

# **Bowen Island Community Childcare Plan**



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The author recognizes with gratitude that the land on which she lives, works, and plays is the traditional and unceded land of the x<sup>w</sup>məθk<sup>w</sup>əy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and sə́lílwətaʔt (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations. She further acknowledges that the land on which this work was completed is Xwlíl'xhwm, the traditional hunting and fishing grounds of the Squamish people.

The author further expresses gratitude to the Bowen Island Municipality, the caregivers of Bowen's children, and the community members who lent their knowledge and their time to the creation of this report.

## **Executive Summary**

Over the past 20 years, the population of Bowen Island has nearly doubled, with an increasing number of families choosing to call Bowen Island home. While the number of children on the island has remained fairly consistent, the number of families drawing from childcare supports on the island has increased. This is largely due to a variety of reasons including long commute times, an increase in single parent families living on island, and the need for two incomes to support families while the cost of living continues to rise in the lower mainland. Parents on Bowen Island face additional challenges with childcare in a community that, while in close proximity to the services of a city, is largely rural in nature, due to the island's separation from services and reliance on ferry travel.

Census information gathered, combined with qualitative and quantitative information drawn from both caregivers and parents on Bowen Island, indicates that there are currently not enough childcare spaces available to meet the needs of the current population on Bowen Island. In addition to this, expected increases in population growth, which will be reflected in the next census year (2021) are likely to place further pressure on the existing resources on Bowen Island resulting in childcare shortages for the families that need them.

This report will explore feedback provided by the community and other resources regarding demographic and occupational trends, childcare usage and services desired. It will further provide short, medium, and long term recommendations for the Bowen Island Municipality to consider in planning for the community's long range childcare needs. In alignment with the requirements of the childcare planning grant used to fund this project, the report will be accompanied by documentation that identifies the number and types of licensed childcare spaces available on Bowen Island as well as create short, medium, and long term space creation targets.

## **Introduction**

Bowen Island has long thrived as a community that supports families. This is obvious in the exponential growth of families with young children as a key demographic, as will be evidenced within this report through review of population growth on the island. As Bowen Island has grown, so too have the needs for childcare support for a community of working parents who, due to Bowen Island's unique location as an offshore community with close proximity to Vancouver, face unique challenges that are difficult to compare to other rural communities in the province. In applying for the Union of British Columbia (UBCM) Community Child Care Planning Program grant, the Bowen Island Municipality seeks to understand the challenges faced by both two parent and single parent families in the workforce. These efforts have potential to support individuals who are prohibited from entering or re-entering the workforce due to the lack of affordable and accessible childcare available in what is essentially a remote location

In participating in the UBCM Community Child Care Planning process, the Bowen Island Municipality has engaged with residents in the community to achieve the following goals:

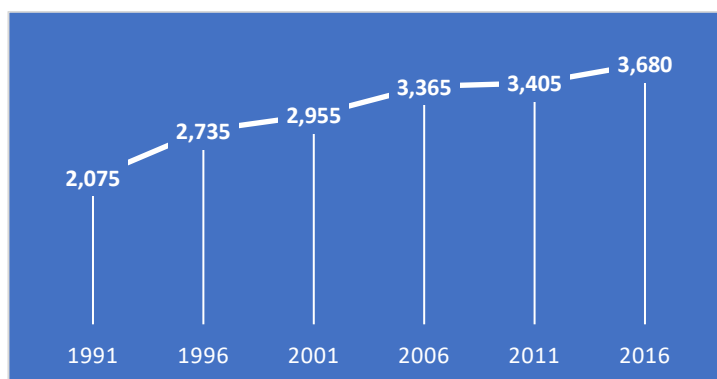
1. To learn about the experiences of the Bowen Island parent population regarding childcare, identifying both strengths and challenges of the existing system as well as any barriers to accessing existing services.
2. To identify the formal childcare systems currently in place on Bowen Island, along with details about the populations they serve and the rates of usage.
3. To identify as many informal and ad hoc childcare arrangements used by residents of Bowen Island (i.e.: childcare swap, unlicensed childcare, grandparent care, etc.)
4. To identify and name gaps in service, as identified by Bowen Island community members.
5. To identify the island's primary childcare needs, as identified by childcare providers, consumers of childcare services, and parents who opt out of childcare services or who face barriers to childcare service on Bowen Island.
6. Based on information provided in the consultation process, identify short, medium and long-range actions regarding childcare spaces on Bowen Island and provide detailed recommendations to address current and future childcare needs in the community.
7. Name concerns and gaps outlined by both childcare providers and childcare consumers.

The enclosed report will summarize these goals under a number of sections including community background information, methodology, needs assessment and data analysis, recommendations and conclusion.

## **Community Demographics and Family Makeup**

In the process of this needs assessment, demographic and census data was reviewed from a number of sources<sup>1</sup>. Specifically, Statistics Canada<sup>2</sup> provided comprehensive historical demographic data. Census data between 1991 and 2016 was reviewed, with 2016 being the last data available.

Bowen Island is a community that has seen steady and consistent growth of its overall population over the past twenty years (see Figure 1). In 1991, Bowen Island's full time population was 2,075 and by 1996, it had experienced an exponential growth rate of 31.8% to reach a population of 2,735. From 1996 through 2016, the five year growth rates have varied between 1.2% and 13.9% to a total population of 3,680, last counted in 2016 and representing 34.6% population growth over 20 years.



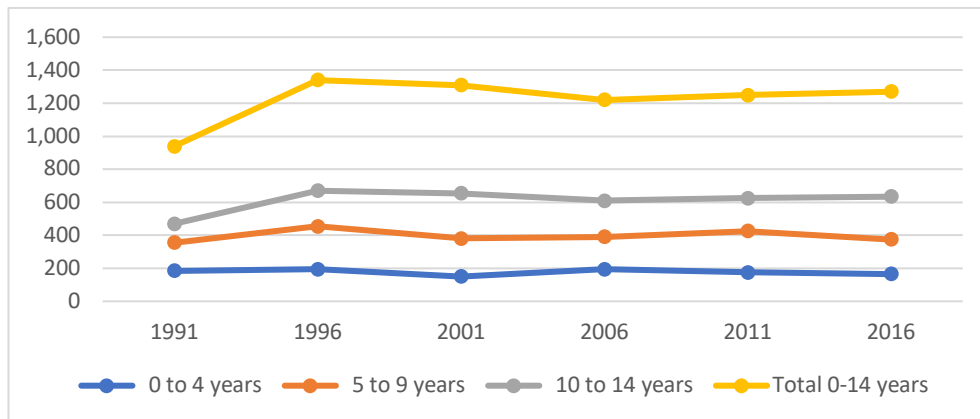
**Fig. 1 Total Population on Bowen Island**

For the purposes of this assessment, when discussing children, it should be noted that only children between the ages of 0 to 14 years were considered, as this encompasses the grouping of children that are of concern to this assessment, namely those 0-12 years of age. However, because available census data groups children into age categories of 0-4 years, 5-9 years and 10-14 years, there is no way to determine how many of the final group are under the age of 12.

