

BLACK AND RURAL

Kootenay Teen News embarked on it's first internship! The newspaper hired four Kootenay youth this winter, thanks to the Columbia Basin Trust. Shayna Jones, a Kaslo-based, award-winning performance artist specializing in oral storytelling of African and Afro-Diasporic Folklore, mentored Mariah, Nyah, Vanesa and Nassali through an exploration and reflection process centered on the stories of Black life in the Kootenays. At the end of their time together, they wrote these reflections.

Nassali Mugerwa of Salmo, age 16

My teacher first told me about this internship a month or so before the end of school. After she showed me the email Shayna had sent out to her, she explained what the internship consisted of, and told me at the end of the sessions I would write a reflection that would be published in the newspaper. At first I wasn't sure if I was actually going to apply because it seemed like a lot of work right before the end of school. My teacher, Ms. Berk, told me it would be a great opportunity to let out some of my suppressed emotions and experiences. She told me it would be a good opportunity to reflect on how that has shaped me as a person. I said I would sleep on it.

I think initially what made me email Shayna back is how amazing it would look on a resume and for my applications to university next year. So I ended up emailing her, and an anxious few weeks later I received a congratulations email. I felt super grateful to be chosen for the opportunity and was excited to meet Shayna.

Our first meeting finally rolled around and Shayna was so much different from what I expected. She is beautifully in touch with her culture and heritage. I could feel it by the way she looked, spoke, and just her overall vibe was so inspiring. One of the first things she asked us was, "what was it like living in your skin today?" Something about the way she worded that question made all my brain cells stop and reflect on every aspect of the question (which doesn't happen very often).

After we answered that question we took

a look at her Black and Rural website, grazing over the gist of what she does, and all I can say is that it was inspiring and amazing to see so many other people like me that I could relate to. The more we talked and reflected, the more excited I became for our next sessions so I could share my experiences. Shayna is so easy to talk to and reflect on that I caught myself just spilling my experiences out of myself knowing that she could understand and relate to me.

In every meeting we would go over a website or watch a video to see other people's experience living black and rural. One that really stood out and resonated with me was the article by Jada Welch Olson, "This is What It's Like to Grow Up as a Woman of Colour in a Small Town". After we read her article, Shayna asked us to write a letter to Jada asking her any questions or telling her what it was like reading about her experiences. I would like to share the letter I wrote here:

"Dear Jada,
Your article made me feel so many different emotions. As I read through it, I felt I could relate to you more and more, and my heart stung that you had to experience the same thing as me, but at the same time our shared experiences form an instantaneous connection, a connection that shows me that I am not alone. I remember back in elementary school standing in front of a mirror for hours with my mom trying to tame my curls into a tight bun so I did not stick out like a sore thumb. I would



Nassali in Uganda with her best friend Jovia.

cry and scream and throw fits if my hair was all slicked down... eventually I grew out of it, and learned to live with my beautiful curls and nurture them. But I still continuously get comments on my hair and how it's frizzy, or oh my gosh it's so big... Those would usually be the comments to make me feel self conscious, but after reading your article on how you learned to love all parts of yourself without suppressing your culture, I know that I can't let mindless comments like that in, from uneducated people who really have no clue how much they can hurt you... I realize that when I was younger I let society hold power over me. Anyway I love to read articles like this because I know there is a larger community that understands and connects to what you are writing about. Your writing can help others embrace their culture and true selves in their rural community. From Nassali."



Vanesa enjoying the natural world around her.

Vanessa Sing of Nakusp, age 15

During the Black and Rural internship we described what it was like living in our skin. One of the many things we agreed on was that racism and disrespect is often disguised as a joke in our communities, especially in school.

The constant little things that everyone sees as funny, but just because it's a joke doesn't mean it doesn't hurt. One of the many things I hear when I decide to say something is, "it's not a big deal - I was just joking," but you never know what is going on in someone's head and your joke could really ruin someone's day.

The fact that I just told them what they said was disrespectful, and they still think it's ok because they were just joking is a big problem that unfortunately can't be solved overnight.

We, as a community, need to educate ourselves and those around us on other cultures and the things we say about them, especially when we are just joking, because we never know how it will affect the people around us.



Shayna with interns Vanesa and Nyah at the internship wrap party in Nakusp.



THE GRADE 10 SOCIALS CLASS OF L.V. ROGERS, NELSON, BC ANSWERS THE QUESTION...

