

Working Conditions

Access to Services

Notes
Part 1 of 3

HEALTHY COMMUNITIES YEARBOOK 1993-1994

Healthy Beginnings

Sense of Control

Physical Safety & Security

Employment

Education

Personal Connections

Wealth

Income

Environment

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HEALTHY COMMUNITIES YEARBOOK 1993/94

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INTRODUCTION

WHAT MAKES US HEALTHY: CREATING A LEVEL PLAYING FIELD

What does Healthy Communities have to do with social justice?

Speaking at the Healthy Cities Australia national conference in 1992, community health researcher Frances Baum described the Healthy Communities process as a "means of...moving health promotion away from its focus on individuals" toward a concern about "the present and future health of humans and their environment..."

"Above all else," says Baum, "Healthy Communities is about directing social change to achieve more health and a more equitable distribution of the resources that create health."

"Healthy Communities is about directing social change to achieve more health and a more equitable distribution of the resources that create health."

Frances Baum
Community Health Researcher

B.C. Healthy Communities advisor Deborah Leach agrees.

"We know that health is not equally distributed in our society," she explains. "Those with better incomes have better health. People who have a sense of control in their lives are healthier than those who do not. And those with safe and secure housing are healthier than those without it. People are healthier when they have social support networks and opportunities to learn and develop their potential. Healthy Communities initiatives are helping to tip the scales of social justice - creating jobs, learning opportunities, and housing initiatives and getting people together to work on the issues that are keeping them from being healthy."

This idea of linking social equity with human health contrasts with the popular idea that health comes primarily from taking individual responsibility for lifestyle choices. That idea leads in the direction of more health education and more or less ignores the effect of social and economic structures on the health of groups of people such as women, children and young people, low-income families, seniors, and Aboriginal communities.

In contrast to health education, which seeks to prevent specific diseases in individuals, Healthy Communities encourages people to work together to influence the kind of social and economic changes that will help everyone to be healthier. Healthy Communities uses the social democratic processes of participation and consensus building to develop policies that will lead to a more equitable distribution of the resources that create health.

WHAT ARE THE DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH?

Many aspects of our lives influence our health. These factors or "determinants" include the social, economic and physical environment, lifestyle, human biology and health services. The social, economic and environmental factors include the strength of the economy, a fair distribution of income, a good education, meaningful work, control over decisions that affect our lives, supportive family and friends, a healthy childhood and a clean and safe

Baum, Frances Elaine. "Healthy Cities and change: social movement or bureaucratic tool?" *Health Promotion International*, Vol. 8, No. 1



"...despite several decades of universal access to health care in B.C., there are still terrible inequities between the health of different communities and groups."

Dr. John Millar,
B.C.'s Provincial Health Officer

¹ Millar, John. Speaking Notes. Ministry of Health and Ministry Responsible for Seniors. 1993

² Marmot, Michael and Smith, George. "Why are the Japanese living longer?", British Medical Journal, vol. 299, p. 1547-1551, December 23-30, 1989. Cited in *Nurturing Health: A framework on the determinants of health*, Ontario Premier's Council on Health Strategy, 1991, p. 15

³ Wilkinson, Richard, ed. *Class and Health* (London: Tavistock, 1986). Cited in *Nurturing Health: A framework on the determinants of health*, Ontario Premier's Council on Health Strategy, 1991, p. 6

physical environment. According to research now going on in a number of centres, socioeconomic factors have a greater impact on people's health than increased access to medical services.

In a discussion paper summarizing current research on the determinants of health, B.C.'s Provincial Health Officer, John Millar, points out that the poor in B.C. have double the rate of infant mortality as the rich. Low-income men also have a life expectancy six years less than that of high-income men and Aboriginal groups, and people in northern communities in B.C. have much poorer health than people in some metropolitan areas.

Looking at these and other examples of inequalities in health, Millar concludes that "...despite several decades of universal access to health care in B.C., there are still terrible inequities between the health of different communities and groups."

Research from around the world shows similar connections between health and socioeconomic factors. A study of life expectancy in Japan, for example, analyzed the reasons for the dramatic change in that country's health status.⁴ In 1960, life expectancy in Japan was behind all other industrialized countries, but by 1985 Japan led the world in life expectancy for men even though it spends less per capita on medical care than Canada or the USA. Today, Japan is so far ahead in life expectancy that for the UK to catch up it would have to eliminate all deaths from heart disease and almost all deaths from cancer.

After analyzing all the possible factors that might account for this remarkable improvement in health status, the authors of the study concluded that the main factors are related to Japan's social and economic environment. During the time period in question, Japan's economy has prospered, with increased per capita incomes, low unemployment, low inflation, and a high economic growth rate. But perhaps most important, this prosperity has not produced greater disparities in income between rich and poor. In fact, Japan has the most equitable distribution of family income of all the industrialized countries.

As Dr. Millar comments in his paper on health determinants, "The distribution of income (perhaps as a general reflection of social justice) has been shown to be as important, or more important, than the per capita income as a factor affecting the life expectancy of the population."

Cultural factors may be important as well. In general, Japanese culture provides strong social supports both at home and in the workplace. Workers feel secure in their jobs and their place in the society. They feel well looked after in their employment, and they in turn are loyal to their company.

Another famous study in Britain⁵ found a strong correlation between job classification and mortality – the lower the job classification, the higher the mortality rate, regardless of the cause of death. This study also found a close relationship between low job classification and smoking – an indication that lifestyle choices themselves are often a function of a person's socioeconomic status.

Studies from Canada, Britain, and Scandinavia have found evidence of strong links between health and other socioeconomic factors such as a worker's place in the job hierarchy, the latitude a worker has to make decisions, unemployment and job security, and poverty in early childhood.



The number and quality of a person's social relationships is also an important factor in health. One California study, for instance, found that a lack of social contacts doubled the risk of death for men between the ages of 60 and 69. For women, lack of social contacts tripled the risk of death.

WHY ARE THE DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH SO IMPORTANT?

Overall, a growing body of national and international evidence points to the fact that health is not the same as health care. Health is much more a function of social and economic policy and a more equitable distribution of resources than it is a function of services and professional care. This fact has profound implications for the way a society uses its limited resources to meet the challenge of improving health and finding alternatives to increased spending on health care costs.

In the opinion of many health economists, societies that fail to shift their focus from providing care to improving social justice run a serious risk of spending more and more money without significantly improving population health. Only by working to improve the determinants of health can we substantially improve the health of the population and reduce our dependence on medical services. If we can "create more health" by improving social and economic conditions in our communities, then social change becomes a real alternative to continued massive and unaffordable increases in medical costs.

WHAT CAN HEALTHY COMMUNITIES DO TO INFLUENCE DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH?

Control over the socioeconomic factors that contribute to health lies in the hands of people in communities, not in the hands of professional care givers or health practitioners. This simple fact explains the enormous contribution that Healthy Communities can make to improving health in British Columbia.

"In B.C. communities we have seen a kind of instinctive wisdom about what improves health," says Healthy Communities advisor Effie Henry. "When communities have the freedom (as they do with Healthy Communities) to identify and act on what will improve collective health, they have usually worked on such issues as improving the future for youth, eliminating racism, and strengthening social supports. They do not choose to provide more medical care or traditional public health services. Community members know that decreasing inequities in health status means decreasing inequities in general."

Healthy Communities operates on fundamental social democratic principles of broad participation, shared decision making, and a cooperative, consensual approach to problem solving. Using these principles to guide them, people who are involved in Healthy Communities are learning to see individual health in the larger context of the way a group of people use shared resources to improve their lives.

- "When communities have the freedom (as they do with Healthy Communities) to identify and act on what will improve collective health, they work on such issues as improving the future for youth, eliminating racism, and strengthening social supports."

Effie Henry
Healthy Communities advisor



- where do these
resources come
from?

- Neighbourhoods, and small communities are obvious places for this kind of collective problem solving to happen. People in communities can not only identify the social and economic issues that are important for their health; they can work together through democratic processes to find appropriate solutions and take suitable action.

Given the right resources, communities can address many different kinds of issues that have an impact on health. Communities can take actions to

- create more income and/or wealth,
- redistribute more wealth to lower income groups,
- increase employment and learning opportunities for youth and adults,
- improve safety and security for women, children, youth, seniors and people with disabilities,
- provide healthier beginnings for children,
- increase the number and quality of healthy personal connections,
- create a better environment for mental and physical health,
- make access to government services more equitable and respectful of people's rights, and
- enable people to have a greater sense of control over decisions that affect their incomes and working conditions.

In planning and taking action on these issues, people acquire skills and resources that strengthen their capacities as individuals and as communities. They learn the value of social support and respect for others. They learn to trust their experience and build on what they already know about health and the environment. They become better able to participate in problem solving with others.

In her analysis of Healthy Communities in Australia, Frances Baum points out that none of this is radically new. It is all part of our social democratic heritage. But it has taken new information on the relationship between health and the socioeconomic environment to make us realize that democracy and social justice are not just philosophical ideas. They are practical approaches to saving lives and reducing health care costs. They are, in a fundamental sense, a matter of life or death.



B.C. HEALTHY COMMUNITIES NETWORK

"Opportunities to learn, to meet, to work together."

That's how one Healthy Communities volunteer views the importance of the B.C. Healthy Communities Network.

Another volunteer describes the Network as "an informal organization of community groups working together to further the Healthy Communities process."

"The Network validates what we are doing locally," says one volunteer from another community. It provides an opportunity to share information with other groups in different parts of the province and an opportunity to influence public policy on health issues."

The Healthy Communities Network operates under the umbrella of the B.C. Public Health Association (BCPHA), which has been a strong supporter of the Healthy Communities process. Financial support from the Ministry of Health and Ministry Responsible for Seniors, Population Health Resource Branch, provides the Network with office space in Vancouver, a coordinator, and other resources to help promote communication and mutual support among communities involved in the process.

The Network is an association of groups involved in Healthy Communities. It has a steering committee made up of 22 representatives from around the province. The job of the steering committee is to develop programs in the areas of funding, communication, and education and to make the Network an effective and sustainable tool for supporting the Healthy Communities process.

The four goals of the Steering Committee are:

- to strengthen Healthy Communities in B.C.,
- to foster development of healthy public policy,
- to increase the involvement of citizens in the Healthy Communities process, and
- to build an exclusive, effective and sustainable organization.

One of the Network's most important resources is its quarterly newsletter. Called The Network, the newsletter contains grass-roots stories and reports from communities around the province, plus news of workshops and other resources of potential interest to Healthy Communities groups.

One of the Network's main functions is to act as an information clearinghouse. If a community group needs information about funding or wants to connect with other communities that have similar issues and concerns, the Network coordinator can usually supply the information that is required or provide a name and phone number of someone who can help.

"Opportunities to learn, to meet, to work together."

under
BC PHA



- "We live in a moderately remote community, and that means we are limited in obtaining information and support for our local initiatives," says a Network representative from northern Vancouver Island. "The Network helps bridge that gap. It is useful to speak with people and get ideas and learn about what has worked and what hasn't in their communities."

- you can get all the people from the community involved that you want - if there's no money, nothing is going to happen (on the scale of structural change)

The Network also helps organize networking events and skill-building workshops in different areas of the province. The workshops, or "learning shops" as they are sometimes called, focus on topics such as leadership skills, consensus building, healthy public policy, and how to get more people involved in community health issues.

In addition to its role in communication, education, and information sharing, perhaps the Network's most important function is its role in raising the profile of Healthy Communities and validating the process.

"For my community," says a Healthy Communities coordinator, "the most important feature of the Network is the opportunity to see that the process is recognized in so many other B.C. communities. Knowing that the process can give rise to so much ability and enthusiasm gives the volunteers in our community reinforcement and inspires them to continue their own efforts."



