



BUILDING A THRIVING COMMUNITY

→ THE ROLE OF SOCIAL ENTERPRISE

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THE KOOTENAYS

OUR REGION, OUR POTENTIAL

3.4 billion people live in rural areas worldwide.

Building thriving rural economies is a **global and local priority**.

In the Kootenays:

- Our economy spans health care, retail trade, construction, and more
- In the West Kootenay alone, incomes total \$5.2 billion
- We're rich in **land, people, and local pride**

But challenges persist:

- By 2031, a **42% decrease** in workforce size
- A **39% drop** in the number of available jobs
- 35% of the remaining workforce will be retirement-aged (source)
- Economic momentum **at risk without local, community-driven solutions**



This is where **YOU** can take action create impact in your community.



COMMUNITY WEALTH BUILDING

A NEW APPROACH TO LOCAL PROSPERITY

What if our economy served us, not extracted from us?

That's the idea behind Community Wealth Building (CWB):
a people-first approach to economic development.

8 Core Principles (CED Network):

- 1. Labour > capital
- 2. Local ownership
- 3. Democratic participation
- 4. Keep wealth circulating
- 5. Local investment
- 6. Inclusive assets
- 7. Place matters
- 8. Systems change

In rural regions, this looks like:

- 1. Community-owned enterprises
- 2. Local finance
- 3. Fair work
- 4. Local spending
- 5. Land used for people, not profit



WHY RURAL SOCIAL ENTERPRISE?

*Social enterprise is the **tool**
and the Kootenay region is the **Field of Play**.*

The Rural Social Enterprise Manifesto invites us to **build socially-owned, place-rooted enterprises** that **respond to local challenges**, anchored in rural realities.

It emphasises:

Building from local assets

Inclusive ownership

Regeneration of land & culture

Long-term generational change

For regions like *the Kootenays*, social enterprise is a way to:

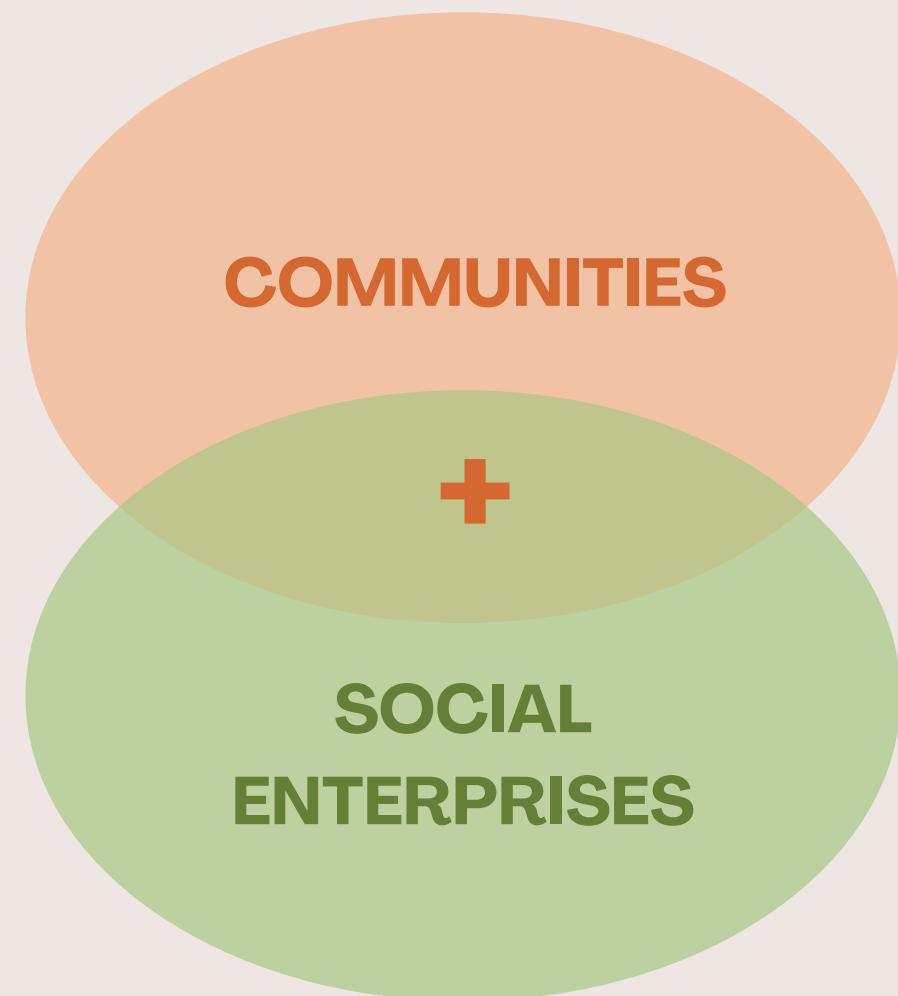
- Reclaim community sovereignty
- Build local purpose
- Keep wealth in motion.

