



What Do You Do ...



... in a small town like vanderhoof that has nothing for teens at all. not even a lousy swimmin pool. if you expect kids to stay off drugs in vanderhoof think again. Its cheap entertainment.

Editorial Answer:

Good comment and one that I've heard spoken out of my own mouth, both when I was a teenager and an adult.

But I've "re-think" it and I don't believe it anymore.

I think we live in an age where we EXPECT to be entertained, and if there isn't the latest and greatest we feel let down and like nobody cares.

Is it really true that Vanderhoof has nothing for teens at all? I don't believe it. There are lots of activities for teens, some of them not as accessible because they cost more money etc, but when we had a youth centre, not so many kids used it...and it was free: Free air hockey, free video games, free computer and internet use, free pool, free ping pong, free movie nights, lots of free stuff... but maybe it wasn't the RIGHT stuff, or not good enough, not ENTERTAINING enough. I don't know because nobody told me. And I really would like to know.

Life is a circle... What goes around comes around. You've heard that one I'm sure. You get out of life what you put into it. Lots of clichés... I've got a tonne of 'em. Here's a story for you.

When we were about 16 or 17, my cousin had a friend come from Kamloops (big city... you know, with a swimming pool) to visit one summer. The weather was great and our friends had all planned to meet down at the cut banks (now Riverside Park) to go swimming. We used to run and jump off the cut banks, and then float down around the corner and get out and do it all over again. Anyway it was a good day for it. We got on our bikes and started down town. Our city friend couldn't believe all the teenagers that were out and about at the river. She, who was from the big city, was amazed by how everyone got together and did something so simple but fun. It made me realize, in that moment when she said it, that I was lucky to live here and that as long as we used our imaginations, we had a blast!

Now, maybe the difference is that we didn't have home computers or a wide variety of technology to keep ourselves entertained so we went outside and had fun with what was before us. And, of course, lots of teens used drugs. But I don't buy that they did it because they were bored. I think they did it for other reasons. I think this because lots of kids drank and did drugs while they were entertaining themselves with other activities – like snowmobiling, or swimming, or tubing down the hill in winter or down the river in summer.

I believe there are a variety of reasons why kids do drugs. And I think, as a community, there is a lot more we can do to support families in taking on healthier, safer lifestyles. So I don't say that I EXPECT kids to stay off drugs. Rather, I want to offer alternatives and education so that the choices made by young people are informed choices; so that if there is other stuff going on in their lives that leads them to drink and use drugs that they know where to go to seek support. And while I can't EXPECT kids to stay off drugs, I can help them be safer about what they are doing so that when they are ready to re-examine their lives, they still have a life to live that's worth it.

But that's not what you said. You said that you are not entertained and that's why you do drugs.

I say that's a cop-out and the least you could do is take responsibility for the kind of recreation you freely choose.

But, hey... a swimming pool would be nice.

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Thanks,

Lisa.