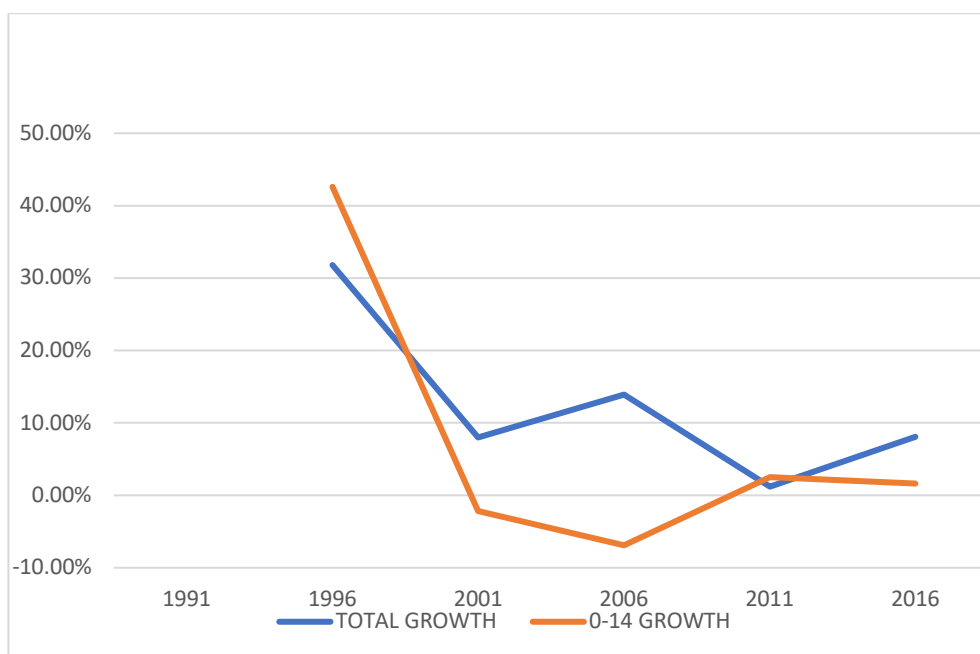
Given the rate of growth for the overall population, it is perhaps surprising then, to note the corresponding growth rate of children under the age of 14 years. While the overall population has increased, the number of children in both the 0-4 and 5-9 year age ranges has actually seen a population decrease of 15.4% and 19.2% respectively over the past twenty years. The only age range that has experienced an overall increase has been the 10-14 year age range, with a 20.9% increase since 1996. As a result, despite a population spike of 42.6% in 1996, which coincides with the similar increase in the overall population, the number of children on Bowen Island has fluctuated slightly each census year ranging from decreases in growth of 6.9% to increases of 2.5% over the census period (see Fig. 3)

<sup>1</sup> <http://communityhealth.phsa.ca/HealthProfiles/PdfGenerator/Bowen%20Island>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/>



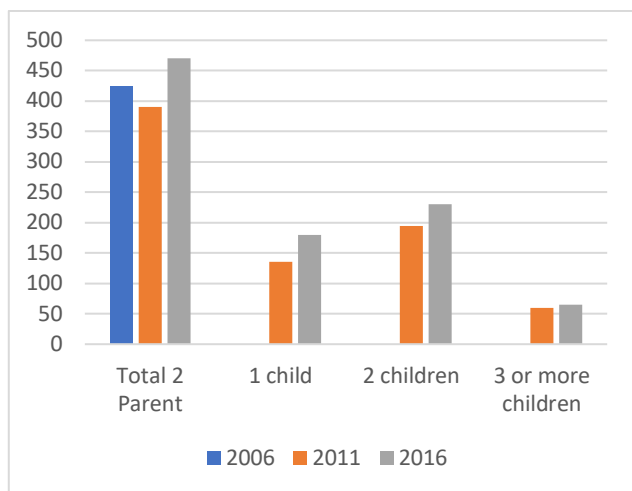
**Fig. 2 Bowen Island Population Growth (Ages 0-14)**



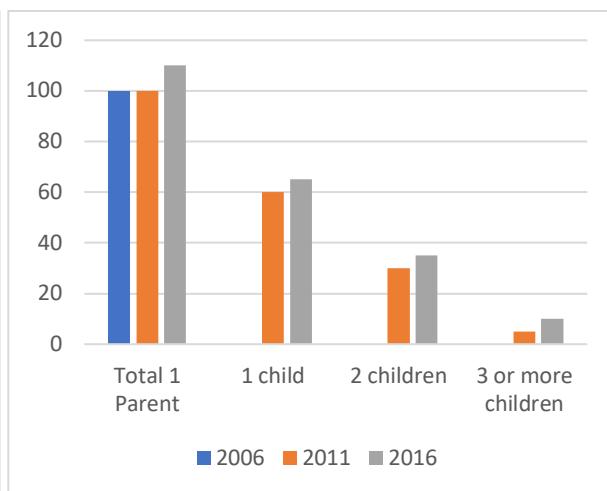
**Fig. 3 Population Growth Comparison (Total Growth to Children 0-14 Years)**

Despite the fact that the number of children in the areas concerned has not necessarily experienced significant increases there has been an increase in the number of one and two parent homes on the island (see Fig. 4 and Fig. 5) over the past five years<sup>3</sup>. During the latest five year period, the total number of parenting families living on Bowen Island has increased 18.4%, compared to an 8.1% increase in the overall population during the same time frame. Since the number of homes raising children has increased, it is possible that there is, therefore, an increased number of homes requiring childcare, even if the number of individual children requiring childcare has not significantly changed. This is confirmed by information regarding waitlists in various programs on island, which is addressed later in this report.

<sup>3</sup> Due to variations in data presentation and categorization between the 2006 and 2011 census, data relating to number of children per household is not available from Statistics Canada and therefore is not reflected in this report.



**Fig. 4 Two Parent Homes**



**Fig. 5 One Parent Homes**

## **Current Childcare Resources**

Bowen Island currently has several sources of licensed childcare resources on the island.

### **1. Bowen Children's Centre<sup>4</sup>**

The largest proportion of Bowen Island's licensed childcare spaces are offered through Bowen Children's Centre (BCC), a non-profit society that has contracts with the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD), including the Child Care Fee Reduction Initiative, to help families lower childcare fees. BCC oversees a variety of programs that support parents, the majority of which are childcare based.

- The Infant/Toddler Program is licensed for 9 full time spaces. BCC chooses to fill these spaces by having 2 full time and 7 part time spaces available for children between the ages of 12 and 30 months each day, which allows for the needs of 12 families to be met.
- The daycare has licensed space for 25 children and 4 of those spaces are reserved for 24 month-olds. BCC's preschool is currently licensed for 20 part time spaces.
- In response to a growing need for after school care, BCC's license for The After School Club, previously at 20 spaces, has increased in the last 2 years to 42 spaces and provides afterschool care for up to 55 families.
- BCC operates Family Place, a family resource centre, and is also co-located with Bowen Island Municipality's fitness studio and the Bowen Youth Centre.

<sup>4</sup> <http://bowenchildrenscentre.ca/>

BCC Society has a purpose built building and houses the Daycare, Infant Toddler wing, the Preschool and Family Place. It also rents space to the BI recreation program (BI Recreation runs 90% of their programming out of this facility) and the Youth Centre (shared space with Family Space).

The After School Club currently rents two classrooms at the Bowen Island Community School and needs its own space as the program's enrolment has doubled in the last two years and serves 55 families with 10-12 kindergarten children and over 40 Grade 1 up per day. It has outgrown a temporary, multi used space.

## 2. Bowen Island Montessori School<sup>5</sup>

Bowen Island Montessori School (BIMS) is an on-island preschool that provides both preschool and kindergarten programming. BIMS offers flexible childcare that offers morning (including lunch), afternoon and full day care for children between the ages of 2.5 and 5 years. BIMS operates for full days Monday to Thursday and for a half day Friday. The program adapts to the needs of our families by offering various levels of care each day rather than families fitting into specific days for specific ages. The maximum number of children on site during any given session is small by design: 8 licensed spaces with one educator. BIMS is also a ten-month program, operating from September through June, which can create childcare challenge for families during the summer months.

