone programs indicator and replaced it with an aboriginal education report card and added another indicator about student satisfaction with their school experience. Mostly we've tried to keep some consistency going from report to report in terms of the indicators we use. That way we can register changes in them that are important to us. That's not always easy but for indicators like a falling crime rate, it's not a problem. Is population growth always positive? Some would say yes, others no.

We believe that this report reflects the values of the Social Planning Society and its commitment to improving the quality of life for all people in the Comox Valley, not just for the people who can afford it.

The following symbols next to the indicators represent changes between the 2009 and 2014 reports. Increase (+), Decrease (-), No change (=), not comparable or insufficient data (id), and new indicator (n). A question mark (?) added to any of these symbols means that there is some confusion or disagreement in the statistics reported.