HEALTHY COMMUNITIES REGIONAL NETWORKS

A regional network is an informal association of neighbouring Healthy Communities groups that come together periodically on a regional basis to share information and ideas.

Regional networks have evolved in response to a need for closer communication among groups in different areas of the province. Although a regional network has no formal structure, it may have a part-time coordinator who is responsible for keeping lines of communication open and facilitating interaction among communities in the region. Coordinators are funded by the Ministry of Health, Population Health Resource Branch. The Ministry also provides networks with a small amount of funding for transportation and other expenses involved in networking activities such as workshops and regional meetings.

Some regional networks are also involved in the distribution of grants from the Healthy Communities Initiative Fund. Networks have selection committees made up of four or five volunteer representatives from communities that have received Healthy Communities funding in the past. The selection committee reviews applications from communities in the region and makes the allocations based on the provincial guidelines for funding and the regional priorities. With the help of the regional coordinator, the selection committee also administers the grants awarded within the region.

In 1993/94 there were four regional networks:

- Northwest Connections
- Northeast Connections
- Thompson Okanagan Kootenay (TOKO) Regional Network
- Northern Interior/Cariboo Regional Network

NORTHEAST CONNECTIONS

In the northeast area of the province, communities have been getting together on a regional basis since 1991. The motive for forming Northeast Connections, as the network is called, was a need to create links and to support each other.

"The communities in this area of the province are all similar in lots of ways," says the regional coordinator Michelle Novakowski, and the issues we have faced are similar. There is always strength in the sharing of ideas," she adds, "finding out what has worked and what hasn't."

There are nine communities in the northeast region, but only six usually receive funding through the Healthy Communities Initiative Fund. The participation of the other non-funded communities helps to broaden the

"There is always strength in the sharing of ideas."

*Michelle Novakowski
Regional Coordinator*



Major issues in the region as a whole include youth issues, alcohol and drugs, violence, and women's issues. Determinants of health such as housing and employment opportunities are also a focus for the network.

- perspective on health issues in the region and increase awareness of the Healthy Communities process.

• In the past four years, Northeast Connections has had a number of network meetings and skill-building sessions on topics such as volunteer recruitment and training, consensus-building strategies, and methods of evaluating community health. The whole network meets at least once a year, and the selection committee also meets on its own to decide on grant allocations.

• "Being part of the funding process has made us pay more attention to the philosophy behind Healthy Communities," says Novakowski. "When it's your money, you have to have a clearer idea of what you are doing and why."

• NORTHWEST CONNECTIONS

• Northwest Connections was formed in 1991 in response to needs identified at a regional Healthy Communities conference. The conference was called to look at obstacles to implementing the Healthy Communities process in the region.

• "People had been exposed to the Healthy Communities concept at a workshop in 1989," says regional coordinator, Karen Chrysler, "but when they went home and tried to put the ideas into practice, they encountered barriers in their home communities."

• The conference identified a number of barriers:

- traditional mind set about health issues
- turf protection
- distance between communities
- transience of the population
- limited resources
- sense of inadequacy in relation to capacities of larger communities.

• "Developing the regional network was a key strategy for dealing with these barriers," says Chrysler. "Part of our strength has been the fact that the network developed in response to a need that was identified at the grass-roots level."

• Many of the communities in the region are dealing with similar issues. Major issues in the region as a whole include youth issues, alcohol and drugs, violence, and women's issues. Determinants of health such as housing and employment opportunities are also a focus for the work.

• "We want to bring these issues to the forefront and show their connection to Healthy Communities," says Chrysler.

• The northeast region has a selection committee for allocating local Healthy Communities Initiative Funds. The committee has developed a consensual decision making process for this new responsibility and a philosophy for its role in monitoring and administering grants.



"We look at monitoring as a supportive role rather than a policing role," Chrysler explains. "It's an attitude. We try to help the community be successful in carrying out the aims of its project."

THOMPSON OKANAGAN KOOTENAY REGIONAL NETWORK

The Thompson Okanagan Kootenay region (TOKO) is the largest region in the province, covering five regional health boards. Like the other regional networks, TOKO functions as a resource for Healthy Communities groups in the area.

"One of the main functions of the network is to promote the Healthy Communities program in this region," says the network's coordinator, Darrell Mathews. "We try to make communities and community leaders aware of what the program is about and what resources are available to them."

The network also administers Healthy Communities Initiative Fund monies allocated to the region. A five-person selection committee reviews grant applications and selects suitable projects that meet the criteria for funding. The committee meets once a year in person and every two months by conference call.

In addition to its role in allocating funds to new Healthy Communities projects, the network tries to enhance the effectiveness of programs that are already in existence.

"We want to help programs succeed if we can," Mathews explains. "Through the network seminars and other kinds of information exchange, we can help projects be ongoing when their grant is finished."

NORTHERN CENTRAL/CARIBOO REGIONAL NETWORK

The first meeting of the North Central regional network took place in Prince George in 1993. The purpose was to bring Healthy Communities groups in the region together to share their experiences and successes and to discuss ways of dealing with common issues and challenges.

"Although the communities all had different priorities," the regional coordinator Penny Stewart explains, "a common challenge to all was mobilizing citizens - how to involve them all in the process and increase awareness."

The people who attended the meeting agreed on a number of ways the network could benefit local Healthy Communities:

- promote contact among communities in the region
- identify issues that affect the region
- create networking opportunities between native and non-native communities

"Our network meetings are just beginning, but we believe that through sharing, partnering, inclusion, and skill development, we will be not only a healthy community but also a healthy region."

*Penny Stewart
Regional Coordinator*



- control the allocation of Healthy Communities funding for the region
- increase First Nations participation at the local level
- increase opportunities for training
- increase opportunities for sharing resources and skills within the region

The network met again six months later to discuss the challenge of "Mobilizing the Community." At that time the network also accepted responsibility for managing Healthy Communities funds for the region. Future network meetings will continue to celebrate and share experiences and develop skills, says Stewart.

"Our network meetings are just beginning, but we believe that through sharing, partnering, inclusion, and skill development, we will be not only a healthy community but also a healthy region."



HEALTHY ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES: STRENGTHENING THE CIRCLE

Among the funded Healthy Communities projects this year are 15 Aboriginal communities. Most of these communities are small, with only a few hundred people. Many are located in remote areas without benefit of easy access to health and other government services.

Because these communities are located away from urban centres, they are often characterized by low incomes and limited educational opportunities. Some people find jobs in local resource industries, usually forestry and fishing, or in band-owned businesses and industries. These communities often have the same concerns as other rural communities – lack of opportunities for youth, drug and alcohol abuse, and domestic violence.

The approach to health issues in these communities shows a strong awareness of the importance of the social support networks and the power of the personal and family connections.

"Issues have to be dealt with differently in this environment," says Marilyn Ota, a coordinator for Aboriginal projects on the mainland. "People live close to one another, and everyone knows what everyone else is doing. You can't put issues into compartments the way service agencies tend to do."

Ota says the only effective approach to issues such as family violence and drug and alcohol abuse is to look at what lies underneath the behaviour.

"We use the traditional medicine wheel to understand how the spiritual and emotional and physical issues are all connected," she explains. "Because our culture is such an important aspect of our lives, we always try to bring that into the way we deal with issues."

For example, several bands have taken the approach of dealing with youth issues by bringing youth and elders closer together and giving young people an opportunity to learn more about their history and culture. This often involves teaching them about traditional languages and dialects, songs and dances, arts and crafts, hunting, fishing, and other methods of gathering and preparing food. Through these activities, the young people form healthy personal connections with the adult members of their community and develop a greater respect for their own culture.

By bringing the community as a whole into the process of dealing with health and safety concerns, Aboriginal groups are using their traditional approach of integration to create a healthier social environment and take control over their own issues.

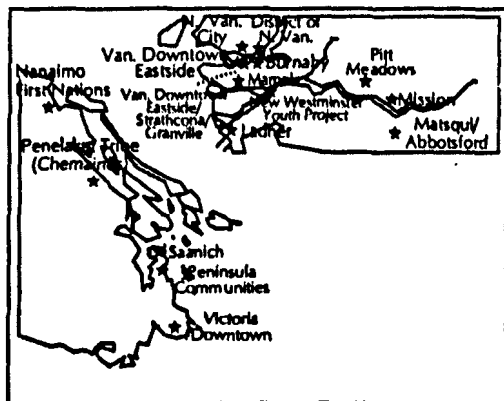
- *By bringing the community as a*
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- *environment and take control over*
- *their own issues.*





HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

SOUTHERN VANCOUVER ISLAND & LOWER MAINLAND



Greater Vancouver/Lower Mainland/Fraser Valley
 Agassiz/Harrison Hot Springs
 Burnaby
 Chehalis Band (Agassiz)
 Hope
 Ladner
 Marpole
 Matsqui/Abbotsford
 Mission
 New Westminster Youth Project
 North Vancouver City
 District of North Vancouver
 Pitt Meadows
 Vancouver Downtown Eastside
 Vancouver Downtown Eastside/Strathcona/Granville

Northeast
 Chetwynd
 Dawson Creek
 Fort St. John
 Pouce Coupe

Northwest
 Smithers

Northern Interior/Cariboo
 Heiltsuk Band (Waglisla)
 Lower Post (Laird River Band)
 McLeod Lake Band
 Quesnel
 Williams Lake

Thompson/Okanagan/Kootenay
 Chase
 Gold Country
 Kimberley
 Merritt/Nicola Valley
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 Oweekeno Nation (Port Hardy)
 Parksville
 Penelakut Tribe (Chemainus)
 Peninsula Communities
 Saanich
 Sunshine Coast
 Tla'amin (Skammon) Band
 Victoria Downtown

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 Boundary Source: Central Statistics Branch, Ministry of Government Services



HEALTHY COMMUNITIES INITIATIVES IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

GREATER VANCOUVER

NORTH EAST

NORTH WEST

NORTHERN INTERIOR/CARIBOO

THOMPSON/OKANAGAN/KOOTENAY

VANCOUVER ISLAND/COAST

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GREATER VANCOUVER/ LOWER MAINLAND/FRASER VALLEY

AGASSIZ/ HARRISON HOT SPRINGS

Beginnings

Located on the Fraser River 60 minutes from Vancouver, the District of Kent includes two neighbouring communities, Harrison Hot Springs and Agassiz. With a population of approximately 5,000, the area contains a major tourist attraction (a hot springs, hotel, and conference centre) and several well-established farms.

These communities started the previous year of their Healthy Communities initiative with a survey and a forum to get people talking together about the issues that concern them as a community. The issues they identified included lack of youth activities and the need to support cycling as an alternative form of transportation.

Actions

"With some of our initiatives, we were able to develop good community partnerships which were instrumental for success," says Healthy Communities coordinator Stephanie Key. "For example, the Rotary Club, area schools, and a local author joined forces to promote education for cyclists and the development of cycling paths."

Community partnerships have also been an important factor in developing other actions. These include

- a study of transportation issues,

- an activities program for community youth,
- a Block Parent/Neighbourhood Watch project,
- a volunteer network,
- a community Health and Recreation Fair, and
- a community foundation to provide long-term funding.

Determinants of Health

- Projects involving youth have had an impact on the **physical and mental health** of young people.
- The project to educate cyclists and develop a system of cycling paths in the area has had an impact on **physical safety and security**.
- Getting these and other projects going (i.e., a volunteer network, a community health and recreation fair, and the community foundation) has promoted **healthy personal connections** between individuals and community groups.
- Developing a process of community cooperation has helped people to gain a **greater sense of control** over decisions that affect the quality of life in their community.

