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YWCA HOSTS COMMUNITY CONSULTATION FOR HIGHER GROUND PROJECT

YWCA Banff invites local and provincial leaders to participate in shaping their plan to build an innovative social wellness Hub in Canmore.

September 28, 2018 - Banff, AB –On September 25th, community members, colleagues, and experts in the field of violence prevention and social wellness from Canmore, Banff, and across Alberta were invited to a Community Consultation and Design Lab in support of the Bow Valley Higher Ground Project.

The Higher Ground Project is the YWCA’s plan to develop a Hub in Canmore that would include shelter, transitional housing, supportive affordable housing, and wrap-around services working collaboratively with other local agencies and businesses to optimize health, safety, and well-being for residents of the Bow Valley. Following in-depth research of current innovations in shelter, affordable housing, and violence prevention practice by Dr. Alina Turner, Dr. Sarah Fotheringham, and Lana Wells, the YWCA was eager to hear input from their community on the project’s plans and progress thus far.

The Consultation welcomed over 70 local and regional leaders to participate in a Design Lab; this exercise encouraged attendees to share their ideas and experience to help the YWCA shape Higher Ground into a transformative solution for social wellness in the Bow Valley. “These conversations will help us to create a housing and service delivery model that is relevant to the Bow Valley context,” explains YWCA Banff’s CEO Connie MacDonald. “The experience reaffirmed Higher Ground’s journey and vision, while presenting some fresh insights into how the project can enhance leading-edge, client-centered service provision in our communities.”

Participants of the Design Lab addressed the need for a Hub that breaks down stigma surrounding domestic and sexual violence and related issues, and that strengthens community connections for all residents. “We were thrilled to see the enthusiasm for bringing a social wellness Hub to Canmore,” reflects Reave MacLeod, Director of Programs at the YWCA. “Having a sanctuary for healing where residents can seek help for their vulnerabilities and deepen their ties to community will have a significant impact on the entire Bow Valley.”

The YWCA will use the findings from the Community Consultation to guide next steps including business planning and program design, establishing partnerships, securing funding, and acquiring land. Thanks to the creativity and commitment of those who participated in the consultation, the YWCA is confident in its capacity to develop a Hub that will foster long-term wellness for all Bow Valley residents.

To learn more about the Higher Ground Project and its plan to revolutionize social wellness in the Bow Valley, visit bowvalleyhigherground.ca/.

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About the Bow Valley Higher Ground Project

The Bow Valley Higher Ground Project is YWCA Banff's plan to develop a collaborative, purpose-built social wellness Hub in Canmore that will support the long-term well-being of women, children, and Bow Valley residents experiencing violence and associated vulnerabilities. The Project will leverage the unique expertise of the YWCA, other local agencies, and the broader network of service providers throughout Alberta in order to optimize the well-being of Bow Valley residents.

To achieve its vision of a safe, healthy, and caring community for all Bow Valley residents, the Higher Ground Project is guided by four principles:

- Client-centered: *Addressing people's unique needs*
- Innovative approach: *Stimulating leading edge, sustainable service provision*
- Well-being: *Creating a sanctuary for holistic healing*
- Connected to community: *Integrating into the fabric of the Bow Valley*

About YWCA Banff

YWCA Banff is a community-based, social profit organization with over 100 years of experience in the Bow Valley. Governed by a volunteer Board of Directors, YWCA shapes a safe, inclusive community that empowers women and girls.

In pursuit of their mission, YWCA Banff focuses on the following priorities:

- Providing a continuum of services and programs that activate our community to end gender-based violence
- Establishing a spectrum of sustainable housing solutions with a focus on women
- Advancing the rights of women and girls through leadership development, community awareness, training, and advocacy
- Building a sustainable organization respected for exceptional people and employment practices including: financial stability; ongoing social and community investment; and wisest operational practices

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