## 3. Bowen Island Kinderhaus<sup>6</sup>

Bowen Island Kinderhaus is a privately owned, home-based daycare that is also a Universal Child Care Prototype Site. It is licensed to provide 7 family childcare spaces. The majority of these are provided on a part time basis so as to maximize the number of families that can be served.

## 4. Bowen Island Community Recreation Playcare<sup>7</sup>

Originally intended to provide childcare for parents attending fitness classes through Bowen Island Recreation, Playcare has become an invaluable service on Bowen Island, providing occasional, drop-in childminding service for children aged 0 to five years. It is co-located with Bowen Island Community School and the Bowen Island Recreation Centre. The playcare program is an unlicensed childminding service that can be accessed for two 1.5 hour sessions each morning for up to 16 children, depending on ages of the children.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.bowenmontessori.ca/>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.boweniskinderhaus.ca/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.bowencommunityrecreation.com/>



## **Information Gathering**

Information related to childcare needs on Bowen Island was gathered via several methods:

### **1. Community Survey**

A community survey was distributed via Survey Monkey and made available from September 9 to October 31, 2019 for completion by all community members. While the primary focus of this survey was parents with children under the age of 12, it was available for all community members to engage with, including those without children and/or expecting or planning to have children. The survey was comprehensive in scope and modelled after survey information endorsed by Child Care Canada Child Care Resource and Research Unit<sup>8</sup>. After completion, the survey was tested with several parenting contacts outside the Bowen Island community, who indicated the survey to be a comprehensive tool gathering information important to parents who require childcare. This group also identified gaps and errors in the test survey, which led to further refinements before being made accessible to the Bowen Island community.

### **2. Focus Groups**

Four specific focus groups were planned for the project that would provide individuals with an opportunity to deliver in-person narrative feedback. Issues relating to both low participation numbers, availability of space and timing of the focus groups led to a mutual decision by the consultant and the Bowen Island Municipality representative to reframe these sessions, leading to the consultant participating in existing community groups.

### **3. Community Groups**

Due to the aforementioned issues with the focus groups, the consultant instead began attending various existing community and childcare groups, where parents would already naturally be gathered. These included:

- Sunday Morning Parent/Tot Playgroup
- Playcare
- After School Club
- Family Play Night

At each of these sessions, a shortened and simplified survey allowed parents to participate in the survey by identifying their childcare needs in a truncated form.

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<sup>8</sup> [www.childcarecanada.org](http://www.childcarecanada.org)

#### 4. Coffee/Meal Chats

The consultant met individually with several community members over coffee, meals, and phone calls to gather narrative data regarding their experiences with and needs regarding childcare. These meetings were typically about one hour in length.

#### 5. Informal conversations

The consultant engaged in informal conversations throughout the course of the project with members of the public throughout the community. These conversations, which took place outside the formal scope of the project were not recorded, as they happened organically during the course of day-to-day life on the island.

### **Project Findings**

In addition to demographic information gathered by the census, survey data collected during the course of the assessment indicated that respondents had between one and four children, between the ages of 0 to 12 years, with a small percentage of respondents being parents who had children over the age of 13. In addition to this, one individual was a grandparent caring for their grandchildren, and one was an expectant parent.

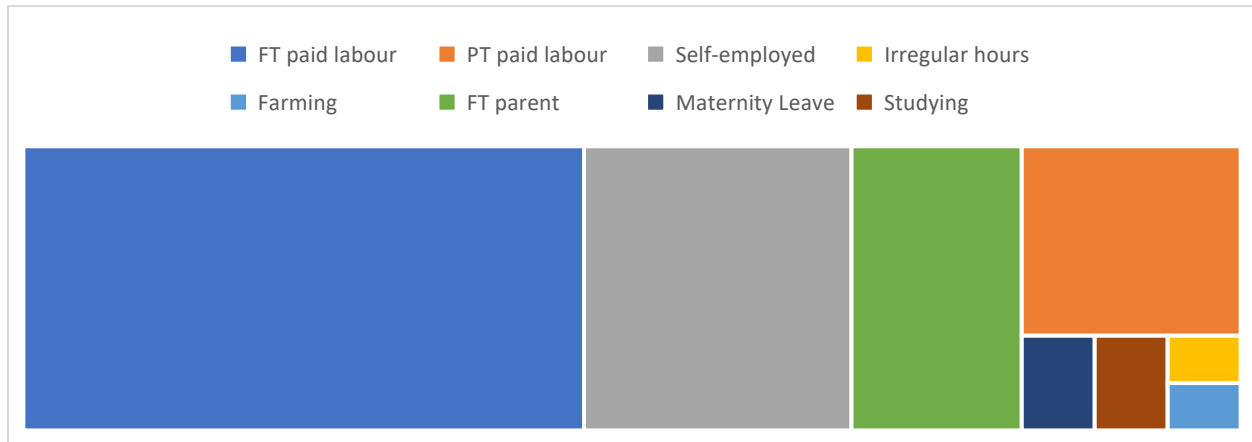
Respondents to the online survey stated overwhelmingly (87.2%) that Bowen Island residents currently do not have access to an adequate supply of childcare services. 89.9% of respondents further indicated that they believed the provincial and/or federal government should make childcare services more affordable than they are at present.

### ***Occupational Demographics***

The survey's initial area of focus was determining the occupational demographics of parents living on Bowen Island. Respondents were asked to answer questions relating to the primary and, if applicable, secondary occupation as well as that of their partner if in a two parent home. 34.4% of respondents indicated that they had a secondary occupation, and 15.3% of respondents in two parent homes indicated a secondary occupation. Primary occupations tended to be focused on full time paid work in the work force as well as self-employment (see Fig. 6 and Fig. 7) while any secondary occupational pursuits of respondents focused primarily on self-employment (33.3%) and further education or studying (23.8%)<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> Graphs and data pertaining to the secondary occupation of both respondents and their partners can be found in Appendix A.