"The forming of partnerships has been very effective," Stephanie Key concludes. "We have been able to address many outstanding community issues that otherwise would have been left."

• FOR INFORMATION, • CONTACT:

- Agassiz/Harrison Hot Springs
- Stephanie Key
- Healthy Communities
- District of Kent
- c/o Box 564
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- Telephone: (604) 796-2235
- FAX: (604) 796-9854



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BURNABY

Beginnings

In Burnaby, B.C.'s third largest centre of population, the city government is a major player in the Healthy Communities movement. The city council has outlined a Healthy Community Policy for its staff and adopted the slogan, "Burnaby Well Into the Future."

- "The council's Healthy Communities Policy promotes meaningful public consultation, interdepartmental cooperation, and consideration of the needs of a wide variety of often 'voiceless' groups in the community, including youth, illiterate people, and disabled persons," explains Burnaby's social planner, Joan Selby.

Initially, Burnaby council's Healthy Communities commitment focussed on encouraging city staff to reflect the Healthy Communities Policy in their work. In 1993 the city council expanded the focus of the program to include a community-based thrust. Through its Community Issues and Social Planning Committee, the council has sponsored the Healthy Communities Initiative, a citizen-based committee that aims at supporting "grass roots" groups in their efforts to influence and improve "the well-being of themselves and their communities."

Actions

An interdepartmental committee, called the "Healthy Community Team," has developed a variety of approaches to promote the city council's Healthy Community Policy at the staff level. Most recently, the team has put together a Healthy Community Recognition Program.

"The program recognizes city staff who have reflected the Healthy Community Policy in specific programs, services, policies, or projects they have worked on," Joan Selby explains. "Within a couple of months of announcing it in March 1994, we had received 'applications' involving over 30 projects and approximately 100 city staff."

The recognition program includes an Awards Event and a campaign to publicize the nominated projects throughout the city bureaucracy as models for other staff to follow.

Staff projects that have been nominated include, among others:

- managing residential growth.
- an urban trail system for pedestrians and cyclists.
- the Club Metro Youth Drop-in Centre for youth "at risk."
- conversion of a rental housing project to the "Garden Square Housing Cooperative."
- Norfolk Neighbourhood Community Plan
- Engineering Department information booklet
- Hastings Village housing development

At the community level, the Healthy Communities Initiative sponsored a "Grass-roots Forum" in April 1994. More than 20 grass-roots groups shared information about their activities and discussed possible solutions to some of the problems they face in building a healthier Burnaby. The initiative's major goal in 1994 was to help remove some of the barriers that grass-roots groups face.



Determinants of Health

By bringing grass-roots groups together to network and problem-solve, the Healthy Communities Initiative is helping local residents—including "voiceless" people in the community—to acquire a **greater sense of control** over their lives.

The initiative will also be supporting grass-roots groups to take action on social determinants such as **healthier beginnings for children** (through parent and child drop-in activities and neighbourhood-based child care, for instance); **healthy personal connections** (e.g., community kitchens, community gardening in multiple-family residential, and communications and cooperation between seniors groups), and **physical safety and security** (e.g., removal of hydro-electric transmission towers from residential areas and traffic safety in school zones and residential areas).

Examples of staff projects which are addressing the determinants include:

- a heart-to-heart cardiac rehabilitation program and an "Eat Well for Less" Cookbook (**physical and/or mental health**)
- the Garden Square Housing Cooperative (**distribution of income and/or wealth**)
- Burnaby South Secondary School's Wellness Wheel (**physical and/or mental health**).

CHEHALIS BAND

Beginnings

Approximately 725 people live on the Chehalis Reserve, which is located in the mountains near Agassiz and Harrison. For generations, people on the reserve have supported themselves by logging and fishing.

Because of the reserve's semi-isolated location and the rapid growth of the population, the community is concerned about its young people. The area has little in the way of recreation facilities, and youth are at risk for alcohol and drug abuse.

The community wanted to bring youth and elders together to explore health issues and to give youth an opportunity to participate in positive activities that would incorporate physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual awareness.

Actions

As part of the Healthy Communities initiative, the community formed a Health Committee made up of community members of all ages, from youth to elders. The committee's work led to the formation of a youth centre and health education programs involving both youth and elders.

The youth have had an active say in the content and type of programs, which promote healthy lifestyles while at the same time encouraging the youth to reach out for help in a manner that is acceptable to them. The elders have played a role in informing youth about the risks of alcohol, drug abuse, and other negative lifestyle habits. The program has also provided the

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- elders with helpful information on
- lifestyle issues such as nutrition and
- how to avoid the risks of
- contaminated water.

- "We have formed a strong group of
- youth who are working towards
- healing themselves with the help of
- their elders and spiritual people," says
- Linda Charlie, one member of the
- committee. "The youth, the elders,
- and the staff of the community school
- have been a source of strength.
- Everyone has worked hard to keep
- the initiative going. The youth
- themselves have inspired us to try
- new methods of reaching them".

- The Health Committee put out a
- newsletter to keep the community
- informed about health issues and
- the committee's activities. It has also
- initiated a Block Parent program and
- promoted interaction with other
- bands to gain support for action on
- health concerns.

- "The Health Committee has had a
- big impact on the community in a
- lot of ways," says Charlie, "and it's
- still very active."

• Determinants of Health

- The Health Committee expects
- the youth programs to have an
- impact on young people's ability
- to take advantage of **learning**
- **opportunities** and their ability to
- earn a satisfactory income.

- By breaking the chain of addiction,
- dependence, and apathy, the
- committee hopes to turn the young
- people around, encourage them to
- stay in school, and thereby enable
- them to enjoy a more productive
- and prosperous way of life.

- The process of supporting the youth
- programs is also opening new lines
- of communications and promoting

healthy personal connections

between youth and the band elders,
between parents and youth, and
between members of the community
as a whole.

The youth are also experiencing
a **greater sense of control** over
decisions that affect their lives.

By identifying their own problems
and seeking solutions to them, the
youth are building a foundation for
their own future. They are learning
to reach out for help, to understand
their actions and reactions, and to
deal with their problems in a
positive and active manner.

HOPE

Beginnings

Located at the eastern end of the
Fraser Valley, Hope is a small town
of 10,000 people with a large
percentage of seniors. The major
industries are tourism, construction,
and logging. Health issues here tend
to focus on the needs of special
populations—seniors, youth, and
people with disabilities.

"We wanted to facilitate interaction
between the groups in the
community that are dealing with
these issues," says Hope's Healthy
Community Committee chair, Chuck
Jensen. "And we wanted to focus on
action and programs rather than
studying the 'problems.'"

Actions

The Healthy Community Committee
approached other community
organizations, including the Hope
and District Recreation Commission,
Hope Community Services, the
RCMP, the local school district, the
Hope Ministerial Association, local



health officials, and the Municipal District of Hope. These groups cooperated on organizing a "Hallowe'en Watch" and employment workshops for teens. They also helped in organizing regular and informal community meetings and advocating for better access for people with disabilities.

Determinants of Health

"Our actions have promoted **physical safety and security** through programs such as 'Hallowe'en Watch," says Chuck Jensen. "Our **employment** workshops have focused on the employment needs of youth and provided **learning opportunities** for young people."

Because these actions have promoted **healthy personal connections** within the community, more people now feel they have "a support system available for their concerns." People have a **greater sense of control**, says Jensen, because "They realize collective action can get positive results, such as improvement in meeting the needs of people with disabilities."

LADNER

Beginnings

Because of Ladner's location on the southern outskirts of Vancouver, traffic has been a major issue for the community's 20,000 residents, most of whom commute to the city to work. As one of its first initiatives, the Healthy Communities Committee formed a Traffic and Access Task Force to develop action strategies such as establishing bicycle routes, van pools, and high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes.

With strong support from the Planning Department of the local municipality, the committee developed some successful actions, including a brochure on bicycling around Ladner. This year, the committee has set new goals. These include raising public awareness of the Healthy Communities initiative, supporting the youth of Ladner, supporting seniors, identifying physical access problems in the community, and increasing public awareness of community environmental assets.

Actions

- Initiated a fund for a central skateboard facility.
- Discussed a fund for a seniors' wellness group.
- Submitted an extensive Traffic and Access Task Force report to the municipal council.
- Developed a concept for signs to identify bicycle routes and areas of special interest.

Determinants of Health

- Community actions on traffic and access issues have enhanced **physical safety and security** and enabled people in the community to have a **greater sense of control**.
- Actions planned for the future (the seniors wellness project and youth projects such as the skateboard facility) will increase **healthy personal connections** and promote **physical and mental health** for seniors and youth.

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MARPOLE

• Beginnings

- The area of Vancouver known as Marpole is located at the southwest corner of the city on the banks of the Fraser River. The oldest residential community in Vancouver, Marpole has changed from an area of single family homes to an area that includes a sizable number of modest apartment complexes. The majority of Marpole's 17,000 residents are single adults of all ages. A considerable number of single-parent families live in Marpole, and new Canadian families now make up 25 percent of the community.

- In this urban environment where most people live on modest incomes and 65 percent of the population are renters, social isolation is a growing issue for the elderly. Young people also need social support in the form of a safe and secure place of their own where they can meet together and build their skills and self-confidence.

• Actions

- "Our vision is to assist in the development of a healthy neighbourhood," says Patricia Black, a member of the collectively run Marpole Healthy Community Committee.

- This has meant working with a broad-based community network of business people, Health Department workers, and other organizations to support community-based projects for youth and adults. These include a youth theatre program, a youth activity centre, a weekly community meal, a self-help group for single parents, and creating employment opportunities for youth, and especially for youth at risk. These

actions are all the result of individual concern and commitment, says Black.

"Probably the greatest strength in our community is the will of many people to improve their lives and the community," she explains.

Determinants of Health

Single mothers and youth have found paid **employment** working on projects such as community meals, child care, teen programs, and youth theatre. Others in the community have received job skills upgrading and opportunities to develop organizing skills. Single mothers have had access to better information about parenting skills and nutrition (**healthy beginnings for children**).

The Marpole Community Meal Program has provided residents with opportunities to make **healthy personal connections** by meeting their neighbours, participating on information programs, and discussing issues of mutual concern. These discussions have led to an awareness that residents are not alone in their concerns and a **greater sense of control** over what happens to them as individuals and as a community.

But the greatest impact on determinants of health is in the area of **physical and mental health** for youth, says Patricia Black.

"The Marpole Healthy Community Committee's greatest impact is on youth at risk," she explains. "Through the teen programs and the youth theatre programs, we provide an outlet for them to be creative, challenged, productive, entertained, and to be themselves in a safe and positive environment."



MATSQUI ABBOTSFORD

Beginnings

As a result of rapid population growth and changing demographics, the 100,000 residents of Matsqui Abbotsford are facing the challenge of change. Located in farming country southeast of Vancouver, this Fraser Valley community, is home to a diverse multicultural population with a growing percentage of seniors and young families.

"We are one of the fastest growing communities in the province," explains Lee Gillespie, communications coordinator for the Matsqui Abbotsford Healthy Community Program.

Development and environmental protection are important issues that local residents say need to be addressed. The goal of the Healthy Community committee is to build a stronger community by establishing connections between groups concerned about these and other issues.

Actions

"In our third year, we have built on the broad-based foundation we developed through our local Healthy Community committee," says Gillespie. "Our goals were to collaborate with other groups, work closely with municipal government, foster regional networking, and develop a higher profile in the community."

Meeting in space provided by the Municipality of Matsqui, the committee has expanded its community network and collaborated with other organizations on a number of projects. These

include an "Art Against Racism" project and public forums on issues such as clean air, public safety, affordable housing, and the role of the arts in a healthy community.