It's *more* than a simple business model.



THE CROSSOVER THAT CHANGES EVERYTHING

When communities and social enterprises work together,
the results are transformational.



=

Social enterprises ground solutions in local realities. They know the land, the people, the challenges.

Communities bring lived experience, trust, and shared purpose.

Together, they co-create systems that redistribute power, resources, and opportunity, **especially in rural areas, where gaps in health, food, housing, and jobs are real.**



STORIES OF PLACE, PURPOSE & POSSIBILITY

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN COMMUNITIES AND
SOCIAL ENTERPRISES PARTNER?

When a **community backs a social enterprise**, and that enterprise gives back, the ripple effects are **transformative**.

TODAY, WE'LL LOOK AT FOUR STORIES:

- Stella's Circle (St. Johns, NL)
- Creston Valley Community Hub (Creston, BC)
- Artscape (Toronto, ON)
- The Yellow Barn (Abbotsford, BC)





STORY 1:

STELLA'S CIRCLE ST. JOHNS, NL

CREATING COMMUNITY TOGETHER

Stella's Circle is a community organization that operates a network of **wrap-around support, services and social enterprises** to help adults facing complex barriers live full, dignified lives.

THEIR MISSION:

Champion growth and transformation through housing, mental health, and employment services.

THE PROBLEMS THEY ADDRESS:

Multiple barriers (addiction, homelessness, unemployment, and more)

STORY 1:

STELLA'S CIRCLE ST. JOHNS, NL

They have successfully created a **connected ecosystem** that restores dignity and independence and **builds community wealth** in the process.

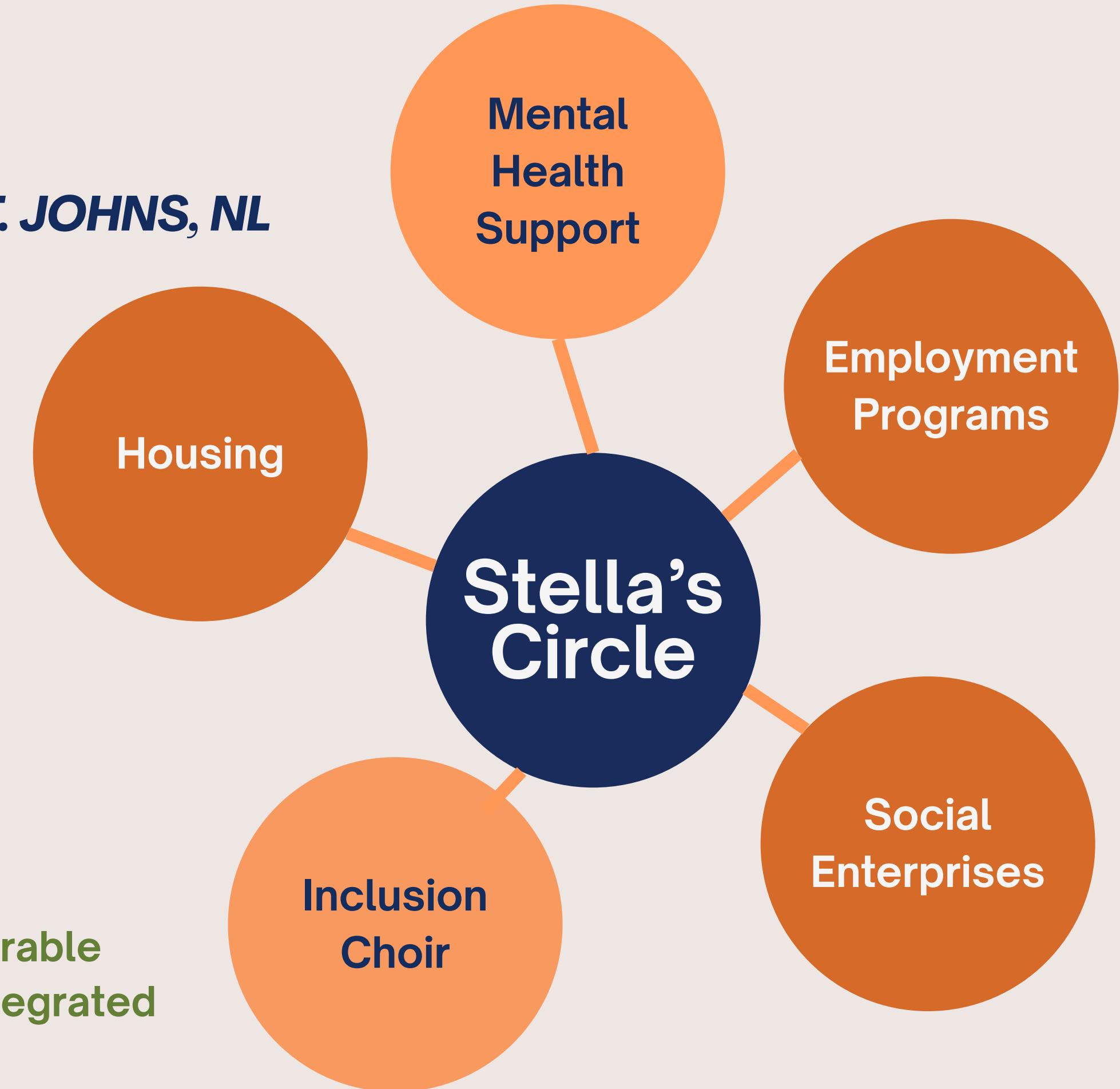
Reflects the Community Wealth Building principles:
local investment, fair work, inclusive assets, place-based systems