**Fig. 6 Respondent Primary Occupation**

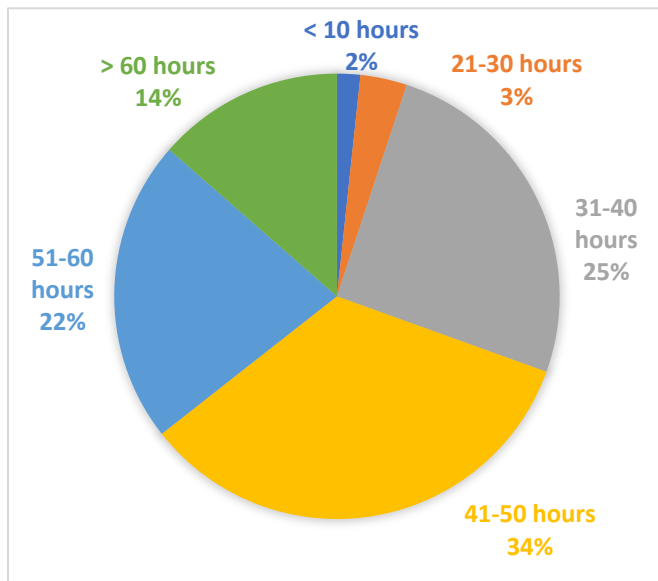


**Fig. 7 Partner Primary Occupation**

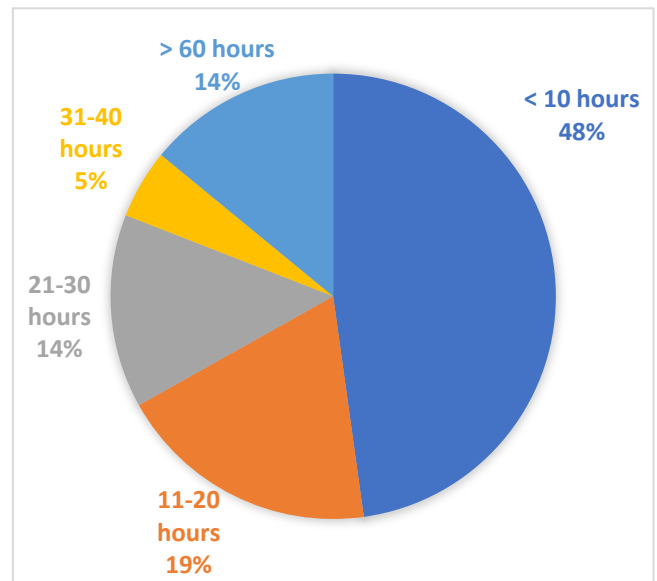
These occupational pursuits are time consuming and require significant amounts of time allotted for work (see Fig. 8 and Fig. 9). With 70% of respondents working more than 40 hours per week, childcare needs are inevitable, and exacerbated when one considers an estimated commute time of 75 minutes each way for many of the island's working parents<sup>1011</sup>. The amount of time families spend working is also reflected in the stated needs for childcare, even despite the fact that the child population has not experienced large population growth since 1996 (see Fig. 2). With an ever- increasing cost of living, more parents work full and part time hours, resulting in increased pressure on the island's limited childcare resources.

<sup>10</sup> [www.https://www.bowenislandtransportationsociety.ca/](https://www.bowenislandtransportationsociety.ca/)

<sup>11</sup> Graphs and data pertaining to the time spent in the secondary occupation of both respondents and their partners can be found in Appendix A.



**Fig. 8 Respondent Time Spent in Primary Occupation**



**Fig. 9 Partner Time Spent in Primary Occupation**

Another factor to consider in the analysis of occupation is that of changes to employment on a seasonal or circumstantial basis. 33.9% of respondents indicated that they experience seasonal or circumstantial changes in their occupation, along with 29% of their partners. The reasons for these changes included:

- Work in an education system that followed a school or university calendar
- “Busy seasons” requiring more time
- The availability and/or seasonal nature of work (i.e.: construction or landscaping)
- Film industry work
- Real Estate
- Sales cycles
- Project-based work
- Business travel
- Market Vendor

### ***Childcare Usage and Satisfaction***

In the online survey, respondents were asked to identify any and all types of childcare services their family had used. As indicated in Figure 10, there is a wide spread of childcare usage on Bowen Island, with families finding ways to meet their childcare needs through a variety of

means. Of these, most respondents had used the Bowen Children's Centre and/or made an arrangement with a private care provider. However, there is usage represented in all areas<sup>12</sup>.

Overall, the survey indicated that, regardless of the type of childcare used, people tend to be satisfied with the childcare arrangements they have used. 87.5% of respondents stated that they were either "very satisfied" or "somewhat satisfied" with their childcare arrangements. As well, due to the relatively small physical area of the island, the location of childcare services did not present as a concern to parents.

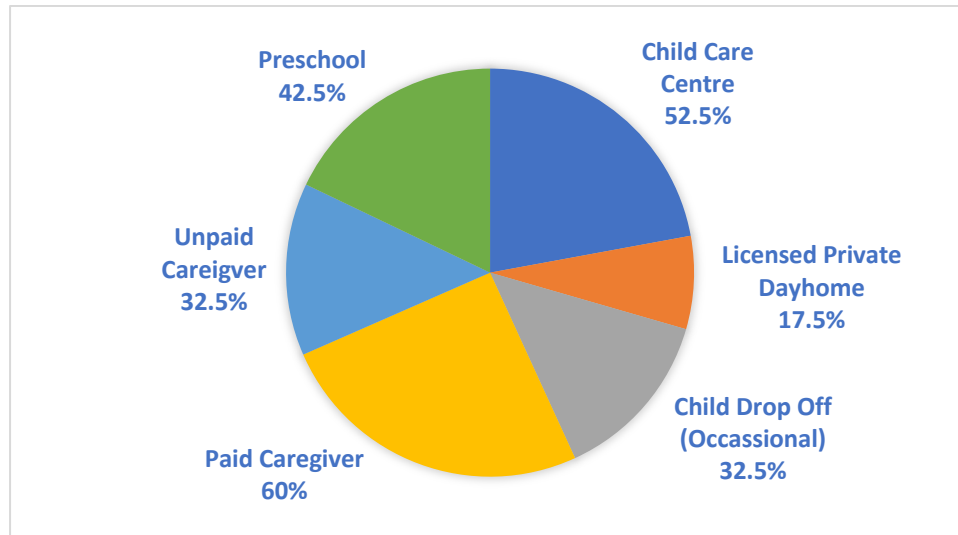


Fig. 10 "Any & All" Childcare Options Used by Bowen Island Parents

Additional information was gathered in the study to address periods of time when planned childcare resources, including school, were unavailable or a child could not attend. These circumstances included school holidays, professional development days, sick children, and emergencies, including planned childcare providers not being available at the last minute.

#### 1. School Breaks and Professional Development Days

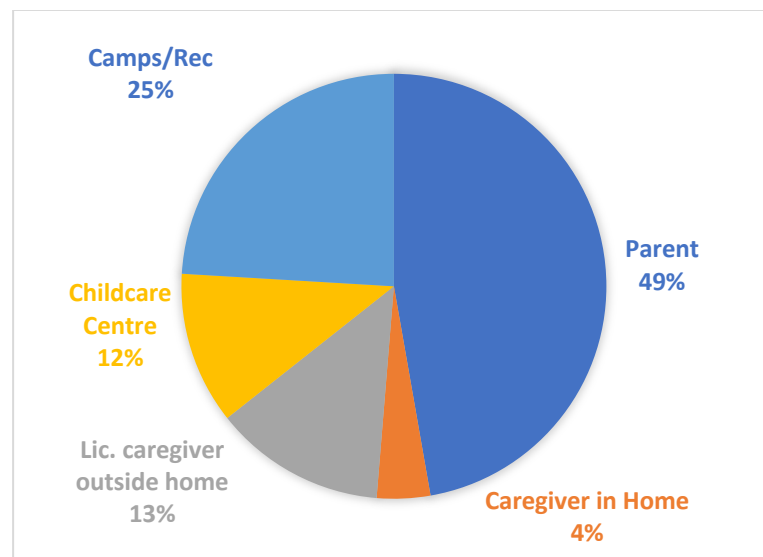
For parents of all school age children, school is part of the day-to-day childcare plan. Respondents reported that in 56.6% of cases, childcare arrangements needed to be adjusted when school was closed for summer and in 43.52% of cases, similar adjustments had to be made for some or all of the other school holidays or professional development days.

In most cases, parents provide the bulk of childcare to children during the summer months, using organized recreation and camp activities as well (see Fig. 11). Similarly, regarding childcare provided during the school year, respondents expressed overall

<sup>12</sup> The data also included "Parent/Child Drop-In Program" as one of the selected options and 45% of respondents indicated using available drop-in programs. However, since this is not technically a childcare option, as parents remain in the same location with the child/ren, this information was excluded from data.