I went to a hotel to ask for a room and the lady at the counter told me that all the rooms were full. I told her my name was “Improvement”. And there’s always room for improvement. Haha.. now let’s think about Nelson. If you were given one million dollars to improve our beautiful city of Nelson, what would you do? If I had one million dollars to help improve Nelson B.C. I would start with businesses, donating a portion of the one million dollars to as many small business owners as I could. With higher interest rates and inflation it must be a struggle for them to keep their business afloat. I would then go on to donate another portion of the one million dollars to schools. To do this, I would do research into which schools are struggling the most and donate some of the money for quality school supplies and anything specific the school is requesting in order to make the students’ learning experience better. Lastly, I would donate the remaining portion to the people without homes to help get them off the streets and into a safer, clean and habitable living space. It would greatly help this part of our community because the people and children of Nelson would feel safer walking around town. Also, the unhoused would then have a solid chance to help themselves. Those are some examples of things I would do if I was given one million dollars to help improve Nelson, B.C.

By Ava Brown

“If money grew on trees, what would everyone’s favorite season be? Fall. If you were given one million dollars to improve Nelson, would you make life easier, would you make Nelson greener, would you give food to people-in-need? There are so many possibilities for things you could do. Some ideas cost more, some ideas cost less, but if I had one million dollars to improve Nelson, I would build a new waterfront city center with shops all along the water and a full operating boardwalk too. I think this would increase tourism significantly, while making it an iconic part of Nelson. I also believe it would be a great social destination for our community, which is something that would be perfect for Nelson. I would have weekly markets and hold many events there. It would be like the Baker street of Nelson, only on the water. People would know Nelson for this place alone. Of course, all of this would never be possible without the proper location and funds. Perhaps the location could be somewhere around Lakeside park or the soccer fields. This idea would obviously have to be planned and budgeted, likely costing much more, but if it is possible, I believe it would be a phenomenal attraction!

By Quentin Kerekes

Just like toilet paper, you never realize how important parking is for everyday life until you’re

in a predicament and you can’t find any close enough for satisfaction. If I had a million dollars, I would put it towards free parking spaces. This would make life much easier and enjoyable for all the inhabitants of Nelson and also for those just visiting. Although it’s probably not the first thing that pops in your mind when you think of everyday essential needs, vehicle parking spaces are extremely necessary. People often need a place to park while they are working. They may also need it when eating at a restaurant downtown. Or even when you need to stop to use the washroom. As of now parking spaces in downtown Nelson are pretty limited, which is often very frustrating when you’re trying to get somewhere fast. When you do finally find a spot, you have to pay for it. Having more parking lots would actually create more business for certain shops and restaurants as most of them don’t have their own parking and sometimes you just don’t want to go through the hassle of finding a spot.

So this is what I’d do if I had a million dollars to spend on Nelson. If we still had some money left over after the project maybe we could figure out a way to make our city more aesthetically pleasing.

By Seveyah Bilodeau

Did you know that Nelson doesn’t have the best economy? In fact, according to a 2017 report in the *Nelson Star*, Nelson features the second highest percentage of low-income individuals in the province at 18.3 percent of the city’s population. This is what I would do to change that: The first thing I would do would be to probably spend a large sum of money to make a homeless shelter. Then I would make a huge food bank so poor people and the homeless could pick up food each day so they wouldn’t starve. Then I would donate some money to the schools so they could give them the maintenance they need, such as making LVR’s wifi better. Actually, have you heard about the new wifi connected chef’s knife? Its cutting edge technology. Next, I would freshen up the air strip and make it accessible for jets and bigger planes such as cargo planes. Then I would put some new houses in so people would want to live here.

By Ryder Berry

In the grand scheme of things our lives are relatively insignificant (no offense). But if we truly had to do something meaningful during our lifetime, how could we make our community better for future generations? What could we do if we had the resources to see through the change that our world—or even just our little community—needs? Nelson: our small town of about 10,000 people. It’s home to those from all walks of life. Which makes for a very diverse and open society. Our main street is flush with shops dedicated to every corner of life; from skiing and snowboarding gear to tote