This encourages us to ask:

“What if we didn't try to fix just one issue, but designed a system that **connects many**?”



We can use their story as a **rural-transferable blueprint**: even if smaller in scale, the **integrated mindset** is replicable in the Kootenays.





STORY 2: **CRESTON VALLEY** CRESTON, BC **COMMUNITY WEALTH BUILDING**

The Creston Valley Community Hub is a community-led social enterprise designed to bring together **workspaces, services, and programs under one roof**, creating a central space for connection, collaboration, and rural resilience.

THEIR MISSIONS

To create a shared space where people, services, and opportunities come together to **strengthen the rural economy and improve community life.**

THE PROBLEMS THEY ADDRESS

- Gaps in rural infrastructure and local services
- Isolation of workers, youth, and nonprofits
- Lack of accessible space for collaboration and enterpris

STORY 2:

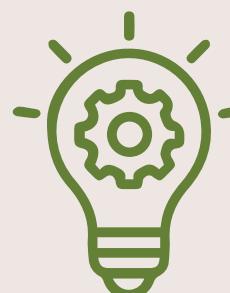
CRESTON VALLEY

The Hub provides the physical infrastructure for work, childcare, and recreation.

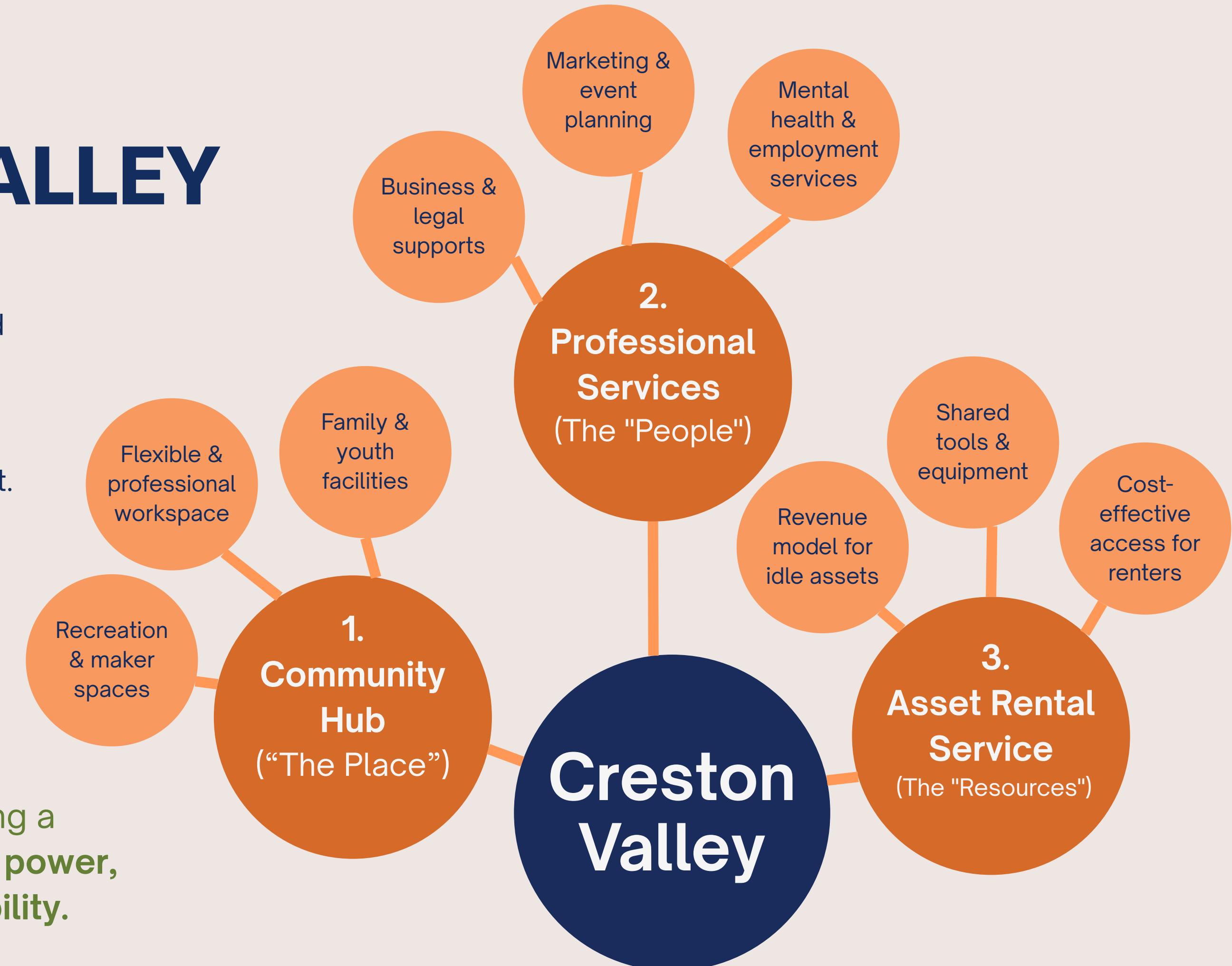
The Professional Services offering provides the human resource support.

The Asset Rental model provides a mechanism for sharing resources.

The entire model is a **vehicle** for deep, sustained collaboration.



Creston Valley is creating a platform for **community power, partnership, and possibility**.





STORY 3:

ARTSCAPE TORONTO, ON

FOUNDATION FOR CREATIVITY & COLLABORATION

Artscape is a not-profit social enterprise that re-develops underused buildings into **affordable, vibrant cultural hubs**.

They work with artists, nonprofits, developers, and governments to **anchor creativity in community**, turning buildings into engines for social, cultural, and economic renewal.

THEIR MISSION:

Create affordable spaces where artists and communities thrive together.

THE PROBLEMS THEY ADDRESS:

- Artist displacement
- Underused buildings
- Lack of inclusive creative spaces

STORY 3:

ARTSCAPE TORONTO, ON

Artscape illustrates:

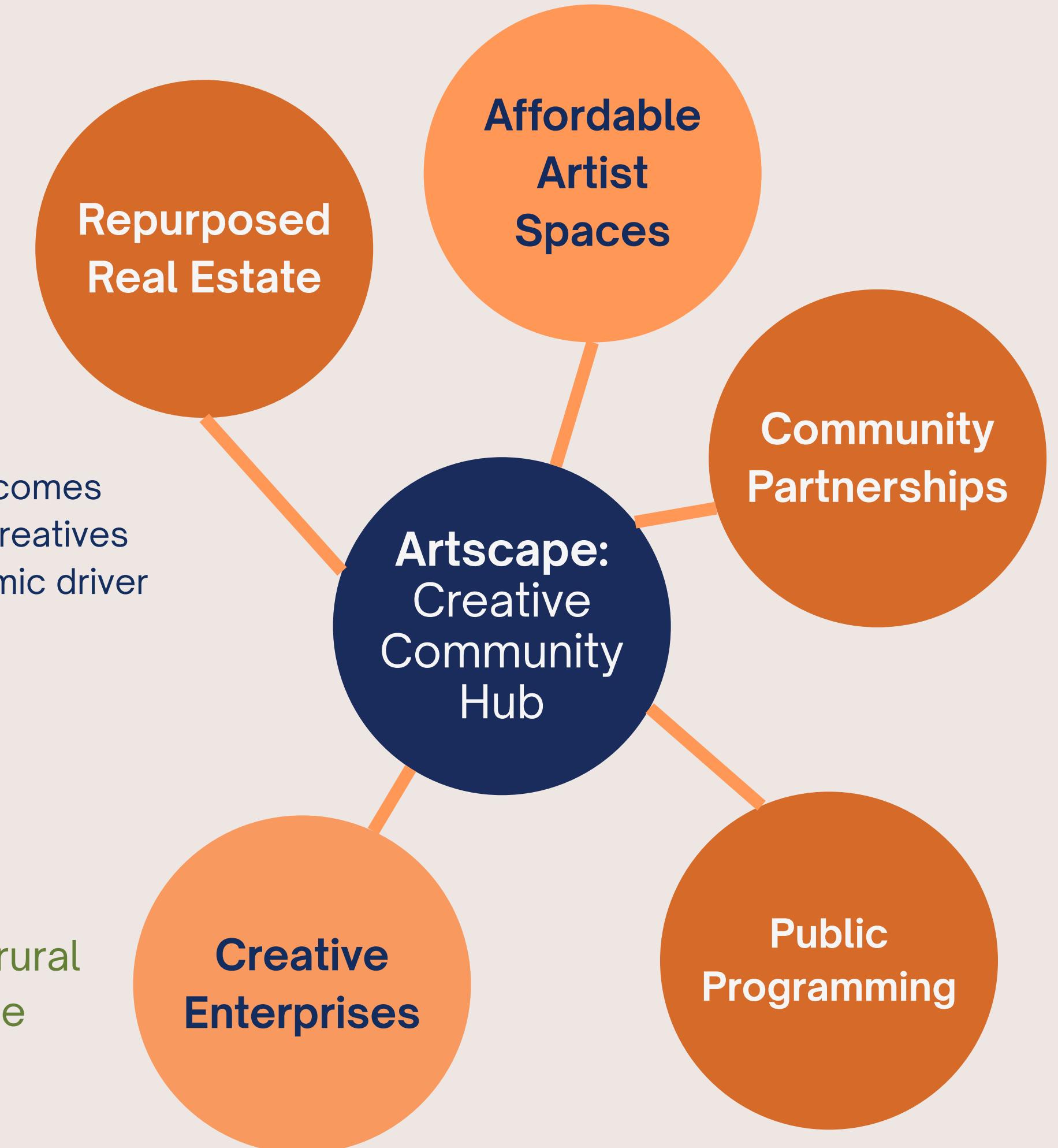
- **Just land use:** Space used for public and cultural good
- **Inclusive enterprise:** Artists and communities co-own outcomes
- **Fair work:** Stable income and platforms for marginalized creatives
- **Community-rooted investment:** Cultural capital as economic driver

This encourages us to ask:

What unused buildings or spaces in the **Kootenays** could become **platforms for community ownership and creative enterprise**?



Artscape is a system that could be scaled to rural regions through co-op art spaces, local culture hubs, and reclaimed land use.





STORY 4:

THE YELLOW BARN ABBOTSFORD, BC

ROOTED IN PLACE, SERVING COMMUNITY

The Yellow Barn is a produce store, cafe, and social enterprise located in Abbotsford. It acts as a **central meeting place for the community, promotes local food, and employs local residents**, and supports relief & development worldwide.

THEIR MISSION:

Support rural vibrancy through food, hospitality, and shared gathering space.

THE PROBLEMS THEY ADDRESS:

- Lack of central community spaces in rural/suburban transition zones
- Need for local employment and farm-to-table visibility
- Growing disconnect between producers and consumers in rural corridors

STORY 4:

THE YELLOW BARN

They've created a **trusted, place-based enterprise** that nourishes the community, economically, socially, and culturally.

Their work reflects the [Community Wealth Building](#) principles:

- Local investment
- Fair work
- Inclusive enterprise
- Place-based infrastructure

This reminds us:



Community social enterprise **doesn't need to be complex to be powerful**. Sometimes, it's a farmstand, a kitchen, and a few local jobs, grounded in the place it serves.



WHAT THESE STORIES TEACH US

When communities and social enterprises come together:

Assets become levers
for growth

(land, culture, skills,
local supply chains)



Challenges become
shared missions

(problems turned
into purpose)



Joint ventures spark
innovation no one
should do alone.