Working with the United Way for the Fraser Valley, the committee gathered public input on the concept of a Community Resource Centre and is now developing a statistics-based index of social indicators for use by local decision makers.

The committee is also looking at issues associated with neighbourhood development.

Determinants of Health

"We have nurtured quite a substantial community oriented network that includes a variety of perspectives on a broad range of issues," says Gillespie. "This network is available as a resource for supporting community action." And, she adds, "With the advent of Health Councils, our role in representing the broader issues of health is becoming more apparent."

MISSION

Beginnings

Located in the Fraser Valley, Mission is a thriving community surrounded by mountains, lakes, and streams. Of the more than 30,000 people who live here, many work in the forest industry. Mission also has the largest number of home-based businesses of any community in B.C.

In the past year, the Healthy Communities group has focussed on making the public more aware of

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- the Healthy Communities process,
- says the local coordinator, Fran Lund.

- Support for the committee's agenda
- has come from service agencies
- and local government as well as
- from individuals.

- "We have a great bunch of
- volunteers and dedicated committee
- members," Lund explains. "The local
- Health Unit supports us with office
- space and other services, and the
- Social Services Ministry has helped
- by giving us access to the time and
- expertise of its local Community
- Development Officer."

- The District of Mission also supports
- the project, and a member of the
- Parks and Recreation Department
- staff sits on the Healthy
- Communities Committee

Actions

- Published a monthly newsletter
- that goes out to 210 groups,
- agencies, and individuals in
- the community.
- Co-sponsored a quarterly inter-
- agency meeting attended by as
- many as 32 different community
- groups and service agencies.
- Organized a Community Pride
- campaign in local schools.
- Investigated the possibility of
- resolving transportation problems
- by using the school bus to bring
- people into Mission from
- outlying areas.
- Worked with the local Social
- Planning Committee to ensure
- that there is public participation
- in the planning process.

Determinants of Health

- The actions of the committee
- have increased **healthy personal**
- **connections** in the community.
- The newsletter has created at
- least one **employment**
- **opportunity** for a disadvantaged
- member of the community.
- The committee promotes **learning**
- **opportunities** by publicizing
- workshops, community forums,
- and learningshops.
- Inter-agency meetings,
- participation in the social planning
- process, and other networking
- opportunities have given people
- a **greater sense of control** over
- decisions that affect support
- systems in the community.
- Inter-agency cooperation has
- had a positive effect on **fair and**
- **respectful access to government**
- **programs and resources.**

NEW WESTMINSTER

Beginnings

"The City of New Westminster is one of the fastest changing communities in British Columbia," says Healthy Communities Coordinator Lynda Dassiuik. "With the introduction of Skytrain connecting us to Vancouver and Surrey, New Westminster has become the community of choice for many young families."

Located on the Fraser River only a few miles from Vancouver, New Westminster was the first capital of British Columbia. After a period of commercial decline, the city has become an important centre of industry in the lower mainland



with a growing population of more than 45,000.

Although the city is having a resurgence of popularity, the environment for health includes concerns such as, a higher teen pregnancy rate, a higher percentage of the population on income assistance, and more lone-parent families than the surrounding municipalities in the lower mainland.

In this context, the Healthy Communities Initiative set its sights on improving the environment for the community's youth.

"The aim of the project is to increase awareness of youth concerns and to provide youth with opportunities to participate actively in decision making about youth services in the community," Lynda Dassiuk explains.

Actions

- Youth conducted a survey of their peers to identify issues and set priorities.
- Youth launched a dialogue between youth and adults by presenting dramatized scenarios on youth issues to local school trustees, agency staff, parents, and city councillors.
- The youth have created special presentations and helped develop video materials on depression, suicide, and family conflict for Mental Health Week.
- Youth contributed presentations to "Learning for Living" school/community workshops.
- Youth lobbied successfully for installation of a condom machine in the school washroom.
- Ongoing committees of youth, community agencies, and community members developed plans for youth services such as a youth centre.

Determinants of Health

- Discussions between youth and influential adults have created **learning opportunities** and given youth a **greater sense of control** over decision making.
- The youths' success in lobbying for condom machine in the school washroom will promote **physical health** and AIDS awareness among their peers.
- The youth presentations have increased **healthy personal connections** among youth peers and with agency staff.
- Preparing presentations and helping to create video materials on mental health has increased the youths' self esteem and given them a **greater sense of control** over their lives.

NORTH VANCOUVER CITY

Beginnings

North Vancouver is a city of 38,000 located on the north shore of Burrard Inlet, across the Lions Gate Bridge from downtown Vancouver. The city's "Healthy Communities Safe City Initiative," focusses on a mixed commercial, office, entertainment, and residential neighbourhood on the waterfront known as Lower Lonsdale. The area is home to 12,000 people and has the highest concentration of low income, single parent, and recent immigrant families in the city.

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- Supported by the City of North Vancouver, the goal of the Healthy Communities Safe City Initiative is
- "to make the Lower Lonsdale area
- safer for residents, workers, and
- visitors, especially those who are
- most vulnerable: women, youth,
- seniors, and people with disabilities."

• Actions

- • Formation of a steering committee made up of city staff and representation from residents, businesses, and organizations in the area
- • Hiring a research consultant to work with the steering committee on research into crime and safety issues in the area, (real and perceived), through analysis of crime statistics and use of safety audits.

- "Although the Healthy Communities Safe City Initiative has been in operation only a few months, the plan of action is based on taking a community development approach to generating and implementing solutions," says North Vancouver social planner, Larry Orr.

• Determinants of Health

- • The focus of the initiative is to reduce crime and increase **physical safety and security** in the area. For the purposes of this study, safety is defined as safety from crime to persons and property, as well as from accidents involving pedestrians.
- • The involvement of local residents and business people will enable them to have a **greater sense of control** over decisions that affect their lives

DISTRICT OF NORTH VANCOUVER

Beginnings

The District of North Vancouver covers a large mountainous area on the north shore of Burrard Inlet, which is separate from the City of North Vancouver. Approximately 76,000 people live in the District, which has easy access to downtown Vancouver as well as to nearby mountain wilderness areas.

The goal of the Healthy Communities Initiative is "to create a shared vision of healthy neighbourhoods which are characterized by a sense of identity, a feeling of livability, and an attitude of involvement in the life and activities in the neighbourhood."

Erica Bell-Lowther, from the District Social Planning Department, says that the main strength of the project is the commitment of residents to their neighbourhoods.

"People care deeply about their neighbourhoods and are dedicated to enhancing their livability," she explains.

Existing residents' associations made a strong contribution to the project.

"Participants committed their time and energy because they saw the value of being involved in decision making that affects them at the neighbourhood and district level," according to Bell-Lowther.

Actions

The project conducted a study of residents' visions of a healthy neighbourhood through surveys and a series of neighbourhood forums. The results were released to the community in a report entitled



"Creating a Shared Vision : A Framework for Neighbourhood Livability and Involvement."

The report was approved in principle by council, and staff were instructed to work with resident groups to establish standards for formal recognition. According to the report, the four basic principles for healthy neighbourhoods are

- a sense of community
- public participation in decision making
- neighbourhood planning and design that preserves the elements of healthy neighbourhoods
- a sense of safety and security in the home.

The report contained a number of recommendations based on these principles, including suggestions that the municipality should involve local residents in the planning and development process as early as possible and should be guided on specific projects by public concerns and suggestions. The report also recommended that the district should support community-based efforts to promote safety and security.

"Like many of the concerns raised by residents," the report states, "issues related to safety and security are closely related to others, such as neighbourhood design and resident involvement

Determinants of Health

- The main focus of the project is on supporting community involvement in decision making and enabling people to have a **greater sense of control** over their lives.

- Creating a sense of community and increasing public participation in decision making will contribute to the **physical safety and security** of neighbourhoods.

PITT MEADOWS

Beginnings

Growth is a mixed blessing, says David Baspaly, coordinator for the Healthy Communities initiative in Pitt Meadows, a small community in the Fraser Valley just 30 kilometres from Vancouver.

"Pitt Meadows is developing and expanding so fast," he explains, "that in spite of gaining all the benefits of a larger city, it is beginning to experience some of the problems."

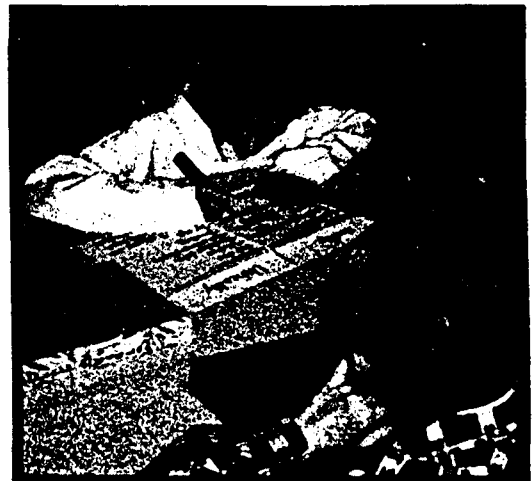
According to their community health promotion survey, youth problems are the biggest health concern in Pitt Meadows. The Healthy Communities initiatives are designed to meet that concern by helping youth develop a sense of investment in their community and responsibility for their actions, decreasing young offenders violations, promoting a new view of youth as an asset to the community rather than a liability, and encouraging community groups to develop programs that directly benefit the situation of young persons in the community.

"First and foremost," says David Baspaly, "the Healthy Communities process will draw on resources in the Pitt Meadows community to enhance self-care, mutual aid, and

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- broad-based citizen involvement in our own community's health."

Actions

- Following the steps in the Healthy Communities process, the Healthy Communities Initiative in Pitt Meadows has:
- introduced the Healthy Communities idea to the local community through schools, businesses, youth groups, and the local news media.
- conducted a community needs assessment, including a survey about what youth want in Pitt Meadows.
- explored the resources the community has to offer.
- set up a steering committee to plan actions.
- hired a youth service co-ordinator.
- implemented a plan to establish a youth council and open a teen centre.

The Healthy Communities co-ordinator has made communication with youth a priority. "Communication with the youth of the community is of great importance," says Baspaly, "and the time spent 'in the field' has been a great influence as well as a great learning tool to become aware of what the real issues are for youth in Pitt Meadows."

Determinants of Health

- "Healthy Communities in Pitt Meadows is still in an early stage of development," says Baspaly, "but our plans include youth **employment** services and expanding **learning opportunities** for youth. The spectrum of learning opportunities extends from leadership courses to

the adventure and experience of activities like camping and rock climbing."

VANCOUVER DOWNTOWN EASTSIDE

Beginnings

The majority of the people who live in the downtown eastside area of Vancouver live in SRO (single room occupancy) hotels and rooming houses. Their main sources of income are government transfers: welfare and pensions. Half the population is over 45, and 20 percent are seniors.

The purpose of the Healthy Communities project in the downtown eastside is to develop a healthier social environment for the older residents in the area by connecting neighbours to neighbours.

"We wanted to enhance the existing social networks of older residents living in SRO hotels and create new ones," says Marg Green, the project's coordinator.

The project describes its goals as:

- to provide a means for people to talk together and take action in the community
- to provide resources for people in the community to get organized to take action on their issues
- to create a stronger community by building mutual support networks in downtown eastside hotels

Actions

The project involves resident volunteers who establish a presence in downtown hotels by visiting older



residents and regularly checking in on those who may need assistance when they are ill, isolated, or disabled. In two hotels, the project has rented space for use as a "coffee drop-in" centre where residents can meet together to discuss issues in their building or in the community. The project runs drop-ins in six other residences which are not rented but are provided free by the management.

