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Youth tobacco and vaping poster contest winners announced

KELOWNA – Four teens have won Interior Health’s *Take a Breath: Teen Voices on Tobacco and Vaping* poster contest. Each winner will receive a \$150 gift card of their choice. The winning posters are being professionally printed, displayed in hospitals and health centres, and shared with schools throughout the region.

“We want to thank everyone who took the time to submit an entry for this poster contest to help raise awareness and help people make informed decisions on this important health topic,” says Interior Health medical health officer Dr. Fatemeh Sabet. “Smoking tobacco and vaping have significant, proven negative impacts on our health. These posters by youth for youth provide important information about the health risks, and differences between commercial and traditional tobacco use.”

Youth in grades 8 to 12 living in the Interior Health region were invited to participate in the poster contest. Posters were individually evaluated and scored by youth judges from McCreary Centre Society against a list of criteria. Contestant names were kept anonymous from judges. The winning posters were the ones that received the highest scores. This group of young people also collaborated in designing the contest and the evaluation criteria. They each received an honorarium for their efforts.

Fourteen-year-old Salmo resident Ruby was one of the winning artists. “I feel as though it is a real issue in modern day teen life and can be extremely addictive no matter who you are,” Ruby says. “There are so many disadvantages to smoking and vaping and it can be harmful to everyone's life and body. It is ultimately your decision what you decide to do with your life, but don't recommend vaping/smoking to anyone, even if you believe it'll boost your popularity or confidence.”

Kailyn, 13, from Kitchener, a small community near Creston focused their poster on the importance of ceremonial tobacco for Indigenous traditions and how it differs from every day tobacco use. Kailyn says, “Please don't start because it's hard to stop and bad for your health,” regarding commercial tobacco use and vaping.

Other winners include Charzhindawa (Chacha), 15, from Greenwood and Lukas, 14, also from Salmo.

Twelve-year-old artist Elizabeth from Kelowna received an honourable mention. She says: “It sucks to see people younger and older than me smoke and vape. I don't understand why people do this to themselves.”

The contest opened October 2022. Interior Health received a total of 18 submissions, and two did not meet the contest criteria. As such, there were 16 eligible posters in the contest.

To view all winning posters, learn more about the poster contest, and find tobacco and vaping information for teens, visit interiorhealth.ca.

- 30 -