(collaboration > competition)

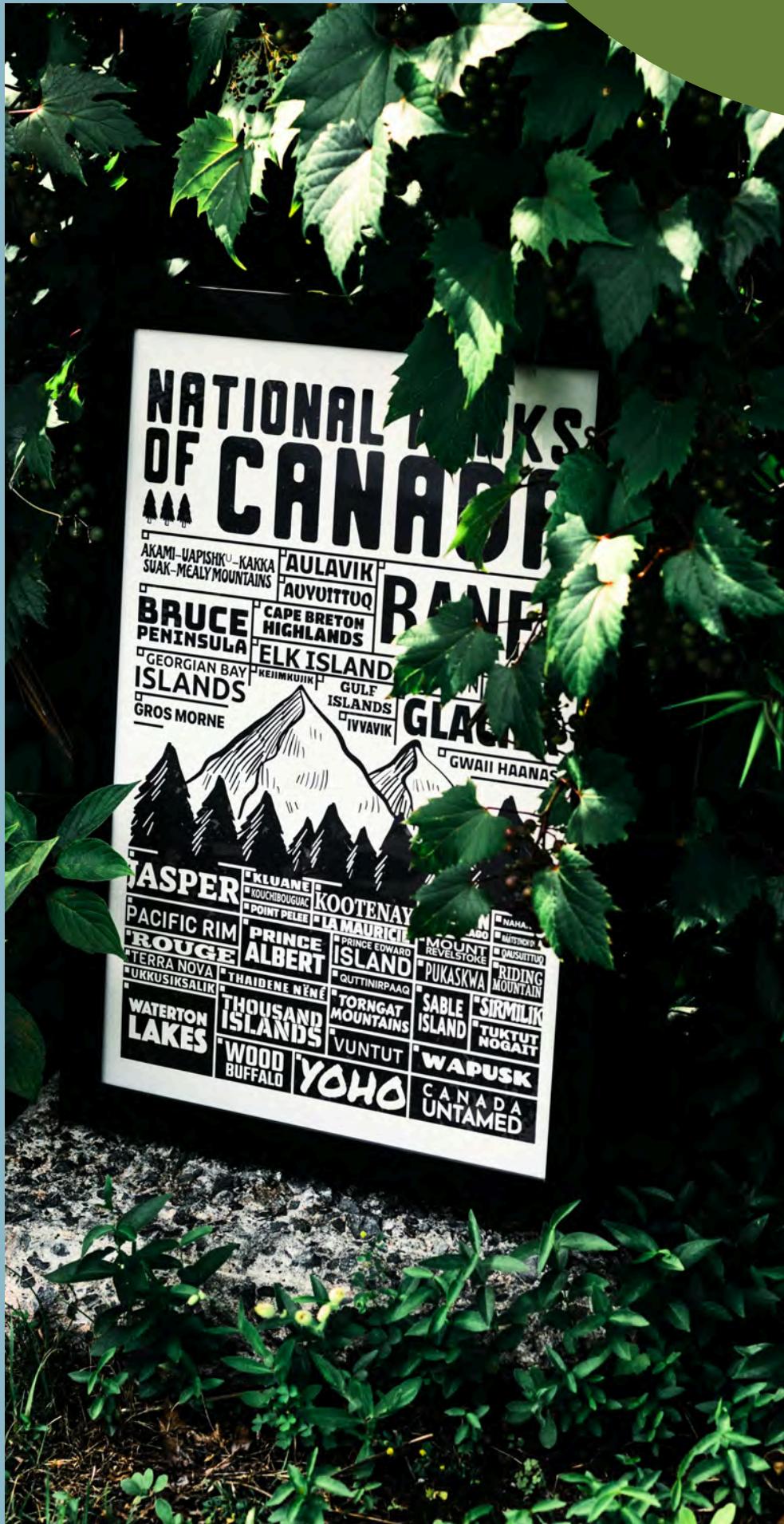


Rural resilience becomes
community-led, not donor
dependant.

(ownership matters)



Now, let's bring more of this to the Kootenay region!



WHAT KOOTENAY COLLABORATION COULD SPARK



Innovate
for Impact

Community
Futures
East Kootenay

IMPACT
TOOLBOX



Imagine a **network of social enterprises across the Kootenays**.

For example...

- Forestry plus community-owned biomass enterprise
- Youth-led tourism venture rooted in Indigenous and local culture
- Community-owned coop for local food processing & supply
- Shared procurement model that keeps local dollars local