Called "Neighbourhood Helpers," the project builds on the experience and knowledge of residents in the area who run the drop-ins. The project trains the volunteers to act as community advocates. They also assist the other residents in standing up for their rights and gaining fair and respectful access to community services such as medical care, housing, and all forms of income assistance.

Determinants of Health

- Enhancing social support networks **increases healthy personal connections** among older adults in the community and counteracts the tendency to isolation.
- Enhancing social support networks **increases safety and security** and enables people to have a **greater sense of control** over their lives.
- The programs in hotels help residents to gain **fair and respectful access to community services**.

VANCOUVER DOWNTOWN EASTSIDE/ STRATHCONA/ GRANVILLE

Beginnings

The Youth Action Coalition (Watari) is a service for low-income street youth in Vancouver who are victims of substance abuse and violence.

"The coalition is made up of youth who are helping street-involved youth create solutions for the challenges they face," says the youth coordinator for the area. "The youth are creative members of our society who have incredible skills to survive on our streets."

The coalition serves the downtown Eastside, Strathcona, and Downtown Granville areas. The coalition of exists "because many youth do not trust adults or services run by adults. They find it much easier to access a resource like the Youth Action Coalition because it is run entirely by youth," adds Abeling.

Partnerships with other groups and agencies in the community have contributed to the success of the coalition. Support in the form of space and services has come from the Native Health services in the area, the Strathcona Community Centre, the Youth Detox Centre, and the Outreach School, as well as from individual community members who have donated their time to help the project.

"We take our priorities from the agenda of the youth themselves," the youth coordinator explains. "We support them in their decision-making process and encourage them to act on their goals."

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*Watari: Research Assn
254-6095?*



• Actions

- One of the main goals of the Youth Action Coalition is to help street youth meet their basic needs. To meet this goal, the coalition runs a food bank and acts as a link to other resources in the community, such as shelter and health services.
- Because many of the youth are not able to meet the expectations of regular employment services, the coalition has developed strategy for employing them in a positive, safe way. The coalition provides flexible job opportunities for low-income youth on a drop-in basis, a weekly basis, and a long-term basis.
- "This gives youth a chance to build their self-esteem so that they can gradually take on more responsibility in the community."
- To promote the safety and security of the youth, the coalition has produced an updated survival manual and developed a youth rights package. The group has also started planning for a youth drop-in centre.

Determinants of Health

- The coalition's flexible job strategy provides **employment opportunities** for low-income youth.
- The jobs strategy, the food bank and the links to other basic resources such as shelter are having a positive impact on the **distribution of wealth** in the youth community.
- Support for the youths' agenda and decision-making process gives the youth a **greater sense of control over their own lives** and increases the number and quality of **healthy personal connections**.
- Linking the youth to shelter and other support services has a positive impact on their **physical safety and security**.



NORTHEAST

CHETWYND

Beginnings

Located in mountainous country in northeastern B.C., Chetwynd is a small community of 3,000 people. The traditional industries in this area are forestry, mining, ranching, and farming. Recently, natural gas processing has become a source of economic expansion.

Chetwynd has a history of interagency cooperation, and the Healthy Communities initiative grew out of this cooperative approach. The Healthy Communities steering committee wanted to solicit feedback from people who have not taken an active or leadership role in the community in the past. The steering committee also felt that Healthy Communities project could provide a venue for information, education, and support to community members.

Actions

The initial phase of the project involved an intense period of information gathering that enabled the steering committee to develop a strategic plan of action. The plan has focussed on information, education, and community consensus building which the committee hopes will get more people involved in developing healthy public policies.

As the project coordinator, Cindy Kelly, explains, "If the project is successful, the Chetwynd community should experience an increase in

citizen involvement with regard to issues of concern to local residents."

Kelly adds that, "Healthier public policies should result from the grassroots involvement this project is seeking."

Determinants of Health

When the strategic plan is complete, says Kelly, it will address specific determinants of health.

"We hope to establish processes and ways of doing things that will address the factors that determine health," she explains. "For instance, if as a matter a process, the community has a chance to review any environmental impact study before a commercial venture is approved, residents will have a **greater sense of control** over decisions that affect their lives."

DAWSON CREEK

Beginnings

In its second year, the Healthy Communities Project continued to pursue its objectives of creating a "one-window" approach to community planning, involving citizens in decision making at the local level, and supporting youth to make their own plans and decisions.

"Our project has focussed on creating links between organizations in the community and developing a strong, supportive community for local teens," says Healthy Communities Coordinator Michelle Novakowski. "We have also worked

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- with local environmental groups and City Council to address the concerns of local citizens about issues such as air quality."

- Located in northeastern B.C. at Mile 0 of the Alaska Highway, Dawson Creek has a population of 11,000 with a trading area of close to 25,000 people. The area has a large number of aboriginal and Metis people, as well as people from many other cultures.

• Actions

- The Healthy Communities Project works in partnership with the Dawson Creek Interagency Committee (DCIC) to encourage networking between different sectors such as service agencies, local government, business, health, education, and the arts. Each January, the DCIC holds a community workshop to set the direction for the coming year.



Dawson Creek Healthy Schools Mural

- The Healthy Communities Project has formed active partnerships with many community agencies and groups. These include the RCMP, Toastmasters, the local Parks and Recreation Department, local health and social service agencies, local arts and culture groups, local teens.

- The Healthy Communities Teen Committee was formed to direct the Youth Project and to address issues identified at the first Healthy Communities Youth Forum. The Teen Committee has organized four youth forums, participated in several community events, and runs a regular column in the local newspaper.

- In partnership with the local school district's "Stay in School" campaign, the Teen Committee hosted a career night with resource people from various professions, as well as the skilled labour sector.

- To address the image of teens in the community, the Teen Committee developed a survey to determine the number of hours teens volunteer, the dollars they spend locally, and the kind of goods they spend their money on. The teens presented this information to a variety of organizations in the community and organized a campaign to publicize the survey results through local radio, T.V., and newspapers.

- The Healthy Communities Steering Committee supported a workshop on healthy public policy with members of the City Council and city staff. The workshop resulted in the implementation of a health impact assessment process for all municipal policies and bylaws.

- The Healthy Communities Project has provided support to several citizens groups working on issues of common concern. The project participates in the work of a number of issue-related community committees. These include the Drug Awareness Committee, the Arts and Recreation Network, the Family Centre Committee, the local Healthy Schools initiative, and the Community Group on Air Quality.

- The previous year, the Healthy Communities Project hosted a series of neighbourhood forums



on the theme of "Making Community Connections."

- Several groups in the community have received proclamations declaring them "Healthy Communities Activities."
- The Dawson Creek Healthy Communities Project has developed a networking relationship with the various Healthy Communities projects in the Peace River-Liard region.

Determinants of Health

- The Youth Project has provided **learning opportunities** for youth and increased the number and quality of **healthy personal connections** among the youth themselves and between youth and adults in the community.
- Youth forums link young people to local decision makers and provide opportunities for youth to have input into local decisions. This interaction has raised the awareness of adults in regard to the capacities of youth and made youth feel that they are valued members of the community. The participation of youth with other citizens in actions to address issues of concern to the community has increased their **sense of control over their lives**.
- The increased networking and links between service agencies has helped to provide more people with **fair and respectful access** to government services and resources.

FORT ST. JOHN

Beginnings

Located in northeastern B.C., Fort St. John has approximately 14,000 residents. The largely resource-based economy relies primarily on three industries: oil, agriculture, and forestry.

The Healthy Communities initiative in Fort St. John started from the community's concern about vandalism, alcohol abuse, domestic violence, and other issues related to community health and safety.

Actions

The community's first action was to ask local residents what they think are most important health issues.

"We conducted a needs survey to find out which issues we should be taking action on and also to raise awareness of the concept of community health," says Colette Roy, the Healthy Communities coordinator in Fort St. John.

As part of its preparatory research, the committee also reviewed the efficiency of existing community resources.

Both these actions had the full support of the Healthy Communities committee, which is broadly representative of the community, and the Interagency Network in Fort St. John.

Determinants of Health

According to the results of the community survey, vandalism and lack of **activities for young people** is a major concern in Fort St. John. Concerns related to employment include lack of jobs for youth and adults and **low wages**.

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- The survey also found concern
- about water quality and quantity,
- road conditions, and other issues
- related to **physical safety and security**. Residents are concerned
- about the lack of recreational
- facilities for families and youth and
- other issues (parenting problems,
- alcohol and drug abuse, family
- violence, etc.) that are related to
- **physical and mental health** and
- **healthy beginnings for children**.

POUCE COUPE

Beginnings

- Healthy Communities got off to a fast
- start in Pouce Coupe with full support
- of the local council, including a
- contribution to the funding of the
- Healthy Communities Committee.
- In the first year, the 850 residents in
- this small, northern B.C. community
- established a clear set of objectives
- that focussed on youth and families.
- With no community facilities except
- an elementary school, the residents
- saw a need to expand social,
- recreational, and educational
- opportunities for children, youth,
- and adults.

Actions

- Working in partnership with various
- community groups, the committee
- soon began to take action on a
- variety of projects. The second year
- saw the development of an activity
- centre that is operated primarily by
- the teens themselves. As well as
- social activities for youth, the centre
- offers workshops and seminars on
- youth issues such as teen pregnancy
- and birth control, drinking and
- driving, and drugs and alcohol. Other
- programs included first-aid and home
- safety courses, learn-to-skate and

swim programs for adults and children, and a family sleigh ride.

In its third year, the Healthy Communities initiative is spearheading the organization of a Meals-on-Wheels program and a blood pressure clinic for seniors. Together with the continuing health seminars and other programs at the teen centre, these actions have enhanced the community's resources for health.

"Due to Healthy Communities sponsoring events and programs, we have found that a large number of people are more willing to help out in the community," says Healthy Communities chair, Jacquie Boyd.

Determinants of Health

- Activities and programs at the teen centre are aimed at having an impact on the **physical and mental health** of youth in the community. They also promote **physical safety and security** through their positive impact on vandalism.
- Activities involving adults and families are promoting **healthy personal connections** and **healthier beginnings for children**.
- More **learning opportunities** are available for youth, adults, and seniors as a result of health seminars and other educational programs.
- The ability of community groups to work together has given youth and other residents a **greater sense of control** over the availability of local services and facilities.



NORTHWEST

SMITHERS

Beginnings

Smithers is a beautiful alpine community of 5,000 people located in the Bulkley Valley on Highway 16, halfway between Prince George and Prince Rupert. Because of the nearby mountains, tourism is important to the town, along with forestry and mining.

The main strength behind the Bulkley Valley Healthy Communities initiative comes from a strong, working executive and a diverse membership that represents a broad cross-section of the community, says Margaret Davey, a member of the steering committee.

"We have people on our committee who represent all walks of life," she explains. "We also have an executive that is willing to work hard at writing proposals and facilitating workshops.

By analyzing all the studies pertaining to community health that had been done in the area in the past five years, the steering committee was able to identify priorities for action. The Healthy Communities committee presented the results of the research review at a community workshop, and the participants decided to focus on youth issues and begin involving youth in the Healthy Communities consultation process.

Actions

The Healthy Communities group formed a youth subcommittee which

organized a youth "visioning" project to establish the priorities of young people in the area. The visioning exercise involved 12 different youth groups, totalling over 200 youth, two workshops in order to listen to youth and listen to their needs.

"After a youth celebration and two more community consultations with youth, it became apparent that these young people wanted to focus on publishing their own newsletter," says Margaret Davey, "so they could reach more of the community with their concerns and gain strength through numbers."

