



Supporting schools, communities and families in

healthy living

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NOTES FROM THE CHAIR BCHLA to Launch 'Healthy Futures for BC Families'

British Columbians want to live in communities that ensure health and well-being for all.

We are fortunate in British Columbia to have a high standard of living which includes good health – that is, for most of us. The problem is that a gap appears when you look closely at who gets sicker more often and who enjoys better health.

In BC, as in other parts of the world, the pattern of health can be described as a slope. At one end, those with low incomes and education have higher rates of disease, are more likely to use emergency health services and rate their own health as poor. At the other end, those with the highest incomes and education levels have lower rates of disease and tend to rate their own health as good or excellent.

In addition to ethical arguments, there is a solid economic rationale for bridging this gap which has been estimated to account for 20% of our health care costs. The literature is quite clear that traditional health care delivery models and lifestyle education and marketing are inadequate to address these inequities in health.

In the fall of 2008 and spring of 2009, BCHLA brought together 360 participants from 203 organizations in a series of regional forums to discuss potential actions and policy options for addressing these underlying determinants of health. Among the community leaders and local professionals, BCHLA heard that there is great interest in developing a collaborative, multi-sectoral response to improve social conditions and health outcomes of disadvantaged groups.

The BC Healthy Living Alliance will be launching our revised Healthy Futures for BC Families policy paper on September 15th. Together with The Winning Legacy; this will outline the evidence and articulate BCHLA's policy platform for improving the health of all British Columbians.

Bobbe Wood, Chair, BC Healthy Living Alliance & President and CEO, Heart and Stroke Foundation, BC & Yukon



Healthy Futures discussion, Wosk Centre, October 2008



ActNowBC



PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Salmon Arm is getting 'Everybody Active'

For those on low incomes the barriers are more than just program costs - there are related complications that prevent them from even 'getting in the door'.

BCHLA's *Everybody Active* initiative, led by the BC Recreation and Parks Association, looks at the added difficulties that keep low income adults from getting active. Salmon Arm is one community that has examined the barriers and options for overcoming these hurdles.

When *Everybody Active* contacted Salmon Arm to participate as a focus community, they saw their involvement as a 'timely thing to do.' They recognized that offering free drop-in swim times and programs was not enough to reach the at-risk populations that *Everybody Active* targets.



Salmon Arm's *Woman Alive* program in action

Donna Flatman, a recreation programmer for Salmon Arm, is a proponent of a more targeted approach to provide access for low income adults. According to Flatman, 'it was eye opening how difficult the population is to engage. Recreation departments think that if they offer programs free that this will solve all the problems - this is not true.'

Childcare, transportation and fees are only part of the issue - Salmon Arm began by addressing these but found

it wasn't enough. Flatman says, 'barriers are more than just financial - low income situations have more barriers, complications that really effect them getting in the door.'

After some initial trial and error, Donna Lee, *Everybody Active* Coordinator helped trouble-shoot by finding a model program that is now in place and making a difference. The 'Woman Alive' program provides activity in the pool and the weight room, nutritious snacks, and a social and mentoring component that has been the key to keeping participants on track.

"Trust is huge... [The participants] believe in the program... We did things we never would in regular recreation programs, including extensive orientations... We got into rock bottom basics, no assumptions were made."

Donna is now working on an access policy for Salmon Arm that will consist of two components - general access so needy families can use the recreation centres at free or low cost, but also a second component to offer programming that supports low income adults to come to the facility. This includes the social and mentoring components that are so necessary for success.

HEALTHY EATING

Local governments and First Nations *Stay Active, Eat Healthy*

Through communication and community input - the shift to healthier foods has been positive for Simpcw First Nation.

"No one likes to be told what to do," says Angela Semrick, the Health Manager for Simpcw First Nation in ChuChua, which has 300 members. That's why her community took an incremental approach in the shift to a healthier food procurement policy. By hiring a local coordinator, focusing on communication and community input and cooking both contemporary and traditional foods healthily - the change has been a positive one.

Angela started the transition process by applying for a BC Recreation and Parks Association Healthy Food and Beverage Sales Initiative Grant, part of BCHLA's Healthy Eating Strategy. They used some of the money to hire a coordinator from the community, which she says was effective because "it assured the community that the project was grassroots."