bags and thrift stores. This makes the decision on where to spend a (hypothetical) million dollars rather difficult. I would love nothing more than to see Nelson continue to flourish and grow. Giving back to the community would be a great way to see this through, especially by improving the lives of others. But through what vein? To start, I would definitely dedicate a chunk of money to schools. Whether this is to help with funding for the public schools or to increase scholarship options, schools here are criminally under funded and I would love to see them be helped out. This could be done through providing better learning materials, supporting extracurricular activities, and offering more scholarships or grants for post-secondary schools like Selkirk College. It’s hard to have a society continue to flourish if the next generation doesn’t have the right funds or space to do so. Another thing I would put money towards, for the benefit of our community, would be to enhance our healthcare services by supporting our hospital, local clinics, and healthcare programs. Maybe even by cutting down on healthcare costs for low-income families. Nelson is also home to a booming love of art and many talented artists. By supporting our local

artists and cultural events, with some of the money, it could not only enrich the culture of the community but also attract tourists. This could help to further boost the local economy. Investing a million dollars in Nelson, should we suddenly have access to such funds, by focusing on education, healthcare, and our cultural and arts, would not only enhance the town’s overall well-being but also create a foundation for a vibrant, inclusive, and thriving community for years to come.

By Jena Smith

If I were given the opportunity to improve Nelson I would prioritize boosting the economy which would be a challenge with only a million dollars but not impossible. Here are some of my ideas on how to make the most of this money. Small businesses are the backbone of Nelson’s economy, investing in them can help them expand and create more jobs. I would encourage entrepreneurship within the town, this could involve offering tax incentives or grants to new businesses, or creating a common workspace where entrepreneurs could collaborate and share resources. Offering more job training programs to local residents could also help boost the local economy. This could include training in high-demand fields such as healthcare or technology, enabling residents to gain new skills and secure higher-paying jobs. We could also focus on upgrading our roads, bridges, parks and other public facilities. By doing so, the town becomes more attractive to visitors and potential investors, which in turn drives more economic growth. Overall, improving a small town requires a multifaceted approach that addresses issues related to infrastructure, the local economy and community engagement. By prioritizing these areas, we can create a more vibrant and inclusive community that benefits all residents.

By Aurora Coppen

If I had 1 million dollars this is what I would do for Nelson: 1)Promote lacrosse. Only a few kids play from Nelson and last year we had to travel to Rossland to play. It’s Canada’s national sport and no school has a team and the NDCC has all the lines under the ice. 2)Donate money to the Emergency Ward in the Nelson hospital to reduce ER wait times. I once sat in the ER with two dislocated fingers for seven and a half hours. 3)Build more indoor sports facilities, so kids have more access for sports like floor hockey, volleyball and basketball. This would help people be active and have fun with their friends. 4)Petition the school board to make school days longer but only 4 days per week. I know I would have almost every kid in the school on that petition and I

bet you I could get at least one teacher on that list

5) Buy the Civic Hockey arena for Minor Hockey and start a hockey academy in Nelson. This would allow youth to have a academy team and get better at hockey.