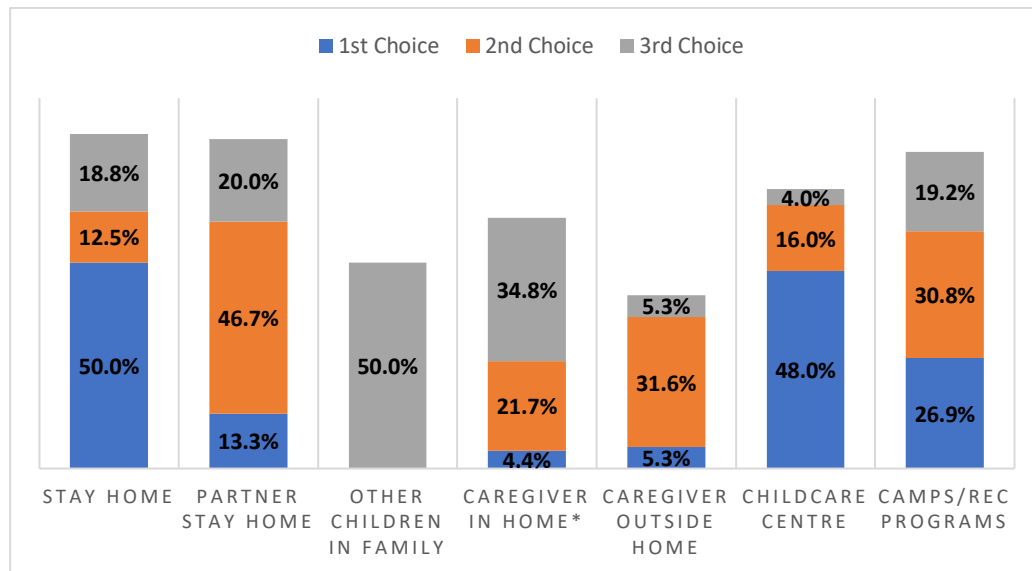
satisfaction with the quality of the childcare they accessed, with 71.6% stating they were either satisfied or very satisfied. However, parents also stated that staying home is often the only feasible option for them for a number of reasons including:

- Perception that no other options are available
- Inability to afford ongoing recreation activities. One parent stated that “although the camps are great, they are costly, and we can just afford about eight days of camp per child per summer.” 50% of respondents stated that they were only somewhat satisfied or were dissatisfied with the cost of their summer childcare arrangements.
- Summer childcare hours being unamenable to a commuting schedule, requiring parents to be home sooner than the normally would be. 22.9% of respondents stated that they were unsatisfied with the hours provided by summer childcare options.



**Fig. 11 Summer Child Care Arrangements**

In both the online survey and at community groups, parents of school aged children identified that while their preference is to stay at home with their children, the two community programs that best support them when this is not possible are recreation and camp programs and a childcare centre (see Fig. 12). Additionally, in face to face sessions, ten parents (2 of preschool age children and 8 of school aged children) identified that their childcare needs would be better met if there were more options for childcare during the summer and school holidays.



**Fig. 12 Preferred Choices of Summer Childcare Options**

## 2. Sick Days

71.9% of respondents stated that when children experienced mild illnesses (including colds, upset stomachs, ear infections, mild fever, or a minor physical injury) they were forced to make special childcare arrangements. Parents stated that they had experienced this anywhere between less than 3 days (31.3%) to more than 10 days (9.4%). In 92.1% of these cases, parents adjusted their own work schedules to stay at home with their child. In addition to this, 26.3% of respondents had relied on a relative, friend, nanny or caregiver to provide care, either in their home or in the home of another person and at 10.6% of parents had taken an ill child to work with them.

When it comes to a sick child, parents overwhelmingly prefer to stay with their child themselves, even when it means accessing leave from their place of employment to do so. 73.7% of parents stated that they would use leave from their work to care for a child with, for example, a mild respiratory illness such as a cough or cold. Indeed, 94.4% of respondents had had one parent stay home with an ill child in the last 12 months and 64.7% stated that this would be their first choice, even if other possibilities were available. However, parents also stated that they would potentially use other community services if they were available to them, such as a childcare centre that had capacity to accommodate rest and quiet play for mildly sick children, caregivers specialized in first aid either in or outside of their home. However, there were only slightly more parents who stated they would be willing to pay for this service (51.5%) than those who stated that they would not be willing to do so (49.5%).

It is obvious from the respondents that taking time off from work to care for an ill child is a sacrifice they prefer to make, but one that has implications to their occupation. 43.6% of respondents took unpaid leave to care for their child (43.8%), resulting in lost wages. In fact,

100% of respondents indicated that they had lost at least one day of wages due to staying home with a sick child. Additionally, parents used their own sick days or vacation days/lieu time 40.6% and 31.25% respectively. In addition to this, it is of concern that 21.9% respondents stated that their work relationships with colleagues or supervisors had been jeopardized due to their absence to care for their child and in 6.3% of cases, an opportunity for advancement was reportedly lost due to time taken away from work for this purpose.

### 3. Childcare Emergencies

Aside from sick days, 61.5% of respondents indicated that they have had to make alternative arrangements for childcare when their regular caregiver was suddenly unavailable, with 63.6% reporting at least one occurrence of this within the last 12 months. In these circumstances, 52.4% of parents stayed home with their child and 23.8% were able to call on a friend or relative to provide care, with 41.7% of respondents stating that they had called on a relative or friend in the past 12 months to provide childcare at the last minute.

Similarly, to when addressing needs for childcare on sick days, respondents accessed unpaid leave (37.5%), sick days (50%) or vacation days/lieu time (31.3%) to take care of their child when regular childcare arrangements fell through. Parents also stated that their professional relationships were jeopardized because of their decision to take time away from work in a childcare emergency (12.5%).

#### ***Additional Impacts of Gaps in Childcare***

Aside from the professional impacts mentioned above, families face additional impacts due to gaps in childcare. When licensed childcare spaces are not available in the community, families are forced to make complicated decisions regarding the care of their children. Some parents reported choosing not to return to work, citing challenges in finding childcare that meets their needs as a contributing factor to this decision. Other parents reported using alternative forms of childcare, relying on family members, often grandparents, to provide care to their children. While these grandparents willingly contribute to the care of their grandchildren, childcare professionals in the community identify this as placing a burden of stress on an aging population who has already raised children and is now being called upon for tangible help in their retirement years. Some parents also have called on programs such as the Work Away Program<sup>13</sup> or Au Pair programs to meet both short and long term needs for childcare. Finally, the lack of licensed childcare resources also results in two parents working at different times, trading off time caring for their children and meeting the demands of their careers. The demands of this type of scheduling results in limited time available to spend time as an entire family unit, which can be difficult for parents and children alike.

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<sup>13</sup> <https://www.workaway.info/en/destination/northamerica/ca>



### Desired Childcare Resources

Further to questions about childcare, respondents were asked to rate their choices regarding services they would most like to see offered in their community that either do not exist or are not sufficiently available now, with options including:

- Childcare centre
- Licensed private home day care
- Parent/child drop in program<sup>14</sup>
- Child drop off centre for occasional use
- Preschool
- Trained caregivers for occasional use
- Play group

Of these, the top three choices of respondents were a childcare centre, licensed private home daycare and a child drop-off centre for occasional use. In addition to this, 68.4% of respondents stated that they would accept paid employment outside their home, or go to school, if adequate childcare services were more affordable in their community.

