

POSITIVE FUTURISMS: PORTALS OF POSSIBILITY

EmberFest would not be possible without the generous support of our funders, sponsors, and community members.

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KICKINGHORSECULTURE
Golden and District Arts Council since 1970



About Kicking Horse Culture

Kicking Horse Culture (KHC) serves Golden and Area A, a community of approximately 7,000 people. We respectfully acknowledge that we live and work on the unceded territory of the Ktunaxa and Secwépemc Nations, and that this area is also home to the Métis Nation Columbia River and other Indigenous peoples.

Supported by the Town of Golden and CSRD Area A, KHC plays a leading role in shaping the cultural life of our region. Through partnerships, we deliver diverse programming, arts education, and community arts experiences for the town of Golden, area A and visitors to our beautiful community.

Since 2005, KHC has grown into a cornerstone arts organization, presenting year-round programming including Live Kicks, Summer Kicks, EmberFest, workshops, film, and community events. We also operate the Art Gallery of Golden & Studio Gift Shop, showcasing the work of over 150 regional artists.

KHC is dedicated to engage, enrich and energize the cultural life of Kicking Horse Country.

EmberFest is a grassroots, volunteer-led celebration of art, community and creativity!

This year's festival theme, Positive Futurisms: Portals of Possibility, invited us to imagine hopeful futures shaped by creativity and connection. Throughout the week, workshops, performances, and community art-making celebrated our community, culminating in a spectacular outdoor pageant in Spirit Square featuring puppets, skits, music, and stories created by hundreds of community members. Following the Pageant, 9 bands took to the stage for a music festival that kept the energy high into the morning!

Everyone was invited to step through the portal.



Community Futures Day



As part of the 20th anniversary of EmberFest, Kicking Horse Culture expanded the festival into a week-long celebration of art, imagination, community, and culture. Under the 2026 theme, **Positive Futurisms: Portals of Possibility**, EmberFest invited participants to explore how creativity and collective imagination can help shape the future of the Columbia Valley.

Community Futures Day emerged through a convergence of community conversations, the Town of Golden's Official Community Plan (OCP) process, and a growing desire to create space for deeper civic dreaming.

Rather than centering fear, scarcity, or limitation, the event asked participants to imagine what could become possible if communities embraced imagination as a tool for change.

“When we choose to embrace our imagination and curate a future that we want to see and live in, we reshape the impossible into the possible.”

“We invite you to play with the impossible and turn it into the possible.”

If Golden were a place where future generations truly thrive, what would our community look and feel like?



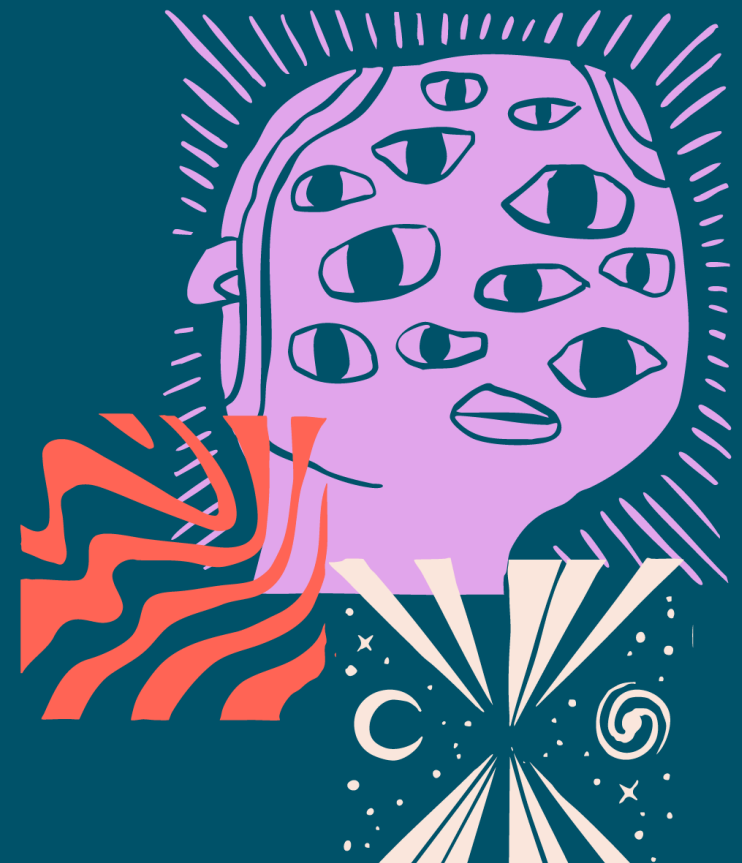
Community members from across sectors gathered in the Golden Civic Centre, including Town Council members, nonprofit leaders, business owners, artists, youth, board members, regional representatives, and residents from throughout Golden and Area A.