Called IAM (Informative Adolescent Media), the newsletter will be published approximately 10 times a year and will provide a "forum for youth to express their views and concerns." In addition to "enabling youth to become proactive and develop a strong sense of self-esteem and belonging in the community," the newsletter will offer young people a chance to write and get published and to get involved in layout and design.

With help from the Bulkley Valley Healthy Communities, the youth group is raising money for the newsletter through grants and donations in kind. It is also doing all the business planning and preparation, including putting together a philosophy, terms of

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- reference, and distribution plan for the newsletter.

Determinants of Health

- The development of a youth committee and the initiatives to meet and consult with youth has increased the number and quality of **healthy personal connections** between youth and adults and community groups.
- The planning and publication of the newsletter can provide **learning opportunities** for youth in the community.
- The publication of the newsletter will provide **employment opportunities** for young people as typesetters and layout artists.
- The distribution of the newsletter to young people in the area can promote the **physical and mental health** of young people by providing information on health issues such as pregnancy and AIDS.
- Being involved in the newsletter and the Healthy Communities process can enable young people to have a **greater sense of control** over their lives.
- By enabling youth to develop a greater sense of belonging in the community, the Healthy Communities process can help reduce vandalism and promote **physical safety and security**.



NORTHERN INTERIOR/CARIBOO

HEILTSUK BAND

Beginnings

A shorter than average life span and a higher than average suicide rate are two indicators of serious health issues facing the Heiltsuk people of Bella Bella.

The nearly 2,000 people in the community live in beautiful but relatively isolated surroundings on the central coast of B.C. between Prince Rupert and Port Hardy. The fishing and canning industries form the main economic base, along with a hotel, a shipyard, and small home-based retail businesses. Other employers include the band administration, the Community School, and public works projects.

"Improving the environment for youth was one of the major issues for the community," says Healthy Communities coordinator Joann Green.

"We wanted to enhance the community's efforts to provide a healthy environment for our youth and children," she explains. "We wanted to involve community members, elders, and youth in a process that would enhance their skills and knowledge and foster self-determination, self-reliance, and independence amongst a group previously rendered dependent."

Actions

The Healthy Communities Initiative began with a potluck supper for the band chiefs, elders, and youth and continued with a series of meetings

to develop a process for finding and implementing solutions to the community's health concerns. The project has had strong support from the Heiltsuk Tribal Council in the form of free meeting space, travel subsidies and use of the band office.

With the support of the elders, the young people of the community formed a youth council in November of 1993. The council gives youth and children a voice in the community. For example, members of the council can attend band council meetings to raise awareness of youth issues. The youth council also helped initiate a children's poster contest on the themes of drug and alcohol abuse, mental health, and garbage clean-up in the community.

"The elders, youth, and community children have definitely helped to accomplish the goals the project," Green explains. "The process has started a social relationship between the youth and the elders, and the youth are learning from the elders through their great wisdom and link to our cultural heritage."

At the same time, health and social service professionals in the community formed a health network team to work collectively toward more effective and "holistic" delivery of health care services.

"One of the greatest strengths and support came from Pauline Waterfall," says Green. "She was instrumental in organizing the health network team, and she constantly

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- encouraged the youth to be strong
- and to work toward independence."

• In the spring of 1994, the Healthy Communities initiative hosted

- Suicide Intervention/Prevention workshop which was open to students in grades 5 through 12 as well as to the general community.
- The workshop was a success, and a support group for survivors of suicide was organized.

- "After suppressing the pain and anguish of being a survivor of suicide, some community members began the healing process," Green explains.
- "Many began to see that they were not alone. The experience encouraged our children to talk openly about their feelings and to keep the lines of communication open to family, friends, and the caregivers of our community."

Determinants of Health

- The project has had an impact on the determinants of health by:

- **enhancing learning opportunities** for Heiltsuk youth and children and encouraging them to continue with their education and to train for future jobs.
- helping young people to understand that they can become stronger **physically and mentally** by following a **healthy** and balanced lifestyle.
- **creating additional employment** in the community.
- **promoting healthy personal connections** between youth and elders and between family and friends in the community and by keeping lines of communication open with others.

LOWER POST (LAIRD RIVER BAND)

Beginnings

Lower Post is a small Native community located beside the Laird River in northeastern B.C., close to the Yukon border. With 150 permanent residents and only two employers—the band office and the local elementary school—most community members depend on trapping and guiding for their income.

In these circumstances, the lack of health enhancing activities for youth and elders is a major concern for the community.

"The lack of cultural, recreational, and social activities manifested itself in alcohol and drug abuse, family violence, and an increase in juvenile crime," says Band Manager Michelle Tochacek.

The main objective of the Healthy Communities initiative is to promote healthy connections between youth and elders by providing a range of activities that the whole community can learn from and enjoy.

Actions

"Our group envisioned a more positive way of life for the elders and youth," Michelle Tochacek explains. "Due to the lack of recreational facilities, we have concentrated on organizing and supporting activities that will foster the relationship between elders and youth."

In addition to providing recreational activities, the Youth/Elder Program emphasizes the values of the community's cultural heritage by offering opportunities for youth to learn traditional skills.



"One of the strengths of our community is the volunteers who assist the elders and youth in their activities," says Tochacek. "We have volunteers with many traditional skills who are willing to teach the younger persons."

The Youth/Elder Program has also resulted in the formation of a youth group that meets weekly with a facilitator to discuss topics such as drug and alcohol abuse, self esteem, interacting with parents and dating.

Determinants of Health

By supporting **healthier personal connections** between youth and elders, the Healthy Communities project is hoping for a reduction in the amount of juvenile crime and domestic violence and an increase in **physical safety and security** within the community. By helping youth and elders to avoid the risks of alcohol and drug abuse, the program is promoting better **physical and mental health** for both groups.

MCLEOD LAKE BAND

Beginnings

Located 30 miles south of Mackenzie and 90 miles north of Prince Rupert, B.C., the McLeod Lake reserve is home to 121 on-reserve residents and another 250 members of the independent TseK'ehne Band. As the owner of three logging companies and two silviculture companies, the band is a major economic influence in the area.

Because of the reserve's semi-isolated location, recreational opportunities for young people are minimal, and drug and alcohol abuse is a concern. The community's concern about

health risks to young people led to the formation of a Healthy Communities initiative designed to give youth a better sense of the value of their traditional way of life.

Actions

The Healthy Communities initiative developed and implemented a series of recreational outings for youth involving traditional activities. Accompanied by elders from the community, the youth went net fishing for salmon in Bisbine, B.C. and travelled several hundred miles to visit a reserve near Spokane, Washington, where residents fish for salmon using a traditional Indian fish fence.

This was the young people's first exposure to traditional activities, and the experience has had a positive effect on their attitudes to their own culture, says Peter Prince, the band's resident community development worker.

"The cultural trips helped people to become aware of their own traditions and to begin to ask the elders for information about them," he explains. "The people who have participated show a more positive outlook on their lives and are planning future drug and alcohol-free activities such as fishing and hunting trips and other cultural activities."

Determinants of Health

The cultural activities have increased **learning opportunities** for youth and adults and given the participants a **greater sense of control** over their lives. The development of a more positive outlook may have an impact on **physical safety and security** and **physical and mental health** through its effect in reducing alcohol and drug abuse and their related effects, such as vandalism and family violence.

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*"The spirit of the community is
where the individual gains a sense
of the larger world"*

QUESNEL

Beginnings

Quesnel is a thriving forestry town located in the northern interior at the confluence of the Fraser and Quesnel River. As the gateway to Barkerville and the Bowron Provincial Park, Quesnel also has a growing tourist industry. The 15,000 people who live in Quesnel and the surrounding area take pride in their community, both for its scenic and historical values and its outdoor recreational opportunities.

The Healthy Communities initiative started with the challenge of helping to create a more cooperative environment for community planning.

"There appeared to be a lot of planning activity, but groups and institutions seemed to be working in isolation," says Lillian Stenecker, co-chair of the steering committee.

"This group recognized the need for a pro-active and preventive approach rather than an ad hoc and reactive one. It also recognized the value of the changing notion of health that includes more personal and community responsibility for all aspects of life, including economic well-being."

Actions

- The Healthy Communities steering committee helped organize a social planning conference for 51 local organizations. The 85 people who attended decided to carry on the process of consultation and cooperation.
- The City of Quesnel suggested using the Healthy Communities program as an "umbrella" for a grass roots planning and community-building process.

- The Healthy Communities steering committee developed a "Vision" for the area.
- The steering committee set up a research subcommittee to gather reports, needs assessments, and any other information on social planning and community development issues in the Quesnel area within the past five years.
- To reduce confusion with New Directions activities in the community, the Steering Committee adopted the name, Community in Action Initiative (CIAI), and a new slogan—"Share Your Vision." The slogan expresses the grass roots nature of the initiative, which encourages broad-based participation by individual residents and representatives of local organizations.
- The CIAI introduced its "Share Your Vision" campaign by sponsoring a display at the local school district's annual "Community Interaction Days."
- The City of Quesnel has supported the initiative through the active participation of its planning officer and a city councillor representative on the Steering Committee.
- In the spring, the CIAI sponsored a workshop on "Community Mobilization." The workshop resulted in the formation of several action teams which will draw their members from the broader community of interested citizens. The philosophy behind this approach is expressed in the comment, "The spirit of community is where the individual gains a sense of the larger world."



The action teams will:

- develop training workshops for nonprofit service groups
 - begin the process of collecting and cataloging information on local research, experts, and community projects
 - develop information brochures on getting access to local government, service agencies, health boards, and health councils
 - promote pride in the community of Quesnel through a series of public information meetings entitled "Quesnel, Our Community".
- Based on public input and a telephone survey on community involvement, the Community In Action Initiative supported the implementation of neighbourhood associations in Quesnel and area. The goal in supporting this project is to encourage individual public input and involvement at the grass-roots level. ("A community that works together will thrive together.")

The success of the group is based on the continuing enthusiasm and commitment of interested individuals and organizations, says co-chair Dwight Pujol.

"From a community splintered by many jurisdictional boundaries, this is a group committed to dealing with local issues as a whole unit, via grass roots involvement."

Determinants of Health

The effect of this process on the determinants of health will depend on the continuing course of action of the Community In Action umbrella organization, says Pujol.

"However, the group has already had a positive impact on the number and quality of **healthy personal connections** by bringing the community together to make decisions and assume ownership of community activities," he explains.

Promoting **physical safety and security** was a priority issue for people who responded to a request for input at the Community Interaction Days. Enabling people to have a **greater sense of control** is also one of the most significant outcomes of grass roots participation in decisions that affect the community.

WILLIAMS LAKE

Beginnings

In a time when most communities are having less drinking and driving arrests, Williams Lake has had more. This year, the arrests were higher than in any other place in the Cariboo.

All the advertising on this issue seems to be missing a large portion of the drinking population, but in this interior logging and mining community, youth are finding ways to tackle the problem.

"Advertising without involvement is a passive method of influencing change," says Healthy Communities coordinator Denise Skarra. "In our version, the youth have 'rolled up' their sleeves and become actively involved. This involvement is itself health enhancing."

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Maxine Stump, 12, Grade 6, Nestlks has a simple message: "Bag the Drinking & Driving"

"A community that works together will thrive together."



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- Dozens of community groups have
- been working together to support
- the youth of Williams Lake in their
- initiative to deal with drug and
- alcohol issues. The secondary
- schools helped by having students
- do "envisioning exercises" related
- to the issues.

