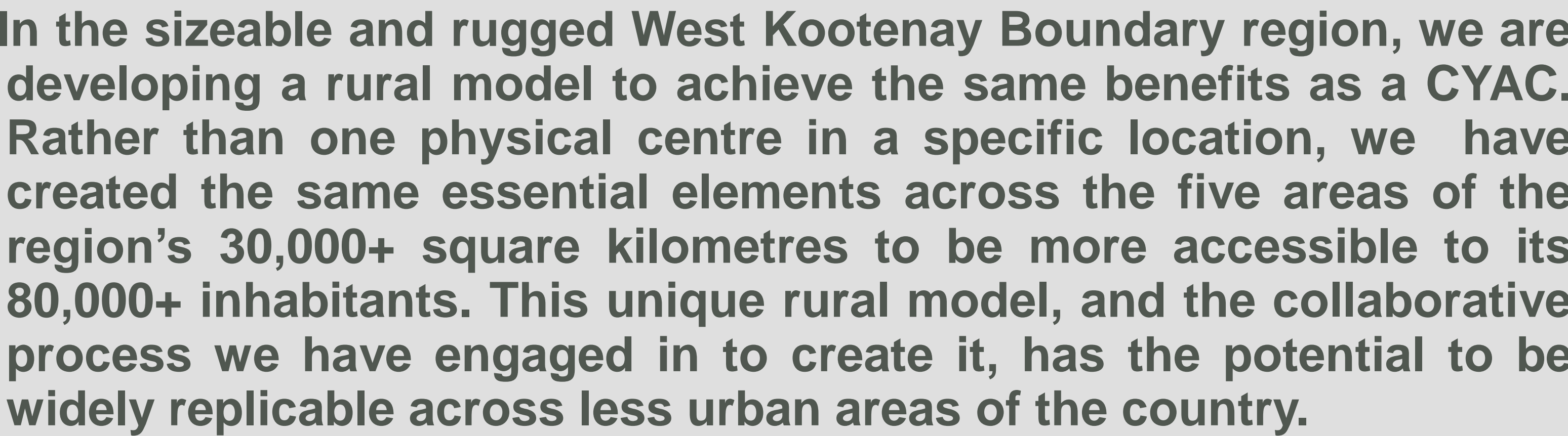


**Lynda Dechief, M.Sc. (Population & Public Health), Regional SKY Coordinator, West Kootenay-Boundary Region, BC, Canada**

Child and Youth Advocacy Centres (CYACs) have been established as a leading practice in responding to children and youth who come forward with experiences of abuse and violence.

The activities of a CYAC focus on reducing the potential for re-traumatization through contact with a coordinated system. CYAC models vary but all offer a range of co-located services and supports, which may include joint interviews conducted in child/youth-friendly interview rooms, ongoing case coordination and support, forensic medical examination, and court preparation.

CYACs have been developed in larger urban centres across North America but there are no established models of CYACs designed to serve the more rural and remote regions of Canada.



This rural model, the Safe Kids & Youth (SKY) Coordinated Response, aims to ensure that children and youth in the West Kootenay Boundary region who come forward with experiences of abuse, violence or neglect receive the best possible response from the range of services they connect with. SKY strives to achieve the same benefits as Child & Youth Advocacy Centres (CYACs) which have evolved in larger urban settings.

**The goals of the SKY Coordinated Response include:**

- a local, multi-disciplinary coordinated response for each child and youth who discloses abuse/violence.
- high quality, collaborative interviews by police and child protection, conducted in child-friendly environments.
- prompt support for trauma symptoms.
- consistent advocacy and support to families throughout the entire process.
- ongoing, specialized training to increase capacity of local service providers.
- prevention of any further traumatization.

**Our detailed Vision, Goals and Strategies statements can be found at:**

**<thekoop.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/SKY-Vision-Statements.pdf>**

**"Coordination and collaboration among the various agencies involved are key to creating the intended result."**

For over two years, more than 100 stakeholders from across the region have engaged in developing and implementing our unique rural model. The model includes a multi-disciplinary Regional Advisory Committee, and local child and youth coordination committees in each of the five areas of the region. A Regional SKY Coordinator works closely with local SKY Coordinators from each area. Participants in the project include representatives from police (municipal and regional), child protection, crown counsel, specialized and police-based victim services, education, health, and the many community agencies that provide support and advocacy for children, youth and families in our region.

Through regular meetings of the regional and local committees, and of all the SKY Coordinators, information and strategies are shared between the local and regional levels. Together as a region we have come to agreement on our Vision, Goals and Strategies and now each area is working to develop their own cooperation agreements. Thus, the project is regional in scope, with community-specific implementation strategies.

### The 5 Areas of the Region:

- ***Castlegar & District***, including Areas I and J.
- ***Boundary Area***, including Christina Lake, Grand Forks, Greenwood, Midway, and Areas C, D and E.
- ***Greater Trail***, including Rossland, Warfield and Fruitvale.
- ***Nakusp & Area***, including New Denver and other communities along Arrow and Slocan Lakes.
- ***Nelson & Area***, including Salmo, South Slocan, Kaslo and other communities along the west arm and north Kootenay Lake.

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graph TD
    RAC[Regional Advisory Committee] --- BCYC[Boundary Child & Youth Committee]
    RAC --- NACYC[Nelson & Area Child & Youth Committee]
    RAC --- GTCYC[Greater Trail Child & Youth Committee]
    RAC --- CDCYC[Castlegar & District Child & Youth Committee]
    RAC --- NAKYC[Nakusp & Area Child & Youth Committee]
  
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A key focus over the past two years has been on building our capacity to respond together in the best possible way to children and youth who disclose abuse or violence. This has included:

- In-depth StepWise child forensic interviewing training for local police and child protection social workers.
- Strengthening Coordination events across the region to bring stakeholders together to build relationships, determine how best to work together, and begin to identify gaps and areas for improvement in the current response.
- Sexual Assault Examiner training for health-care providers in the region.
- Identifying and equipping appropriate child-friendly interview spaces across the region, and creating mobile interviewing units for the more remote areas.
- Trauma training for a range of professionals who work with children and youth.

## We are currently working towards:

- Cooperation agreements between all of the relevant agencies in each of the five areas.
- Local training on pediatric violence/abuse for health-care providers so that children in our region who need forensic medical examination do not need to travel 4+ hours.
- Outreach and education about the SKY Coordinated Response across the region for service providers who work with children and youth.

The second 'Wilder Collaboration Survey' goes out to stakeholders May 2015, and will tell us if all of our efforts have been successful in enhancing essential elements of collaboration within the region.

August 2015 sees the beginning of our pilot project: implementing and refining the cooperation agreements developed in each area, and beginning to collect essential evaluation data on the SKY Coordinated Response.

## For children and youth

**In an external evaluation conducted at the conception of this model:**

- 94% of service providers involved thought the response to child and youth victims in the region could be improved (56% thought substantially).
- 90% of participants think the project will improve the response for child and youth victims across the region.
- 94% expressed being committed to making the changes and doing the work necessary to improve coordination and implement the project's vision, goals, and strategies.

## For service providers

Those working with children and youth want them to have the best possible experience after disclosing abuse/violence. Working more closely together can also improve the experience of service providers themselves. No one agency can respond to this issue on its own. With a formal coordinated response in place, everyone's job can hopefully get a little easier and a lot more rewarding.

**For more information or to get involved, please contact:**

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[thekoop.ca/about/projects/sky-coord-response/](http://thekoop.ca/about/projects/sky-coord-response/)

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