

I would like to start off by thanking SILGA for the wonderful opportunity they offer to youth in our area. It's initiatives like these that allow interested young people to become involved in their local governments and feel like a part of the community and province they grow up in. The idea of applying to attend UBCM came from my friend Allie Landy. She attended the 2017 conference with SILGA and the City of Salmon Arm, and after hearing of her experience I was incredibly excited about the prospect of perhaps attending myself. I mentioned this to my cousin Carolyn Black who works with the TNRD, and she got in touch with CSRD area director Rene Talbot. It was the start of what would ultimately become my trip to Whistler.

Additionally, in the fall of 2017, our school decided to pilot a new course in which a small group of students would attend city council meetings to provide some youth input into our own local government. This meant I had connections with the City before applying for UBCM. I met with the CSRD board in mid-August and was introduced to their directors, along with Director Talbot who was my mentor at UBCM. I feel certain that one of the many reasons I enjoyed the convention as much as I did was because I had already established connections with three local governments before attending. This allowed me to attend a large variety of meetings and sessions with many different groups. Being able to accompany different local government delegates allowed me to get a broader understanding of the issues spread throughout British Columbia. I found that while the different Regional Districts and Municipalities are unique, they share many of the same complex and challenging issues. In my mind, this was one of my most notable takeaways from UBCM. I heard many conversations between officials from different areas of the province comparing notes as to how they had tackled specific problems. It made me realize that for all the sessions, the workshops, the speeches and the resolutions, the heart of the conference was the networking amongst the delegates.

I spent much of my time meeting people from across the province. This was one of my favourite parts of the convention. I attended many of the receptions held during the week, and it was at these that I met the Premier, Minister Selena Robinson, UBCM president Arjun Singh, and many others. Throughout the week, I also met Ministers, MLA's, Electoral Area Directors, Mayors, Councillors, and governmental staff from around the province. On Monday, I went on the agricultural tour and met like-minded people and was amazed by the variety of topics discussed while on the tour. I continued to be amazed throughout the entire conference. On Tuesday, I got my first taste of lobbying the provincial government when I accompanied the CSRD to their meeting with the Minister of Agriculture; they were discussing abattoir regulations and legalizing the on-site kill of meat animals on the farm. I was impressed as this is a topic that has often been discussed at our family dinner table, and I was pleased to be able to give my opinion as a farmer in support of the CSRD's request. For me, this was one of the highlights of the convention, and it touched on one of the key ways to get youth involved.

Listening, as the Honorable Lana Popham did during our meeting, or as the City of Salmon Arm does with our youth council, shows youth that their voice is being heard and their opinion matters.

My primary conclusion from the convention builds on what I have been learning while taking part of the Salmon Arm City youth council - local government has a much larger role in our societies than many give them credit for. In Salmon Arm, I witnessed first hand the numerous decisions made by Council that affect its residents, and I was ever more astounded when I came to realize that they are in fact one cog in the many gears that work as a collective for the residents of British Columbia. Together, the municipalities and electoral areas of BC have an impact far greater than most British Columbians comprehend.

Over the week since the conference, I have been thinking alot about the convention's theme: Communication, Collaboration, Cooperation. A theme I admit I didn't understand when I first read it back in July. Now looking back I can say that I do understand it, but without the experience I would never have understood how vital those three C's are to our province. I believe now that I understand the theme enough to make my own extrapolations on what those three C's mean for someone like myself - a youth interested in politics. It is through those three practices, Communication, Collaboration, and Cooperation, that I believe governments, whether at the local, provincial, or federal levels, can engage and connect with youth. First, we need to target efforts toward engaging students who show interest, then open discussion and offer them opportunities to get involved. This is where collaboration comes in. For students to have the desire to stay involved, they need to feel that their contribution is being taken seriously. As I mentioned previously, it is very encouraging to know that your opinion is being heard. Members of the community, youth and adults alike, are more likely to take an active role in their community when they know that their hard work is appreciated. That brings us to cooperation, the key to any successful enterprise. Different groups have to be able to work together to create beneficial change. It is through the sharing of thoughts, knowledge and opinions that many great ideas are conceived and implemented. Youth are yet another resource to be tapped for their perspectives in order to make well-rounded decisions for not only current generations, but up and coming generations as well. The initiatives already undertaken by the Southern Interior Local Government Association, as well as by Mr Gomme and the City of Salmon Arm are positive steps toward getting youth interested and involved, and I'd like to see more initiatives like these across the province.

In closing, I'd like to thank the CSRD, especially Director Talbot, for all they did during my trip to UBCM. I am also very grateful to the TNRD and the City of Salmon Arm for including me their activities. This enriching opportunity would not have been possible without

SILGA's generous and forward thinking initiative in sponsoring youth participation at UBCM, and I am grateful to have taken part in such a valuable program.