



Supporting schools, communities and families in

healthy living

April 2009/Edition 2 www.bchealthyliving.ca

NOTES FROM THE CHAIR

Bobbe Wood Assumes Chair of BCHLA

On May 1st Bobbe Wood assumes the Chair of the BC Healthy Living Alliance taking over from Jean Blake who is moving from her role as Executive Director of the Canadian Diabetes Association, Pacific to CEO of the Alzheimer Society of BC.

Bobbe is the President and CEO of the Heart and Stroke Foundation of BC & Yukon and has been an active member of BCHLA since its beginning.

Speaking about the transition, Bobbe said "I am excited about taking on this role at this important time in the Alliance's evolution. We've been privileged to have Suzanne Strutt from BC Recreation and Parks Association and Jean Blake as our first two chairs to guide us to our current success and initiate the next stages of our work."

She believes that the work of BCHLA initiatives to improve healthy eating, physical activity, smoking cessation and community capacity, will help our province and others to

Bobbe Wood, incoming Chair of BCHLA

cultivate healthier populations. "We will be looking at the results from our work and focusing on how some of them may be sustained and expanded. Interestingly, we are already receiving requests from other jurisdictions for materials from some of these initiatives and we are keen to share best practices."

Bobbe also believes BCHLA must pursue healthier public policy. "Addressing the social determinants of health allows us to get at the underlying reasons why some people are healthier than others. Early childhood education is critical in determining the life path of tomorrow's adults, and of course when families don't have access to healthy food or good affordable housing because of lack of income, or transportation, it's almost impossible to live healthily. BCHLA will continue to address these issues and work with other like minded organizations to help create the solutions."

Jean Blake, welcomed Bobbe saying, "With the wealth of skills and experience she brings, I'm certain that Bobbe will ensure BCHLA continues to be a strong agent for positive change."

TOBACCO REDUCTION

Getting the nic out on campus

BCHLA's Tobacco Free Post Secondary Institution Initiative is working with 10 schools across the province to help campuses provide supportive environments that are tobacco free.

University of Northern BC (UNBC) is serious about helping their students to quit. They began by forming a committee to address tobacco use on campus with representation from nursing, sciences, the campus medical clinic, and student union among others. They then developed a needs assessment to figure out who was smoking and how they might be supported to quit. One interesting result from the survey was that while many respondents identified smoking as a "habit", far fewer were willing to identify themselves as "addicted".

Hearing from peers and other schools has been an important part of the process. At a November forum held by BCHLA in Richmond, post secondary schools found out how Kwantlen University is providing support for nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) through their student health plan. Five other schools, including UNBC are now investigating how to support NRT for their students.

Levels of smoking in the north of the province are statistically higher, over 23% of Northern BC residents smoke. The BC average is just over 17%. Between 1993 and 2003, over 2,900 deaths in Northern British Columbia were related to smoking. UNBC has introduced on-campus

support for smoking cessation through Nicotine Intervention Counselling Centre (NICC) training. The campus nurse, Devi Prasad, now provides NICC counselling in addition to other supportive programs such as Stressbuster, which helps students cope with stress. Through the NICC program, students will receive a starter kit, which includes one week of NRT and other tools to help ease the process of quitting.

BCHLA is proud to support UNBC's efforts to reduce tobacco use on campus. With the help of the Tobacco PSI initiative led by the BC Lung Association, UNBC is beginning a strategic planning process to determine next steps for developing long term policies that will restrict smoking on campus.

Members of BCHLA staff visited the campus and were excited with the progress being made. Anne Sommerfeld, a Senior Lab Instructor and member of the Tobacco Free committee put it this way, "without the Tobacco Free program and finding out what other schools are up to, we may not have been so dedicated to moving forward."



BCHLA and UNBC joining forces to stop smoking at UNBC (left to right) Tyler Janzen, Mary Collins, Sam Hartley-Folz, Rose Soneff, Devi Prasad, Anne Sommerfeld, Scott McDonald

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Use a M.A.P. to find your way to physical activity!

The M.A.P. is a toolkit with easy to use directions on how to create an awareness campaign at the community level, using the theme “Active Is What You Make It”.

The recently launched Marketing Action Plan (M.A.P.) was drawn up to help communities get active. Eva Cheung Robinson, Manager for BCHLA Partner Initiatives at BC Recreation and Parks Association, describes it as “the IKEA directions for building a marketing plan – anyone can do it.”