Simpcw kids learn more about healthy food

The first thing they did was to launch a community consultation process. Neil, the coordinator, distributed water to people at community events to engage people in conversations about the initiative.

Neil took the time to meet with elders and many other community members one-on-one. He also arranged a free community lunch for all community members in which the menu consisted entirely of healthy food. At that lunch, a dietitian gave a round table talk on nutrition and diabetes, which was "really well received."

The first official step for the Simpcw was the summer awareness campaign. The next step was changing the food they sell, and the food they provide at all meetings and events. Now, most of food and beverages for sale in The Centre are in the 'choose most' and 'choose sometimes' categories, according to information provided by BCHLA's brandnamefoodlist.ca. They keep the healthy choices competitively priced or less expensive than 'choose least' options.

TOBACCO CESSATION

Smoke Free and living is easy!

Clear days, with no clouds in sight – that's the report at three Metro Vancouver Housing Corporation sites that are becoming smoke free.

Out of 50 sites across the Lower Mainland, Metro Housing has designated three buildings as smoke free. The process is gradual, says Ulryke Weissgerber, Tenant Programs and Services Supervisor. All new tenants must sign a non-smoking amendment to the tenancy agreement; this amendment includes balconies, courtyards and other spaces adjacent to the buildings. Existing tenants who smoke are grandfathered in, so none of the designated sites displace tenants.

The Housing Corporation began their journey towards smoke free housing due to a Human Right's complaint, but the demand for smoke free housing is on the rise. Community consultations have been positive, with the most vocal group not resistant smokers, but non-smokers wanting a faster pace to the change. As rental units turn over, the Housing Corporation has been introducing non-smoking tenants to the building. Over two years, the first site to make the transition is almost 100% smoke free with only three of 32 units still smoking.

Neighbours have been working together to find compromises and the Housing Corporation has tried to ensure good communication when they need a bit of help to find their way.

BCHLA's Smoke Free Housing initiative, led by the Heart and Stroke Foundation of BC and Yukon, has been studying the successes at the Metro Vancouver Housing Corporations and learning from their challenges as well. Ms. Weissgerber is a valued member of our advisory committee. To those housing providers considering making a move to smoke free status she has "one word of advice – don't dismiss it right away." Housing providers can decide to move towards a smoke free building, it just takes time, patience and the will to make it happen.



Karen youth representatives at Langley International Festival

COMMUNITY CAPACITY BUILDING

The power of sport - connecting Karen youth to community

Karen youth in Langley are taking the community by storm with their athletic prowess and involvement in community events.

The Canadian Cancer Society, BC and Yukon Division, lead agency for the BCHLA Capacity Building Strategy, has provided a grant which is working to promote health on multiple fronts – it is creating opportunities for Karen Youth to increase their physical activity and to be involved in their new community of Langley.

Karen refugees (from South Asia, near Burma) have been increasing in numbers in the Fraser Health Region over the past two years. As newcomers to Canada with no access to English or western culture, the Karen people have been linguistically and socially isolated in their new home.

This has begun to change with the CARL project (Community Activities and Recreation Liaison), which is supporting Karen youth to take part in new sports such as ice hockey, and in turn, introduce Canadian youth to some new sports like Cane Ball. The project's success can be seen on the faces of the youth who had a chance to showcase their sport in the Langley International Festival this summer, and to proudly wave the flags of both Canada and the Karen nation.

As the Community Development Leader, Lindseigh Lochhead, says "if I can sum it [the project's success] up in one word, it would be 'belonging'." Kids who last year did not know how to access even the local drop-in at the recreation centre swimming pool are now using the facilities consistently. Kids who a year ago had never stood on an ice rink, are now skating circles around the competition.



Grant Main, Deputy Min. and Hon. Min. Ida Chong, Healthy Living and Sport meet with BCHLA Chair Bobbe Wood and Past Chair, Suzanne Strutt at the Legislative Building Aug. 17, 2009

BCHLA, the Best of Health on Twitter

As selected by HMy Family DoctorH! With nearly 4,000 followers, this US-based national health magazine is one of the most popular sources of health info on Twitter. In their July Twitter roundup Hblog postH, they included @BCHealthyLiving as one of their favorite sources to retweet.

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