The event was intentionally designed not as a traditional consultation, but as a collaborative act of imagination.

Participants were invited to:

- introduce themselves, their passions and purpose within the community
- participate in a guided meditation and collective journey twenty years into the future
- imagine what Golden were a place where future generations thrived; what would our community look and feel like?

Through the imaginative framing of the Civic Centre as a “time machine,” participants were transported to the year 2046, a future where community dreams had materialized into tangible realities.



The session invited people not simply to identify problems, but to collectively practice possibility.

EmberFest Community Futures Day also created space for meaningful overlap between arts, culture, and civic planning. **OCP consultants participated throughout the afternoon,** listening to conversations and reflecting on how values, aspirations, and lived experiences might help shape future planning processes within the community.

Throughout the gathering, participants repeatedly returned to a shared desire: not necessarily for Golden to become something entirely different, but for it to become more deeply connected, more accessible, more joyful, and more rooted in care.

The event concluded with participants contributing reflections, photographs, and future wishes to a community time capsule that will be opened in twenty years, a symbolic gesture that captured the spirit of the day itself: planting imaginative seeds for future generations. The group presentations were recorded, transcribed and captured within this document.



“Does our town feel alive?”



1. Belonging & Community

Participants expressed a strong desire for Golden to remain a place where people know their neighbours, support one another, and feel a sense of belonging. Many reflected on the importance of preserving Golden's small-town connectedness as the community grows

Emergent Themes

Across all discussion groups, several shared themes consistently surfaced.

One participant described the importance of “not losing that sense of place,” while another imagined a future where “meeting strangers feels like meeting old friends.”

There was a clear longing for **spaces and systems that encourage genuine human connection.** Community gathering places, shared celebrations, intergenerational housing, public art, music, walkable neighbourhoods, and opportunities for spontaneous interaction.

Many participants emphasized that arts & culture are not “nice-to-haves,” but essential in supporting a healthy vibrant and interconnected community.