M.A.P. provides templates for posters, ads, radio spots and directions for creating promotional materials and press releases to get the message about local initiatives, programs and/or events to the target audience. These no-cost and lo-cost templates come with tips on how to time and plan marketing campaigns, use popular Internet tools like Facebook and create motivating workshops.

Suzanne Grieve, Bike to Work Week Revelstoke Coordinator says, “The BCRPA Marketing Action Plan (M.A.P.) is proving to be a very useful tool and we are finding our public awareness strategy implementing many of its ideas.”

This Community Based Awareness Initiative will also be providing small grants to communities who want to get started. The first phase of grants went out to 36 municipalities, regional districts, First Nations communities and non-profit organizations who are motivating their communities to be more active. A second phase of grants will be coming up this spring.

The name of the game is to get people moving, especially inactive adults, who may need a little prompting to get off the couch – and to bring their families with them. “Active is... what you make it... whether taking a walk, taking the

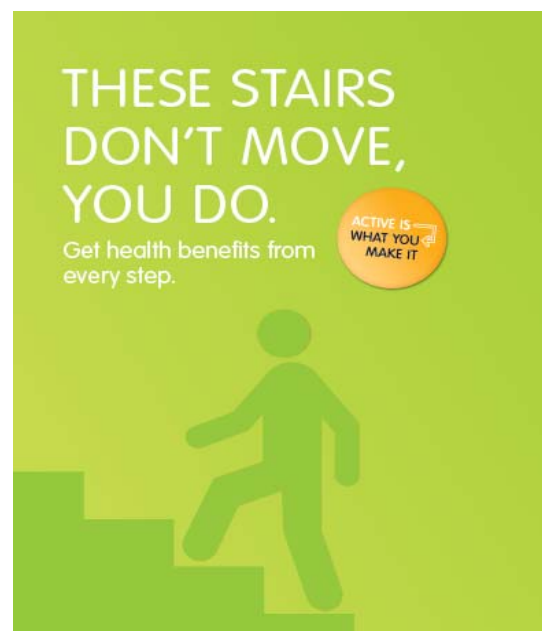
stairs or riding a bike to the store instead of taking the car.” The positive message and bright colours are sure to attract attention.

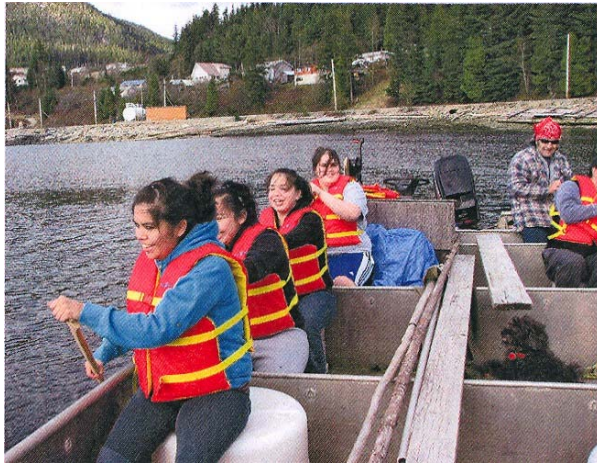


Some examples of M.A.P. options to promote physical activity

This initiative is co-led by BC Recreation and Parks Association and Heart and Stroke Foundation of BC & Yukon and all materials are downloadable from the Physical Activity Strategy website at www.physicalactivitystrategy.ca

Active is ... easy!





Haisla youth doing some hard paddling in a 'punt'

COMMUNITY CAPACITY BUILDING

Kitimaat Village Paddling their way back to health

With BCHLA's financial support the Haisla peoples (People of the Snow) will relearn the art of traveling the ocean waters by their own power.

Kitimaat Village is a First Nations community on the northwest coast of BC, where access to recreation is limited by transportation, weather and geography. Traditionally, canoeing was a way to bring the community together; however, the village's canoe was damaged when the boat house where it was lodged caved in under a heavy snowfall. The community wanted to learn how to build their own canoe from the last carver in their village; but trees in the area no longer grow large enough for the size of travelling canoe that they need for racing, transporting goods and training their kids to paddle together.