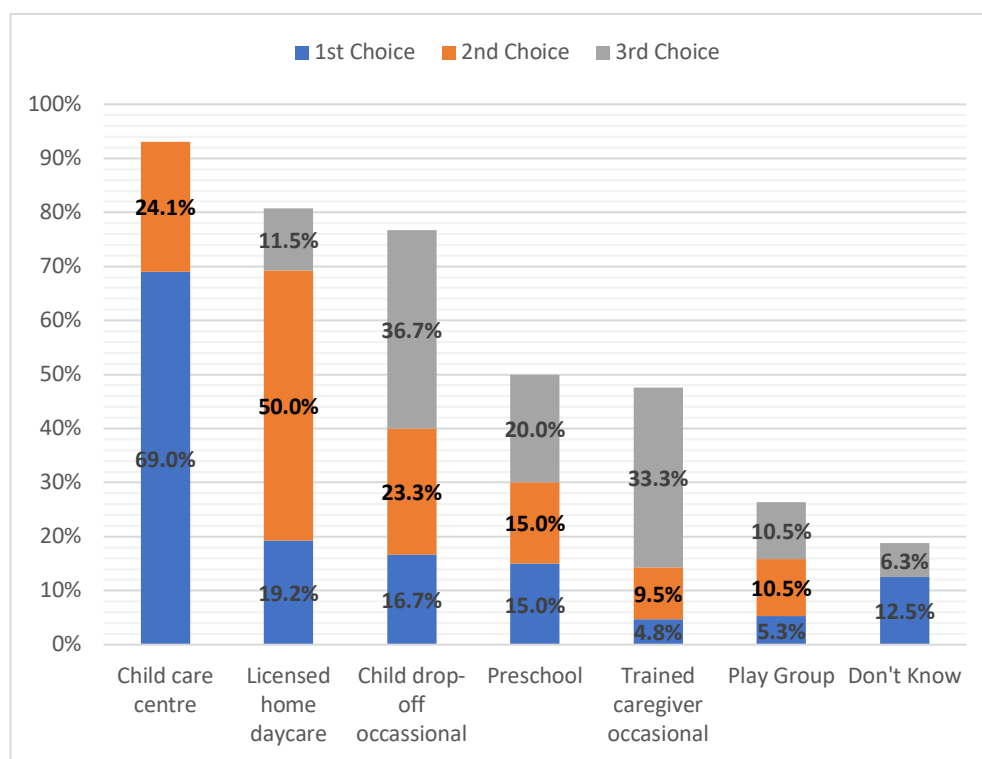


Fig. 13 Preferred Community Childcare Resources

<sup>14</sup> The data also included “Parent/Child Drop In Program” as one of the selected options. However, since this is not technically a childcare option, as parents remain in the same location with the child/ren, this information was excluded from data.

## **Plan, Bylaw, and Policy Review**

The creation of this action plan required a review of Municipal plans, bylaws, and policies that may create barriers to the creation of licensed childcare spaces in our community. It was identified that zoning bylaws may need to be amended to include childcare use on parcels of land that may be desirable for childcare facilities.

It should also be noted that the Bowen Island Municipality has a Collaborative Project Policy. The policy objective states that “Bowen Island Municipality encourages collaborative project opportunities that enhance current infrastructure and services and are consistent with the Official Community Plan and relevant Municipal Master Plans. Project opportunities may be capital and/or operational in nature.”<sup>15</sup>

The Collaborative Project Policy was implemented in 2017 between Bowen Island Municipality and Bowen Children’s Centre regarding the proposed construction of an addition to their existing childcare facility. The resulting expansion now houses the Infant Toddler Program previously discussed in this report. As a result of the Collaborative Project Service Agreement, the Municipality agreed to waive municipal permit fees and prioritize permit application processing in order to support the project. This is an example of the collaborative work that can be accomplished by implementing this existing policy into new childcare planning initiatives.

The Bowen Island Community Child Care Plan was presented to Bowen Island Mayor and Council at a regular council meeting held on February 24, 2020. The included recommendations were unanimously approved and indicate a commitment by Council to continue to review municipal policies and procedures with a family friendly lens. The unanimously approved motion from this meeting states “that Council endorse the Bowen Island Community Child Care Space Creation Action Plan’s short, medium, and long- term goals as targets to be considered in future community planning; and that Council continue to work with community organizations to support the creation of childcare spaces by applying a family friendly lens to municipal policies and procedures.”

## **Recommendations**

Within the study, several themes became apparent. Firstly, it should be noted that, overall, parents on Bowen Island are satisfied with the quality of care that children receive amongst the various caregiving options available to them, stating, in the words of one parent, “The quality of daycare on Bowen is great!” In addition to this, qualitative responses stated that parents appreciate the efforts of their various childcare providers. Bowen Islanders have become adept at navigating systems and meeting their needs in spite of any inadequacies that exist within the formal childcare systems on Bowen Island largely through supporting one another on island in informal ways.

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<sup>15</sup> <https://bowenland.civicweb.net/document/107471>

Despite the overall satisfaction with the quality of childcare available, it can be concluded from both feedback and program waitlists that there simply are not enough childcare spaces, particularly for children under the age of two (see Fig. 14) and that the spaces that exist are difficult to access. While licensed caregivers on the island have worked hard to meet the needs of as many families as possible, waitlists for all licensed programs are significant and, as previously stated, reflect the fact that despite the numbers of children on Bowen Island remaining fairly consistent year after year, increasing numbers of families require childcare support as they dedicate more time to both full and part time work and study. Furthermore, as caregivers in the community seek to support as many families as possible, they have limited access to full time spaces for this age group. While this has resulted in a greater number of families being able to access at least part time childcare services, it has meant that parents who require full time childcare have been forced to make other arrangements, often at great inconvenience and expense to themselves.

<b>Current Waitlists on Bowen Island</b>			
<b>Program</b>	<b>0-2 Years</b>	<b>2-5 years</b>	<b>Grade K - 4</b>
<b>BCC Infant Toddler Wing</b>	26		
<b>BCC Day Care</b>		20	
<b>After School Club</b>			10
<b>Bowen Island Montessori</b>		3	
<b>Kinderhaus</b>		30	

**Fig. 14 Preferred Community Childcare Resources**

In addition to insufficient availability of childcare spaces for infant, toddler, and preschool age children, parents of children in school age categories are struggling to make arrangements for their children both before and after school. With many parents working off the island and an average commute time of 75 minutes each way<sup>16</sup>, childcare for school age children both before and after school is an issue. While this issue has been relieved to some degree by the presence of the After School Club, parents expressed a need for expanded services to provide care before school as well. Further to this, the gathered data indicates that the timing and hours of available childcare in general is in and of itself an issue. When asked about “unusual work schedules”, respondents did not name shift work as an issue relating to childcare. Instead, they pointed to working days between 8:30 am and 5:30 pm (26.32%). With lengthy commutes to full time employment, and with many households having either one or two parents also engaging in secondary employment or study, the hours of available childcare on Bowen Island are problematic and do not serve the needs of these parents. Other parents indicated that they start work before 8:30 am (36.8%), work overtime (21.1%) and sometimes on weekends and/or evenings (10.5%). While families tend to problem solve, there was overwhelming consensus

<sup>16</sup> [www.https://www.bowenlandtransportationsociety.ca/](https://www.bowenlandtransportationsociety.ca/)

that expanded hours would relieve both family and professional stress and would likely be a welcome addition for both school age children and infants and toddlers.