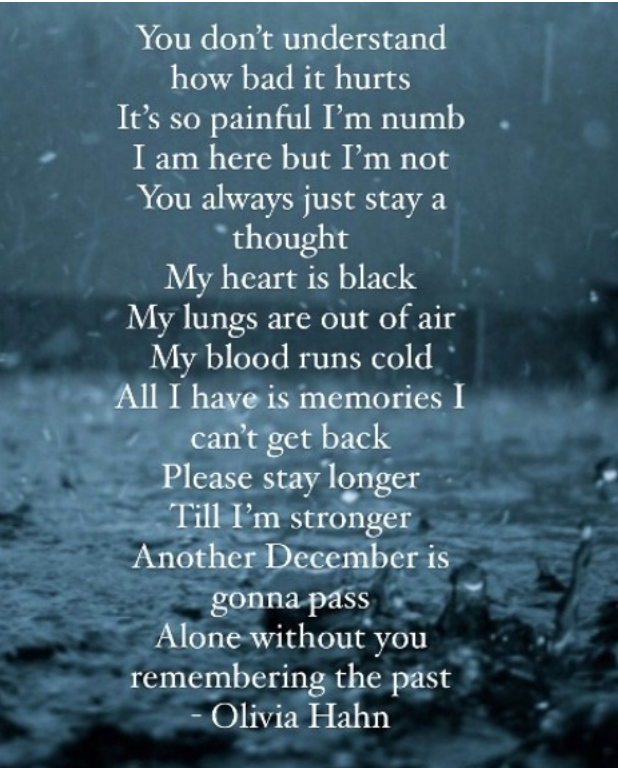
By Chuck Shrieves

What would I spend my money on to help Nelson if I had any? There are so many ways I could make a positive impact on this city, so if I had a million dollars to help the Nelson community I would start by investing in the parks, making them not only less dangerous but just more fun and comfortable to be around. Maybe we could have some fun slides and swings. Some parks could have solid rooftops with no holes so rain and snow doesn't come through and make it all slippery because I heard Humpty Dumpty had a great summer...but he had a horrible fall. They could also have heaters so you always stay warm which could also melt the snow so people don't slip. Secondly, I would create job opportunities for everyone and anyone that might be struggling to find work. I would also support community programs, like after school clubs. The last thing I would do is help pave all the bumpy roads so they are safer for people and cyclists, particularly in the winter when the roads are wet, icy and snowy. I want to not only help with the quality of Nelson but also make sure everyone feels more comfortable where they live. I hope this also inspires others to give back and make a difference. The possibilities are honestly endless.

By Isabel Wilson



Olivia at age 16.



A recent poem written by Olivia.

OLIVIA GRIEVES



**Olivia Hahn,
age 17 of
Victoria.
Interviewed
by Chloe
Tesoriere of
Nelson.**

Olivia Hahn, a Grade 11 teenager who lives in Victoria BC, knows grief. At the age of 16, her mother passed away from cancer. Her mom who was her best friend. “My mom was the one I would always talk to, we would deal with things together. Me, my mom and my brother all had this special bond with each other. We’d always talk before bed until super late.” As a creative outlet and with the hopes of helping another teen going through a similar experience, Olivia wrote and published a book on her experiences, called “Healing our Wounded Hearts: A Real Life Story about Loss in the Voice of a Teenager.”

Chloe: How did the book come to be?
Olivia: “I started writing it over the past year after I lost my mom. I wrote all my experiences going through cancer with her, what it was like from a teenager’s perspective. Also, writing was one of the ways I was managing my grief. It was an outlet for me. I wanted to show other teenagers that they are not alone in their grief, because when I was looking for books on grief for teenagers, I couldn’t find anything. I wanted another person my age to relate to who has gone through something similar, so I thought this would help me and hopefully help others as well.”

Chloe: Did you have any obstacles in publishing the book?
Olivia: No, not many. I did Kindle self-publishing as it doesn’t cost anything. The hardest part was the formatting and editing, but I had help from my English teacher.

Chloe: Why did you write the book?
Olivia: I’m just trying to be a voice for other youth who are grieving because they don’t always have much support. I’ve had friends say just move on already. But it doesn’t work that way. Schools don’t know how to deal with people that are grieving. Even if they don’t have firsthand experience, being able to know how to support others is important. We all go through it but no one talks about it, ever. I want to let people know that its okay to talk about it.

Chloe: What would you say to a teen who has just had a loss?
Olivia: At first I was taught the five stages of grief and I thought there was a beginning and end to each stage. But I wish I knew there is no order to grief. It is more like a rollercoaster and you just have to ride it. It is normal to move back and forth through the stages.

Chloe: What does grief feel like?

Olivia: Sometimes it can feel very isolating because you feel like you are the only one experiencing that right now. I thought I was the only one without a mom. I am grateful for my relationship with my mom. We were super close so it makes it more special. If I had pulled away, I would have regretted it. Grief comes and goes – it’s weird, someone will say something in class and all of a sudden the grief comes.

Chloe: How do you be a good friend to come someone who has had a loss?
Olivia: Keep including them in things, even if you aren’t sure if they want to or not. Because being a part of the friend group is important. My friends stopped talking to me and stopped including me – I would have wanted them to invite me to the mall even if I didn’t feel like it that day.

Chloe: What are your future plans?
Olivia: I plan to keep writing in the future – mostly poetry. Dance is a big outlet for me too. I have been dancing ballet since I was two, and now I dance contemporary and other styles. Dance is so great when you can’t find the words. Movement is important with grief.

Chloe: When you look back on it, what have you learnt about grief?
Olivia: We don’t know what it means until it is experienced. I remember before my mom died, we were in the car reading an article about this kid in my brother’s school who lost his dad. I was thinking that must be really hard for him, but I never thought anything of it, because I didn’t know then how hard it was. We also just don’t want to feel the uncomfortable feelings so we avoid them.