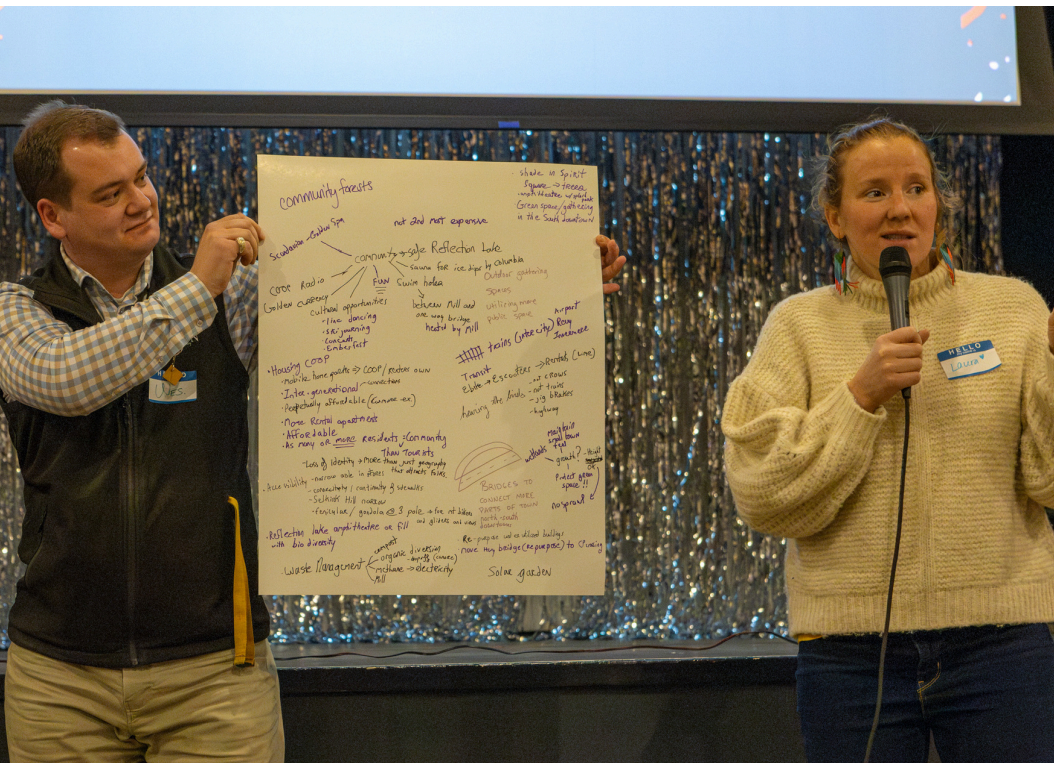


“We imagined Golden was a place where you know your neighbours, help each other out, and feel like you have everything you need”

2. Ecological Stewardship and Living With the Land

Environmental stewardship emerged as one of the strongest collective values across the conversations. Participants envisioned a future Golden with clean air, climate resilience, expanded green spaces, healthy waterways, and deeper integration between human systems and the natural world.

Rather than viewing nature as separate from daily life, participants repeatedly spoke about reconnecting with the land and understanding humans as part of nature rather than apart from it.



Ideas included:

- community forests
- composting systems
- food sovereignty initiatives
- local agriculture
- renewable energy
- swimming holes and river access
- climate-friendly transportation
- increased biodiversity
- fire-smart green spaces

“What if we imagined ourselves as humans as part of nature rather than apart from it?”

Several participants also spoke about the emotional experience of living in the valley: hearing birds instead of traffic, feeling connected to rivers and trails, and protecting the sensory experience of place.

“Everybody just wants to chill out.”

3. Housing, Affordability, and Intergenerational Living

Housing affordability and accessibility surfaced as major concerns throughout the event. Participants spoke openly about rising housing costs and affordability pressures in Golden, and the impacts this has on residents, families, workers, and future generations..

However, the conversation extended beyond affordability alone. **Many participants envisioned housing systems that foster intergenerational connection and long-term belonging.**

Participants imagined:

- neighbourhoods with permanent residents
- housing that supports families and elders together
- rental housing options
- walkable communities
- stronger social supports
- community-oriented design



There was a shared recognition that thriving communities require residents who are able not **only to work in Golden, but to build meaningful lives** here over time.



4. Transportation & Accessibility

Participants consistently imagined a future with safer, more connected, and more accessible transportation systems.

Participants envisioned transportation systems not simply as infrastructure, but as tools for creating connection, reducing isolation, improving accessibility, and strengthening community cohesion.

Many also discussed the importance of linking currently fragmented areas of town through green corridors and pedestrian-friendly public spaces.



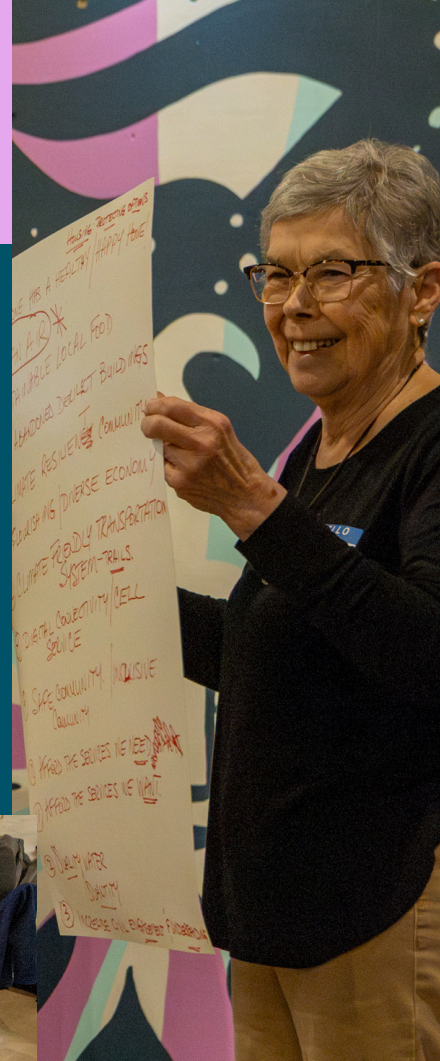
Ideas included:

- expanded pedestrian pathways
- active transportation corridors
- bike infrastructure
- regional bus systems
- passenger rail connections
- e-bike and scooter access
- accessible sidewalks and trails
- reduced dependence on vehicles

5. Art, Culture & Collective Joy

Community celebrations, public art, music, and gathering spaces were repeatedly identified as essential parts of a thriving future.

A recurring theme throughout the discussions was the importance of joy, play, and creativity in community life. Participants spoke about wanting a future where people are able not only to survive, but to gather, celebrate, create, rest, and experience delight together.



Participants imagined:

- public pianos
- dance spaces
- festivals
- art centres
- community saunas
- gathering spaces
- outdoor performance venues
- collaborative creative projects



“We want a community where people can gather, create, play, and belong.”

Group Presentations

“If Golden were a place where future generations truly thrive, what would our community look and feel like?”

Participants engaged in group discussion for 45 minutes. They were invited to fill a blank posterboard answering the question above, which was then presented.

Protocols:

- Invite curiosity over certainty
- Share the space: No one person should dominate the conversation
- Practice “Yes, and!”: let ideas be playful, unfinished, and bold



“We dreamed of food forests, community composting, and using what we already have more wisely.”

The Bear Table

Table Bear explored systems thinking, ecological integration, education, and long-term sustainability.

Participants discussed renewable energy, food sovereignty, outdoor education, community composting, active transportation, and human-centered public spaces.

A key idea that emerged was “donut economics”, **balancing ecological limits with human wellbeing**. Participants imagined a future Golden where environmental stewardship, housing, food security, safety, and community care exist in balance rather than in competition.

The group consistently returned to the idea that future systems should allow people not simply to survive, but to flourish.



Participants discussed:

- community composting initiatives
- local agriculture and food forests
- turning Spirit Square into a food forest
- renewable and community-generated energy
- outdoor and land-based education
- active transportation networks
- human-centred public spaces
- collective creativity and cultural gathering



“What if we considered ourselves as humans as part of nature rather than apart from it?”

The Muskrat Table



Participants envisioned a future with:

- healthy, safe, and affordable homes
- clean air and climate resilience
- sustainable local food systems and food security
- increased green space rooted in fire-smart principles
- affordable and accessible services
- strong family networks and intergenerational connection
- vibrant community celebrations, arts, and events
- increased civic engagement and community participation
- stable neighbourhoods with permanent residents and a strong sense of belonging

Table Muskrat focused on foundational quality-of-life priorities including housing, clean air, food security, climate resilience, accessibility, and community connection.

Participants envisioned a future with healthy homes, sustainable local food systems, increased green space, affordable services, strong family networks, community celebrations, and stable neighbourhoods with permanent residents.

The conversation emphasized the **importance of preserving Golden's sense of place and maintaining strong relationships between neighbours as the community grows**. Participants reflected on the value of knowing and caring for one another, imagining a future where community connection remains at the heart of everyday life.

The group also highlighted the importance of civic engagement, coordinated community planning, and ensuring residents continue to feel connected, supported, and rooted in place through changing times.

“You know your neighbours. If they’re sick, you take the casserole.”

The Eagle Table

Table Eagle explored interconnectedness, communication, belonging, and regional resilience. Participants imagined a future where community members, organizations, and **local initiatives work together “like the roots of trees,” creating stronger systems of collaboration and mutual support.**

The conversation focused on shifting from scarcity thinking toward abundance and recognizing the unique strengths already present within the community. Participants discussed the importance of improving communication, strengthening regional connectivity, and creating opportunities for year-round economic resilience beyond seasonal tourism.

The group repeatedly returned to questions around identity, connection, and what makes people choose to stay in Golden long-term.