After many community meetings, feasts, surveys and a strategic planning process, the Haisla people of Kitimaat Village identified their priority – to purchase a traditional canoe. BCHLA's Community Capacity Strategy, led by the Canadian Cancer Society, BC and Yukon region is supporting them through the Sahnis (Water Grizzly) project. With BCHLA's financial support the Haisla peoples (People of the Snow) will relearn the art of traveling the ocean waters by their own power. Canoeing is a significant part of Haisla tradition and this project will contribute greatly to the physical, social, and cultural health of the Haisla Nation.

Community partners will provide opportunities for community members to use the canoe for racing, cultural teaching, journeys, and cultural tourism, each of which will contribute to healthier and more active lifestyles of community members. The purchase and use of the large canoe will also inspire the carving of smaller canoes again, fostering community spirit and pride.

Building capacity within communities means taking a grassroots approach and allowing communities to find their own solutions. The Sahnis project is a wonderful example of how communities are finding their own path to healthy living, and BCHLA is happy to support their journey.



1950s Haisla nation canoe on the water



Students at Mountain View Elementary get set to eat right

HEALTHY EATING

Getting at the ‘root’ of the problem

Carrots, turnips and rutabagas are being combined into tasty concoctions during the winter, and with spring around the corner, the school salad bars are soon to become fresher, tastier and more diverse.

BCHLA’s Farm to School Salad Bar, led by the Public Health Association of BC is introducing the enhanced tastes and textures of local produce to students in the North and Interior. The root of the issue has been the abundance of root vegetables available in the shorter northern growing season! Carrots, turnips and rutabagas are being combined into tasty concoctions during the winter, and with spring around the corner, the school salad bars are soon to become fresher, tastier and more diverse.

One of the model schools for the program is Mountain View Elementary in William’s Lake, BC where 95% of students are eating their veggies. The key champions for the program are the principal, Rick Miller and local community nutritionist, Tatjana Bates.

Principal, Rick Miller ensures that vulnerable kids aren’t stigmatized, inviting all the kids to “Go and load up!” He is quoted in the Williams Lake Tribune saying “...he has noticed how the healthy eating program is influencing his young charges. “Kids are asking their parents to buy them carrot sticks now when they go to the store.” The funding also helps with a breakfast program for students bussed from outlying areas. Miller says it’s making a difference educationally too, as students are more focused and able to learn throughout the day.

Tatjana Bates is also working hard to keep local farmers in the equation. For instance, local meat for a chilli is used when produce is not available locally and the weather is cold. In an ideal situation all the food would be local and organic, but where that’s not feasible it’s about feeding the kids, and getting more veggies and fruit into their diet.

At Mountain View it seems that rather than the proof being in the pudding, it’s in the salad bar.



A healthy lunch means enquiring minds at Mountain View

BC HEALTHY LIVING ALLIANCE

Addressing Social Issues – the Key to a Healthier BC for All

Research has shown access to income, employment, affordable housing, healthy food, education and early childhood development have a greater influence on our physical and mental health and life expectancy of British Columbians than genetics or any other single factor.

In the wake of prominent studies linking living conditions or “social determinants” with poor health, the BC Healthy Living Alliance brought together key stakeholders across BC in a series of forums to discuss the issues and policy options.



Jean Blake, outgoing Chair of BCHLA speaking at Healthy Futures for BC Families Interior Forum

The event, "Healthy Futures for BC Families: a Policy Discussion" was held in the lower mainland (Vancouver), Vancouver Island (Nanaimo), the Interior (Williams Lake) and North (Prince George). The Northern and Interior



Healthy Futures for BC Families Northern Forum

forums also linked in other communities by videoconference, making them accessible to a broader range of regional representatives.

There is an increasing body of international evidence suggesting that to really address the social determinants of health, a multi-sectoral approach is needed (and specifically a number of sectors outside of health need to be involved). Trying to build on this concept, BCHLA brought together opinion leaders from health, business, Aboriginal and non-profit social service agencies and government to discuss solutions and create a plan for action.

In the past year, major studies from provincial, federal and international agencies have reached the same conclusion. The World Health Organization’s Commission on the Social Determinants of Health cites evidence that links “wealth with health” and urged governments to address social inequities to improve population health.

The BC Healthy Living Alliance will be analyzing the feedback from the discussion participants and using it to revise their policy platform and position paper on the social determinants. After the provincial election BCHLA has committed to bring the recommendations forward to decision-makers and look at all the ways we can build a healthier BC for all.

For more information on all BCHLA’s work check out our website at www.bchealthyliving.ca