Chloe: Were there ways in retrospect that your mom helped prepare you for her death?
Olivia: She taught us so much in such a short time. Even from the hospital bed, she was still paying bills and showing love and empathy to everyone. It took a lot of strength. She was very resilient too, and she passed that down to me and my brother. She wasn’t afraid to stand up for what is right. She always said she would rather stand alone and be right then stand in a crowd and be wrong. It takes a lot of guts to do that.

Chloe: What is one memory that stayed with you?
Olivia: My mom always said she was going to come back as an owl because she was always so wise. We would talk about that all the time. She said I am going to come back and watch over you guys. A few days after she died, I was sitting quietly in my bedroom and I heard an owl hoot. My brother came into the room and said did you hear that? I had this feeling and I just knew it was mom.



TEENS REPRESENT

Article by Ava Campbell-Wall of Beasley, age 15

Summer 2023 was a time bustling with arts and culture, from the first ArtWalk opening in July until the leaves started to turn. I was the first artist to be featured in the Black Cauldron for ArtWalk, and on July 24th, opened my exhibition to the public with a night full of food, music, and great conversations with art connoisseurs and enthusiasts from all over. The ArtWalk 2023 opening night walk returned for its 35th year, with a loop stretching across central Nelson from the Chamber of Commerce to Torchlight Brewing Company, brimming with vibrant street music, crowds of enjoyers, and participating artists taking questions at their venues. Friends and family who came in to say hello said the walk was beautiful, a warm night with crowds of people moving from venue to venue and a wide variety of artisans and artists showcasing everything from fibre art to oil painting and wood burning to ink sketches. For me, ArtWalk was a brilliant first foray into the fine arts community of the Kootenays, my debut solo artist feature after having one piece featured in the Nelson Museum, Archive & Gallery’s 2023 Member’s Show last spring. I talked to folks from all over BC and Canada, as well as a few tourists coming up from the States. Some were artists, some were art enjoyers, and some were just people taking in the sights of Nelson on a summer night who happened to get caught up in the swing of ArtWalk.

What is your current state of mind?
My current state of mind is focused – I am focused on study.

What part of India did you come from?
I came from the western coast of India state called Gujrat. Surat is the second biggest city in the Gujrat state, and it is really busy.

Why did you move?
I moved to Canada for my future study and it was my dream.

What was your first impression of Nelson?
My first impression of Nelson was that it was a beautiful and peaceful place.

Has it been hard to make friends?
Yes, it is hard to make friends anywhere, but I have finally found some good and supportive friends in Nelson.

What is perfect happiness to you?
Perfect happiness means always making good memories with my loved ones and seeing them happy.

What part of Indian culture do you miss?
I miss festivals of Indian culture. India is full of festivals, and I love all of them, but there is one festival called Diwali that is my favourite. Diwali is the five-day festival of lights. Diwali, which for some

Meet Dhriti!



also coincides with harvest and new year celebrations, is a festival of new beginnings and the triumph of good over evil; light over darkness.

What has been challenging about living in Nelson?
It was difficult to find accommodation and, in my opinion, accommodation is quite expensive.

Which historical figure most intrigues you?
For me Mahatma Gandhi, who is father of India. He helped India to be free from Britain without violation.

What do you wish Canadians knew about the immigrant experience?
It is totally different, and at first it is always hard to be in a new country and to leave loved ones.

What are your future plans?
My future plan is to focus on my studies and have new experiences. I plan to study nursing. When I first came to Canada, a lot of people close to me said that nursing has lots of benefits. I also especially love maths and science, especially biology.

Naturalist’s Niche



by Hazel Raine of Wyndell, age 15

As autumn shapeshifts into the stirrings of winter, darkness inks over the sky earlier and earlier in the day. Sunsets are fleeting and vibrant in the crackling air, flitting and quick like hummingbirds, startling behind mountain ranges. Now the seasonal colours shift into visible gems; larches turn amber, conifers remain emerald and jade, maples’ leaves coat the ground in cracking layers of gold and ruby and citrine. It’s as if the entire landscape has become a painting. I can almost see the paintstrokes of cadmium red, phthalo blue, Naples yellow coating the world in brilliant and subtle colour. Even in the growing darkness, there is luminosity and radiance to be found
I’m Hazel, a fifteen-year-old living in Wyndell, BC. My pastimes include doodling on any canvas I can find (including chemistry papers, books, and my hands), writing about the numinous synchronicities of life, listening to music much too loudly, and photographing the natural world. I love cloudy days, cats, and the nighttime.