Participants envisioned a future with:

- stronger collaboration between organizations and community groups
- improved community communication and information sharing
- increased food security and local resilience
- thriving four-season businesses and economic diversification
- accessible gathering spaces and community hubs
- stronger regional connectivity
- local investment in Golden’s unique identity and culture
- spaces and opportunities that foster belonging and community pride



The Otter Table



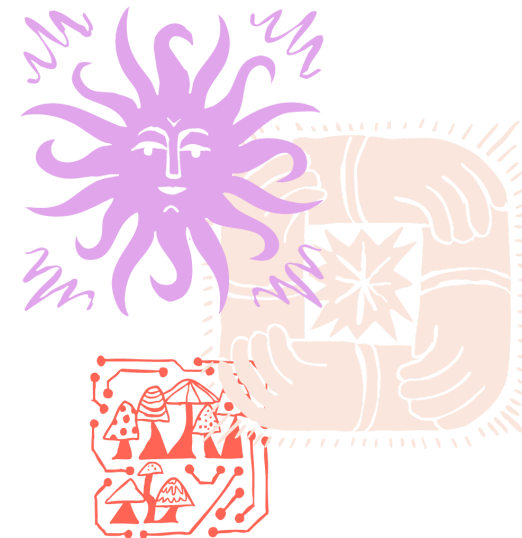
Table Otter focused on public space, accessibility, recreation, and creating a more connected and family-friendly community. Many participants spoke from the perspective of raising children and navigating daily life in Golden with strollers, young families, and multi-generational needs in mind.

The conversation emphasized the **importance of balancing tourism with local livability and ensuring Golden remains a place where residents feel rooted, connected, and able to thrive.** Participants discussed revitalizing underused spaces, increasing river access, and creating opportunities for gathering, recreation, and play throughout the community.

The group repeatedly returned to the importance of joy, play, and **creating spaces where people of all ages feel connected to both the land and one another.**

Participants envisioned a future with:

- connected green corridors and pedestrian-friendly public spaces
- improved accessibility for families, strollers, cyclists, and mobility needs
- expanded public and regional transportation options
- swimming holes, river access, and community recreation spaces
- revitalized gathering places and thriving local businesses
- intergenerational housing and stronger neighbourhood connection
- accessible sidewalks, trails, and active transportation networks
- arts, culture, and events integrated into everyday community life



The Ermine Table

Table Ermine focused on long-term thinking, collective wellbeing, and the importance of making decisions with future generations in mind. Participants reflected on the **“seven generation” principle, emphasizing the need to move beyond short-term urgency and toward more intentional, values-based community planning.**

The conversation explored how Golden can preserve its strong sense of connection, belonging, and quality of life while continuing to evolve. Participants spoke about protecting the things that already make the community special, while addressing the social, environmental, and economic barriers that prevent people from fully thriving.

The group repeatedly returned to the importance of creating systems that support not only economic sustainability, but collective wellbeing, care, and resilience for future generations.

Participants envisioned a future with:

- long-term and intergenerational decision-making
- stronger community connection and social supports
- housing and neighbourhoods designed for belonging
- active transportation and accessible public spaces
- community-owned and socially driven initiatives
- sustainable growth rooted in shared values
- opportunities for collaboration across generations and sectors
- a slower, more connected pace of life



“What would change if every decision we made considered the next seven generations?”

Reflections,

Community Futures Day was not about predicting the future. It was about creating space to imagine together.

Throughout the afternoon, participants spoke about housing, transportation, food systems, climate resilience, public spaces, arts and culture, and community wellbeing. Groups co-created a shared imagined future where our community thrived despite external environmental, social and ecological pressures.

Again and again, participants returned to the importance of slowing down, knowing neighbours, supporting families, caring for the land, and creating spaces where people can gather, celebrate, create, and feel rooted in place.

What emerged was not a single vision for Golden's future, but a collective recognition that imagination itself is a form of civic participation.



The ideas shared throughout this gathering now live beyond the walls of the Civic Centre. They live in conversations, relationships, organizations, plans, artworks, and future decisions still to come.

This gathering of minds was a reminder that futures are not fixed. They are shaped collectively through the stories we tell, the systems we build, and the care we extend toward one another and future generations.

Thank you to all the participants, staff and volunteers who made this event happen.

With Gratitude

Logan Turner
Executive and Artistic Director