• Actions

- • The youth in the Williams Lake
- area have formed a group called
- the Cariboo Youth Council and
- are raising funds to support
- the project.
- • To improve their image in the
- community, the youth have
- formed working parties to clean
- up certain parts of the town.
- • In conjunction with the RCMP,
- the Cariboo Friendship Society,
- the school district, and other
- community organizations, the
- Healthy Communities Steering
- Committee is developing a
- campaign to create more
- awareness of the drinking and
- driving issue by distributing liquor
- bags that school children in
- grades 4 to 7 have decorated
- with messages about drinking
- and driving.

Determinants of Health

Youth involvement in the campaign to raise awareness of drinking and driving gives youth a chance to take charge and develop a **greater sense of control** over decisions that affect their lives. The liquor bag campaign will also increase **physical safety and security** among young people.



THOMPSON/OKANAGAN/KOOTENAY

CHASE

Beginnings

According to Frank Shelest, the new chair of the 12-member Chase Healthy Communities Committee, geography and "turfism" have been barriers to the Healthy Communities process in Chase and the unincorporated communities in the area. The area includes Pritchard, Adams Lake, Chase Creek, Turtle Valley, all of the communities of the North Shuswap, and the Village of Chase.

"I think we're unique because we have so many small communities spread out over a large area," he explains. "And because we're under two different regional district boards, it's difficult to initiate any collective action."

Although the permanent residents in the area number approximately 4,000 (2,000 in Chase), the population swells to 10 to 12 thousand in the summer months. Last year, a needs assessment pointed up a number of concerns in the area, including recreation, sewage treatment, youth problems, access to specialized health practitioners such as chiropodists and psychologists, and lack of communication between groups and individuals.

Following the needs assessment, the group developed a set of goals that include "endeavouring to involve the broadest representation of community membership" and "acting on identified needs for maintaining a healthy community."

"With the addition of some 'new blood' and some fresh energy, the group hopes to find a way to get through the barriers and support local action on the major issues," says Frank Shelest.

"The committee recently had a no-host dinner that was very successful," he explains. "It gave us a chance to get better acquainted with each other and find out just who we are. We have some excellent people in the group who would like to see change."

Actions

- The Healthy Communities Committee conducted a community survey and needs assessment, followed by a workshop to discuss the results and set priorities for action. Because of the publicity surrounding the needs assessment, the Healthy Communities Committee was able to point to issues on which other groups could take action.
- In a number of communities, committee members are working with local groups on issues of specific concern to residents: e.g., sewage run-off into the lake, lack of recreation services and activities for youth and the need for "closer-to-home" health care services and facilities.

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• Frank Shelest and Granddaughters Nikki & Jenny. "A picture of Health"



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- In Pritchard, residents are looking at ways to deal with the lack of local information in the area's three newspapers: e.g., put out a small flyer (one to two pages) devoted to information about community issues and events.

- The Healthy Communities Committee has supported the hiring of a mental health counsellor to assist students and parents and has been working with the Healthy Schools initiative to form a "Parents Together" group in the area.

- The Healthy Communities Committee has supported a successful campaign to get a separate Community Health Council for the lake-

- side communities and efforts by the Recreation Commission to develop a recreation centre.

- The Committee met with the Healthy Communities coordinator in Dawson Creek to learn about the initiatives there. The meeting produced "a wealth of ideas and information," says Shelest.

Determinants of Health

- Focussing on the determinants of health has not been easy on the context of fragmented local government jurisdictions and poor communication in the area, says Frank Shelest.

- "We have to solve these problems before we can go on to tackle the issues that affect the overall environment for health," he explains.

GOLD COUNTRY

Beginnings

The Gold Country Communities Society is a coalition of eight small communities (Ashcroft, Cache Creek, Clinton, Lillooet, Logan Lake, Lytton, Savona, and Spences Bridge) with a total population of about 10,000. The society exists to promote cooperation within the region on community-based projects related to economic and social development.

Last year, the society became involved in the Healthy Communities Initiative in order to promote wider participation in the community building process. There is a Healthy Communities committee in each of the eight communities.

"The Gold Country board of directors includes six mayors, two regional district directors, and a Community Futures chair," explains Ron Hood, the society's manager. "Healthy Communities is a 'grass roots' process, so we have had support from both formal and informal leaders in the community."

Actions

- All eight communities have completed a community needs analysis.
- All eight communities participated in a workshop to discuss "What do the community surveys really mean?" and "Where do we go from here?"
- Each community is developing individual goals and action plans related to issues such as recreation programs, the needs of seniors, town beautification, and safety and security services.



Examples of community projects include a "health track" in the local park in Clinton, a tree planting program in Savona, a joint native/non-native healing centre to replace the old hospital in Lytton, and a study of the transportation needs of seniors in Ashcroft.

Determinants of Health

Through its emphasis on sustainable economic development, the Healthy Communities process in the Gold Country communities is addressing the **creation of wealth/income** and the creation of **employment opportunities**. The new healing centre and new recreation facilities will have an impact on **physical and mental health**, and projects such as the fire hall and the study of seniors' transportation needs will address the physical safety and security of individuals.

The process of determining community needs and taking action on them is increasing the number and quality of healthy **personal connections** and enabling people to have a **greater sense of control** over their own lives.

KIMBERLEY

Beginnings

Located in rural southeastern B.C., the town of Kimberley sits in the midst of abundant natural amenities and recreational facilities.

"We hike, ski, fish, hike, climb, water ski, and hunt—all in our back yard," explains Healthy Communities project coordinator Rebecca White.

With all these amenities, Kimberley still has a number of community issues. In the next ten years,

residents will face major economic changes with the projected closing of the local mine. Last year, the Healthy Communities Initiative project in Kimberley focussed on sustainable economic development, an important determinant of health. This year the focus has been on another major determinant of health—the environment for youth.

Nearly 7,000 people live in the community, 26 percent of whom are over the age of 55. The presence of so many older people may mean that young people feel left out and undervalued. Having identified youth issues as a concern, the Healthy Communities initiative looked for ways to support youth and improve the social environment for young people.

"We wanted to create a positive view of youth in our community," Rebecca White explains.

Actions

To achieve its goal, the Healthy Communities committee in Kimberley organized a group of youth to play a larger role in the community. The youth have been doing this by participating in the town's annual "Julyfest," volunteering at seniors' activities, and raising funds to develop a youth centre for the community.

"We want to see the centre become the hub of youth services and activities in Kimberley," says White.

"We will be able to plan our own activities, be responsible for our own building, and give local youth training and access to information on youth issues."

The process of developing their own centre has involved youth in a variety of learning activities, such as

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- attending city council meetings,
- videotaping their findings, holding
- public forums to discuss the
- concept, and distributing opinion
- surveys in the community.

- Support for the youths' actions has
- come from the city council, the local
- newspaper, and the local RCMP, as
- well as from a number of individuals
- in the community.

• **Determinants of Health**

- The action plan to develop a youth
- centre has involved the youth in a
- learning process that has given
- them a **greater sense of control**
- over their environment.

- "The youth have gained a better
- sense of control by following
- through the process of locating and
- lobbying for their building and
- formulating the youth centre
- concept," says White.

- The project has promoted **healthier**
- **personal connections** between youth
- and adults, and it also has possibilities
- for affecting **youth employment**.

- "We hope to create **employment**
- **opportunities** for youth by
- renovating a building to house a
- youth centre," White explains.

• **MERRITT/ NICOLA VALLEY**

• **Beginnings**

- Traditionally, the strongest economic
- sectors in Merritt and the
- surrounding area in the Nicola
- Valley have been ranching, logging,
- and saw milling. With the growth of
- tourist traffic following the
- construction of the Coquihalla
- Highway, the tourism and service
- sectors of the economy in this

interior community are expanding rapidly. This expansion has brought other social changes, including the need for better recreation facilities and the growth of racial tensions.

The 12,000 people who inhabit the Nicola Valley include five Native Indian bands and a large East Indian population. After completing a comprehensive needs assessment in 1992, residents of the area established five priority issues—recreation and leisure opportunities, counselling, the visual appearance of the city, awareness of available services, and racial harmony. For its main focus in 1993, the Healthy Communities chose racial harmony and multicultural issues.

"Over the past year, the issue of racial tension had come to a head," says Healthy Communities Coordinator Iris Hodson. "The community was aware of the problem, and people wanted to do something about it."

Actions

After considering various ways to address the multicultural issue, the Healthy Communities Committee decided to hold a community festival that would bring different cultural groups together in celebration of their place in the community. Because the festival also addressed the need for more information about community services, it became a "celebration of community."

Events took place in two locations—the Civic Centre in Merritt, where people enjoyed a variety of displays and performances by cultural groups, and the local high school, where participants received instruction in traditional dances and were

entertained by singers, dancers, and a multicultural fashion show. The festival also included the Arts Council annual spring Variety Concert.

Determinants of Health

The community festival supported **healthy personal connections** and gave participants a **greater sense of control** over their lives. It has also provided learning opportunities for all the community and helped to increase **fair and respectful access to community services and resources.**

NORTH THOMPSON BAND (CHU CHUA)

Beginnings

Located in relatively isolated surroundings 10 miles north of Barriere, B.C., the North Thompson Band has its own school and its own sawmill and logging company. The forestry industry is the major employer, but band members also work in agriculture or fishing.

The 505 members of the band comprise seven major extended families, each one made up of three to four generations. In this close-knit rural community, the strength of the community is based on family relationships, and healing is a community effort. Within this context, the Healthy Communities initiative has focussed on finding culturally relevant ways of dealing with issues such as suicide, family violence, alcohol and drug abuse, parenting problems, AIDS awareness, vandalism, and drunk driving.

"We are especially concerned about the youth in our community, who are at high risk for accidental death and

suicide," says Healthy Communities coordinator John Harrison. "We are trying to determine how we can best use our limited resources to reach our dream of promoting healthier lifestyles for our children."

Actions

- The Healthy Communities Committee works with the band's social planning team to provide direction on social development issues.
- A youth group has been formed to provide a focus for a visioning process.
- The band has developed an extensive program of workshops for adults and youth on a wide variety of health and lifestyles issues. Topics have included suicide prevention, grief management, family violence, AIDS awareness, family violence, and positive self-development.
- The Healthy Communities Committee is doing a series of surveys to determine the effectiveness of the workshop programs. The surveys will help to identify which groups in the community are not being reached and why.
- The committee is participating in an ongoing planning process to review which strategies have worked and which haven't and to develop and implement effective parenting/youth/elders programming for at-risk youth and elders.
- The community hosted the 1994 Shuswap Gathering in August. This annual summer event is a celebration of Shuswap culture and

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Sicamous

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- a chance for different bands to
- come together and exchange ideas
- and experiences on issues related
- to community development. The
- theme of this year's gathering is
- "The Year of the Family." Meetings
- and workshops will focus on the
- quality of community life and
- strategies for community renewal
- and re-affirmation of cultural values.

Determinants of Health

- • The band's workshops and adult
- education programs have
- increased **learning opportunities**
- for youth and adults.
- • Band-owned
- industries are providing
- **employment opportunities** in
- the community.
- • Through its effect on vandalism,
- family violence, and alcohol and
- drug abuse, the band's new
- parenting/youth/elder programs
- will address determinants such as
- **physical safety and security,**
- **physical and mental health,**
- **and healthier beginnings**
- **for children.**

SICAMOUS

Beginnings

- Calling itself "New Images for
- Sicamous," the Healthy Communities
- initiative in the District of Sicamous
- started out with one clear
- objective—to find out what local
- residents think would make
- Sicamous a better, and therefore
- healthier, place to live.
- • Located in lake country at the north
- end of the Okanagan Valley,
- Sicamous and the surrounding area
- has a year-round population of
- approximately 3000 and a seasonal

economy based largely on forestry and tourism. Most services are located in neighbouring centres 30 to 60 minutes away by car.

