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## **West Vancouver Community Foundation releases new *Vital Signs* community check-up**

West Vancouver, BC, October 3rd, 2017

How do belonging, diversity and housing contribute to a healthy community? That was the question that the West Vancouver Community Foundation started with in its follow-up to last year's *Vital Signs* community indicators report.

Whereas the 2016 report provided a snapshot of what was happening in West Vancouver in 10 different areas, such as Learning, Safety, Environment, and Health and Wellness, this year's report focuses more closely on just three of the areas that are critical to community health, vitality and resilience.

Foundation CEO Adine Mees stated, " We know that belonging is not only important to health and quality of life for individuals, but also for the community as a whole. So we decided to take a deep dive and explore the topic of belonging through the lenses of diversity and inclusion, and housing diversity and attainability – two other features that are key to a healthy and vibrant community."

Over 1000 people contributed to this year's *Vital Signs* research through a series of *Vital Conversations*, interviews, outreach, and surveys. The resulting *Vital Signs* Report summarizes the knowledge, insights, concerns and ideas contributed, and also includes relevant data gathered from the 2016 Census and other recent studies.

According to Mees, "We consistently heard that while West Vancouver is a highly desirable place to live, the lack of housing diversity and affordability is having a severe impact on community belonging, diversity and inclusion. It is affecting everyone from our more vulnerable residents to our workforce, employers, newcomers, and lifelong West Vancouver residents. Our task now is to use this research to better support the agencies working at the community level; connect our donors with opportunities to help address these issues; and engage residents in simple things that they can do to create connections and build community."

*Vital Signs* is a national program led by community foundations that leverages local knowledge to measure the vitality of our communities and support action towards improving quality of life. West Vancouver Community Foundation is one of 38 Canadian community foundations participating in this year's *Vital Signs* program. Across Canada and around the world, more than 100 communities use *Vital Signs* to mobilize the power of community knowledge for greater local impact.

### **Highlights from West Vancouver's 2017 *Vital Signs* report:**

- In 2016, there were 3,950 West Vancouver residents aged 25 to 39 - a 45% drop in the 20 years since 1996.
- West Vancouver employers find it increasingly difficult to attract workers due to high housing costs. Having fewer service workers, emergency responders, health care workers, caregivers, and other key members of the workforce living in the community adversely affects local businesses, community safety, and the well-being of many of our more vulnerable residents.

- 33% of West Vancouver residents surveyed expect to move from their home in the next five years, with the key driver being financial and economic reasons - primarily stated by those under 65 years of age.
- 37% of residents surveyed have family or friends who had to move from West Vancouver due to a lack of housing.
- Over half of residents surveyed said they are pessimistic that they will be able to find the right housing in West Vancouver when they move, with affordability being the key issue. This level increases to 60% among those expecting to move within the next five years.
- There are 18,649 private dwellings in West Vancouver. Of these, 9% were unoccupied in 2016.

West Vancouver's *Vital Signs* Report is being launched today at Park Royal, bringing together leaders and decision-makers within the community and provoking a discussion about how to tackle some of the key issues raised in the publication.

In addition, in conjunction with the 2017 *Vital Signs* Report publication and in partnership with British Pacific Properties, the Foundation is co-hosting an evening event Tuesday, October 3<sup>rd</sup> – "Mind Bugs" an interactive presentation by Dr. Calvin Lai, from Washington University in St. Louis, on implicit bias and how it impacts our lives. Tickets are \$20 and all proceeds go towards the West Vancouver Community Foundation and the Kay Meek Society.

**West Vancouver's 2017 *Vital Signs***® received financial support from British Pacific Properties Limited; the District of West Vancouver, Leith Wheeler Investment Counsel Ltd., Larco/Park Royal; and Rotary Clubs of West Vancouver.

#### **About the West Vancouver Community Foundation**

The West Vancouver Community Foundation is a public charitable foundation that connects philanthropy with community needs and opportunities. Launched in 1979, the Foundation has assets in excess of \$13 million through the accumulation of gifts that come from people in the community. It holds more than 65 endowed funds, has granted over \$2 million in support of community projects and organizations, and awarded more than \$230,000 in scholarships to students in the community. The West Vancouver Community Foundation is one of over 190 Canadian community foundations.

#### **About *Vital Signs* Program**

Learn more about *Vital Signs* at [www.vitalsignscanada.ca](http://www.vitalsignscanada.ca).

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