In order to continue Bowen Island's long tradition of thoughtful and impactful service to as many children and families as possible, the following short, medium, and long-range recommendations are presented for consideration.

### ***Short Term (2020-2021)***

#### ***1. Create a before school program.***

The creation of a before school care program is currently limited due to a lack of space available for housing this program. Providing before school programs between 6:30 and 8:30 am would increase the level of support that commuting parents receive.

It is recommended that current childcare providers on the Island collaborate to explore options for providing before school care. This may require partnerships between organizations to utilize available spaces located within walking distance of Bowen Island Community School. The development of a before school program would support between 10 and 20 children between 6:30-8:30am.

#### ***2. Identify funding sources and partnerships for increased spaces available for infants and toddlers at Bowen Children's Centre.***

During the childcare survey, it was identified that care for infants and toddlers was one of the greatest needs on the island. With only twelve designated spaces for children under 36 months and 26 infants currently on the waitlist, there is a dire need for additional spaces to serve this population. Bowen Children's Centre has plans to revamp their program delivery beginning in September 2020 to accommodate additional spaces for 24 month-olds. This will serve to create more Infant Toddler spaces in their current facility. It is recommended that Bowen Children's Centre move forward with this plan.

#### ***3. Increase hours for occasional childcare.***

Parents on Bowen Island have identified drop-in, occasional care as a key component of their childcare plan and identified this as one of the top three desired space creation targets for Bowen Island. While Bowen Island does not have any licensed childcare spaces for occasional or drop in use, the Bowen Island Municipality does provide this service through their recreational programming. Bowen Island Community Recreation provides two sessions per day on Monday through Thursday, with the first session being between 8:45 and 10:15 am and the second session being from 10:30 to 12:00 pm. Until recently only one session was available on Friday mornings from 8:45 to 10:15am due to space constraints, however, during the writing of this report, a pilot project was initiated to increase to two sessions on Friday mornings. This increases the capacity for

occasional care by providing space for a maximum of 16 children, dependent on child to staff ratios based on ages, for an additional 1.5 hours. The intention of this service is to primarily provide child minding for parents accessing Bowen Island Community Recreation fitness programs during that time. If space permits, parents have used this service for occasional use childcare, during which time they can focus on work, studies, or other activities of daily life. In the absence of licensed childcare spaces available for occasional use, it is recommended that the municipality continue to offer short session drop in child minding for 10 sessions per week (2 sessions per day), allowing for a total maximum number of 16 spaces per day.

4. *Increase Collaborations between organizations providing Child Care on Bowen Island*

The Early Childhood Development (ECD) table has representation from various sectors who provide services to children on Bowen Island. Childcare providers are currently managing their own waitlists separately without an overall vision of the needs for the entire community. It is recommended that a subcommittee of the ECD table be created with the task of amalgamating a centralized waitlist for Bowen families. Other tasks of the committee could include identification of the gaps in service, and suggestions of possible solutions. Funding would be required to create the centralized waitlist and would be achieved through grant applications. A further recommendation is that the ECD table report to Council quarterly to ensure Council is aware of the needs of families in the community.

5. *Educate the Bowen Island Community with regards to facility needs*

Creation of childcare spaces on Bowen Island will depend on acquiring more facility space to provide care. It is recommended that landowners, developers, and the Municipality be made aware of the needs in the community in an effort to ensure future buildings or development plans consider creating space for childcare operations. This could be achieved through BIM's Collaborative Project Service policy, development contributions of an amenity that benefits the community, and publication of this report on the Municipal website.

***Medium Term (2021 – 2025)***

1. *Creation of dedicated facility space to house the After School Club and Before School Care.*

Quality programming is important to Bowen Island childcare providers and the families they serve. Currently, the After School Club is housed at Bowen Island Community School in 2 separate classroom spaces that are shared with other programs on a daily basis. This arrangement is not ideal for the After School Club to be able to provide expanded programming due to time constraints on the facility space, physical space

requirements, lack of suitable storage, inability to have continuous programming due to shared nature of spaces, and lack of control of program times as this is governed by the school custodial schedule.

It is recommended that in order to continue to improve and expand childcare capacity on Bowen Island for school age children, a dedicated space for this program be established. This could be achieved in multiple ways and would require partnerships between landowners, Bowen Island Community School and Bowen Children's Centre.

2. *Retain and maintain partnership with Bowen Island Community School regarding the sharing of space for an existing 42 licensed spaces for before/after school care.*

Bowen Island Community School (BICS) in School District 45, has been a long standing supporter of families on the island, both in their formal role as the primary educational resource on the island and through agreements created to allow childcare activities to take place within its space. The school currently provides space for 42 licensed spaces for After School Club, serving a total of 71 school aged children after school. In order to expand this program, it is imperative that, in addition to any additional partnerships that are created, existing agreements between BICS and Bowen Children's Centre be retained.

3. *Build a new Infant/Toddler Wing of the Bowen Children's Centre*

Expansion of the infant toddler program has already been identified as part of Bowen Children's Centre's long term plan. It is recommended that they be supported to continue this process. Adding an adjacent Infant/Toddler Wing at the Bowen Children's Centre (BCC) has potential to double their capacity for this age group. Support from the Municipality could include expediting building permits and waiving fees for developments that include childcare space creation.

4. *Identify and access funding to continue to support on island childcare providers to pursue updates in training and education that would allow them to contribute to increased childcare capacity.*

Bowen Children's Centre has proven itself to be adept at supporting the training and education of staff to work in their licensed facility and should continue exploring avenues for funding for training their staff to support a new infant/toddler wing to the degree licensing requires.

5. *Re-assess childcare challenges on Bowen*

As demographics change and childcare spaces are created it will be important to reassess the needs moving forward. It is recommended that a needs assessment be

conducted in 2022 following the next census data report to determine if needs are being met and identify new gaps in service.

### ***Long Term (2020-2030)***

- 1. Bowen Island Municipal Council consider childcare space creation opportunities during discussions related to use of community lands, development amenities, and future community planning.*

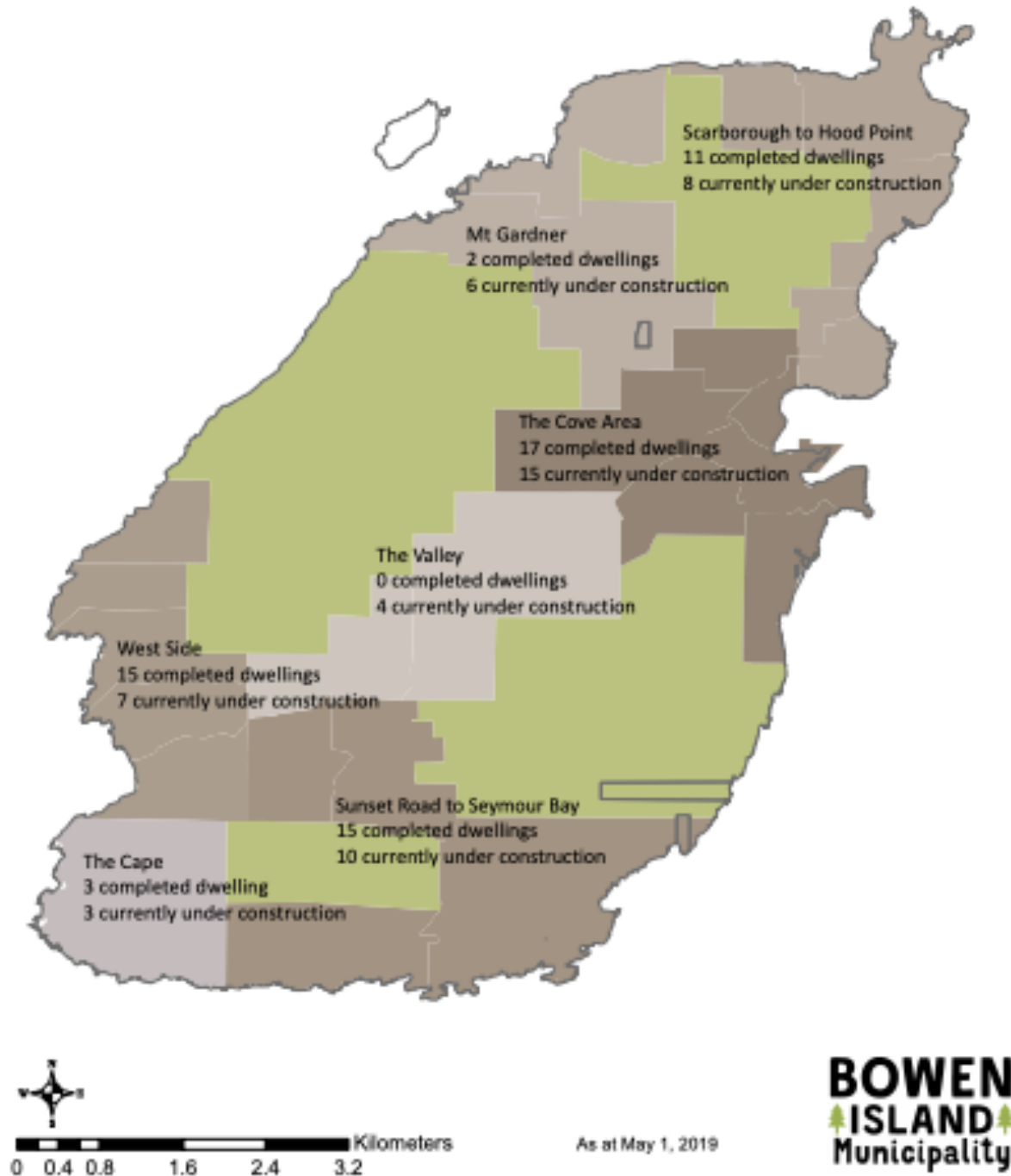
As the community continues to grow and the needs of families on Bowen change and evolve, it would be prudent to continue exploring childcare space creation on a regular basis, considering the impact of planning on childcare spaces and the potential for development of additional spaces.

### **Conclusion**

Bowen Island appears to have a history of identifying needs and responding with a creative and action-oriented spirit as evidenced within the childcare schema on Bowen Island. Since the inception of organized childcare on Bowen Island, the community has worked together through not for profit societies, private organizations, the efforts of individuals, and partnerships with government and municipal bodies to meet the needs of Bowen's families and children. This can be evidenced through the development of an infant and toddler wing at Bowen Children's Centre, the development of the After School Club and the dedication of providing recreational options for children after school and in the summer months. In addition to this, private caregivers and educators have exercised creativity to support as many children as possible without compromising the quality of their care. Bowen Island's tenacious spirit and willingness to support one another creatively through their partnerships will serve them well if called upon to meet the needs of children and families both currently living on the island and those preparing to call it home in the future.

## Appendix A

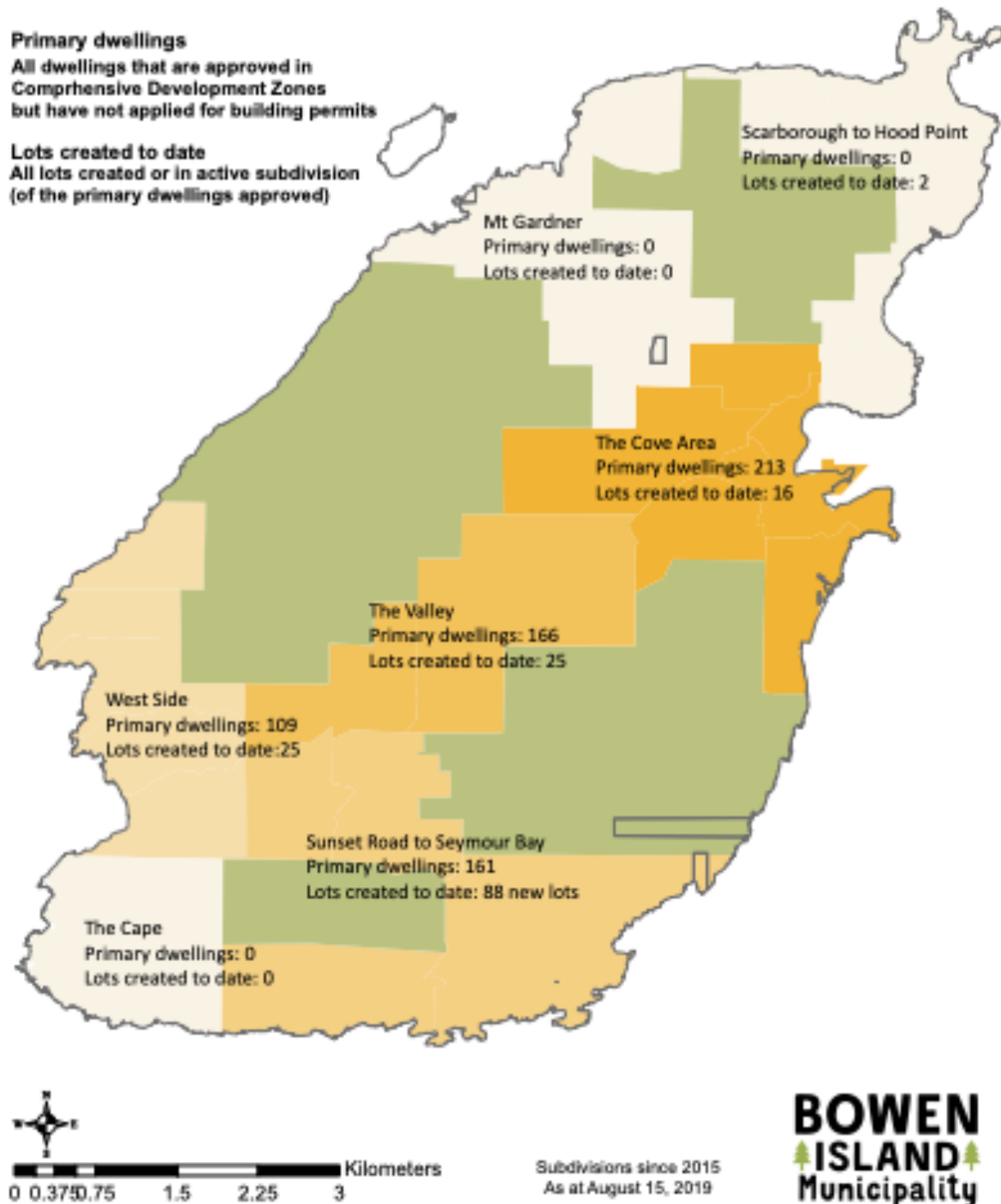
### Bowen Island Net Building Dwelling Permits Since 2015<sup>17</sup>



<sup>17</sup> Bowen Island Municipality



## Appendix B Bowen Island Zoning for Future Growth<sup>18</sup>



<sup>18</sup> Bowen Island Municipality