The New Images Steering Committee which is directing the project is an example of broad representation and a demonstration of how different groups can work together for the benefit of the whole community. Members of the committee represent organizations such as City Council, the Eagle Valley Community Support Society, the Eagle Valley News, the Eagle Valley Arts Council, the Recreation Centre, and the Sicamous Wellness Group.

Actions

The Healthy Communities Steering Committee conducted a community survey to get ideas and suggestions from residents on how to make Sicamous a better place to live. Residents could participate in the project in three ways:

- attend one of several open house meeting at different locations in the area.
- talk to one of the survey assistants who conducted on-the-street interviews.
- fill out and return the blank portion of the project's information pamphlet.

To give young people a voice, the project arranged separate meetings with elementary and secondary school students. Grade 12 journalism students also participated by conducting on-the street interviews as a class project.

The survey consisted of seven open-ended questions designed to encourage people to think about different aspects of their lives, such



as family life, the quality of the environment, youth facilities, wheelchair accessibility, employment opportunities, transportation, adult education, affordable housing, and recreation facilities and programs. The survey questions and the open meetings also offered residents an opportunity to suggest ways of bringing about change.

The project presented preliminary results at a free Pancake Breakfast in June. A full report is now available.

Determinants of Health

By means of the survey and the open meetings, Sicamous residents were encouraged to consider the way health determinants such as **learning opportunities, employment opportunities, fair and respectful access to government services,** and a **greater sense of control** can affect the health of the community.



Small group discussions at a New Images meeting



VANCOUVER ISLAND/COAST

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CAMPBELL RIVER

Beginnings

- Campbell River (which calls itself the "Salmon Capital of the World") has experienced something of a population explosion in recent years. In this northern Vancouver Island community where fishing, forestry, and tourism are the main engines of the economy, the number of people is still relatively small—around 30,000—but the rate of growth has been rapid—over 16 percent in five years. Located in spectacular surroundings, Campbell River has attracted a diverse population, including many new Canadians and a growing number of "urban refugees" looking for a more balanced lifestyle, closer to nature.
- Healthy Communities began in Campbell River in 1992 with a needs assessment that identified areas of greatest concern. These included environmental protection, neighbourhood health, AIDS education, and multicultural participation in the life of the community. The "Action Phase" began in April 1993 with the hiring of a coordinator to help the group move forward on its agenda.
- "With the coordinator on board, the group needed to do some work to identify how it could achieve results," says Barb Wallington, the group's coordinator. "The first step was to adopt a mission statement: 'to encourage people to work together in a cooperative process to improve conditions that affect their

well being.' The second step was to develop a master plan as a basis for the group's actions."

Actions

The Master Plan included:

- promoting awareness of the Healthy Communities idea through media exposure, brochures, mall displays, reports to council, public forums, and other communications strategies.
 - making connections with other community groups and organizations that are working toward improving conditions that affect the wellbeing of the community.
 - a "Neighbourhood Recognition" program to acknowledge the work people are doing to make their neighbourhoods safe and friendly places to live.
 - a community workshop on group facilitation.
- Within the parameters of the master plan, other activities have included:
- community workshops on citizenship and participation by multicultural groups.
 - anti-discrimination training sessions.
 - a public forum on air quality and recommendations to council on control of wood stove smoke.

Determinants of Health

Through the neighbourhood recognition program, the Healthy



Communities committee is promoting **physical safety and security, healthy personal connections** among neighbours, and a greater sense of control over neighbourhood living conditions. The workshops on multicultural participation and anti-discrimination training address the need to promote **fair and respectful access** to social services and health care and a **greater sense of control** in decisions that affect our lives.

Actions on air quality are addressing **physical health** as well as a **greater sense of control**. In addition, the committee is encouraging net-working and partnerships within the community (for example, between business and the social sectors) to work toward improving the **overall quality of life**.

COMOX-STRATHCONA REGIONAL DISTRICT

Beginnings

The Comox-Strathcona Healthy Communities initiative began in 1992-93 with a series of community meetings and a commitment to take positive action on the problem of youth alienation and vandalism.

"We wanted youth and other groups in our community to become more involved with each other and to work together to meet the needs of youth," says Healthy Communities coordinator Jim Stevenson.

Located on the East side of Vancouver Island, the Comox-Strathcona Regional District is a large, mountainous area with a population of over 50,000 and

growing fast. Forestry, tourism, government services, and a Canadian Armed Forces base are important sources of employment, along with retail sales and other small businesses.

The community identified a lack of leadership training and appropriate recreation opportunities for youth as a major issue. The community also identified youth themselves as part of the solution. From the beginning, the major thrust of the project has been to give youth opportunities to make choices and take responsibility for their decisions.

"One of the positive characteristics of the community is a strong interest in youth and a willingness on the part of youth to become involved," says Jim Stevenson. "Other strengths were a supportive local government and a cooperative attitude on the part of community service agencies and local recreation departments."

Actions

With support from the Healthy Communities coalition of interests, youth in the Comox-Strathcona district have taken leadership roles in number of projects to improve the environment for young people in the area. These projects include:

- establishing a Comox Valley Youth Council
- developing a summer outdoor youth leadership program.
- organizing several community forums involving youth.
- creating the Cumberland Youth Centre.
- forming the Comox Teen Centre.
- organizing a self-esteem

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- workshop for teens and parents, called "Turning Point".
-
- organizing teen involvement in violence awareness.
-
- helping to create the Task Force on Youth Violence.
-
- involving youth in community events such as Canada Day and Nautical Days.
-
- forming a skateboard club which raised \$26,000 towards the building of a skateboard park.
-
- "By getting youth and adults working together in a positive direction, these events have changed the environment in the community", says Jim Stevenson.
-
- "The community is more aware of the needs of youth and what youth can contribute," he explains. "More opportunities are available for youth to get involved, and we have created some permanent programs and facilities that will benefit youth. The relationship between youth and adults in the community has improved, and we now have more groups that are working on youth issues."
-
- **Determinants of Health**
-
- By giving youth a larger say in the community and in decisions that affect them, the project has given youth a **greater sense of control** over their lives.
-
- By providing opportunities for youth and adults to work together on issues and encouraging greater cooperations among groups and individuals, the project has increased the number and quality of **healthy personal connections** in the community.
-
-

- By developing a wider range of programs and facilities for youth, the project has improved young people's **access to government and community services**.
- By helping to youth to build leadership skills and self-esteem, the project has had an impact on the **physical and mental health** of young people.

GWA' SALA- 'NAKWAXDA'XW COUNCIL

Beginnings

The Gwa'Sala-'Nakwaxda'xw council consists of approximately 500 people who live on a reserve near Port Hardy, on the northeast coast of Vancouver Island. In this coastal environment, most people work in the fishing industry or have jobs in silviculture or construction.

In the first year of its Healthy Communities initiative, the band has focussed on projects related to safety and security for children and families.

"Our first objective was to create a safe environment for our children and to involve a broad base of people in the process," says one band member. "We wanted to clean up unsafe places in the community and set up a Neighbourhood Watch program and a community patrol. We also wanted to develop a family intervention-healing program."

Actions

The band has followed through on its objectives in a number of areas. For example, it has created a Family Intervention Program that offers healing services for members who



have experienced family violence or abuse situations. In addition, volunteers are now patrolling the community and "looking out for each other."

The actions have had a positive impact on attitudes inside and outside the community, says Wilma Isbister, the manager of the Family Intervention Program.

"Because of the Healthy Communities initiative, more community members are committed to healing and community safety," she explains. "Off-reserve professionals are giving more respect to the community as well."

Careful planning and the support of the band council have been important factors in the success of the initiative, says Isbister. Of equal importance are "people pulling together, a strong desire to heal, and dedicated people," she adds.

Determinants of Health

- By creating 12 new jobs in the community, the initiative had a positive impact on the **creation and distribution of wealth in the community**.
- Training 31 members of the community in techniques of mediation and reconciliation has increased **healthy personal connections** within families, supported **healthier beginnings for children**, and **improved mental health** by building self-esteem among parents, children, and project staff.
- The project has had a positive impact on **physical safety and security** for children and has given people in the community a **greater sense of control** over their lives.

NANAIMO FIRST NATIONS

Beginning

On the four Nanaimo First Nations reserves on the east coast of Vancouver Island, people are using the Healthy Communities model of decision making to deal with youth issues.

The community took advantage of an opportunity to purchase of a youth centre, which it then turned over to the youth to operate through an elected Youth Council. This decision initiated a process that has brought new strength and purpose to the youth community.

"Now the Youth Council has taken over all of the responsibilities involving youth and youth issues," says Councillor Irene Seward. The members of the Youth Council are Kerri-Anne Potvin, Emmy Manson, Blake White, Nicole Lewis, and Kate Wyse. At the Youth Centre, they are in charge of programming and fund raising, and they also interview, hire, and supervise the youth coordinator and youth worker that run the Youth Centre.

"We have had some very interesting comments when candidates are interviewed by a 12 year old!" says Seward.

Actions

As well as directing the operation of the Youth Centre, the Youth Council has taken on a variety of activities to support a healthy youth community.

- For National Addiction Awareness Week, the council scheduled a host of activities, including a video night and discussion, guest speakers, a "Mocktail and Pizza"

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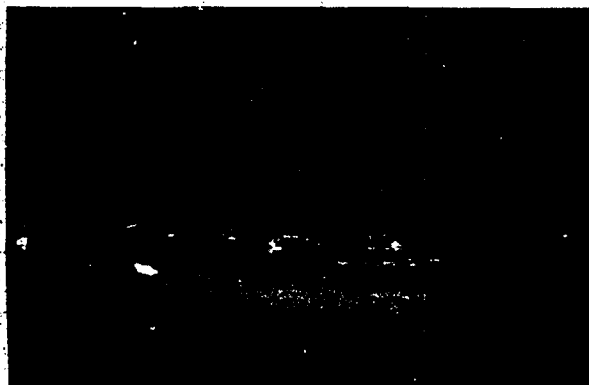
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Oweekeno Nation

- Night, and a dance. The youth had full control of the project, including planning, organizing, advertising, promoting, and hosting all the events.
- The council recently hired a coordinator to create a summer recreation plan for youth six to fourteen years old.
- The Youth Council meets weekly, and any issues concerning the youth in the community come to the council for discussion.

- The Youth Council has been involved with a long list of community initiatives and activities. These include a First Nations sports festival, numerous youth conferences, raising funds to go to a Pow Wow in North Dakota, the Commonwealth Games opening

- ceremonies, youth/elders dinners, posters and workshops on AIDS, suicide prevention, fetal alcohol syndrome, communication, numerous sporting events and activities, and student exchange programs.

- A bi-weekly newsletter lets the community know about "all the wonderful things our young people have accomplished," says Irene Seward.

- Support for the youth project has come from all sectors of the community, including the Chief and Council and the community "Health Team."

- "The team works together to brainstorm and fine tune our approach to any kind of community

development project," says Seward. "This system of team work has become an essential ingredient in building a strong foundation for all community projects."

Determinants of Health

The Healthy Communities principles have been incorporated into the every-day workings of the Youth Council.

"It is the system now," Seward explains. "It will be very difficult to return to any prior system of youth involvement. With the Youth Council, the message is 'to try something, anything, just understand, that there are always results.'"

This approach of giving youth responsibility for decision making has enabled them to have a **greater sense of control over their lives**. Youth involvement in community activities has raised their profile and increased the number and quality of **healthy personal connections**. By raising the self esteem of youth, the project can have an impact on **physical and mental health**. Specific programs such as sports activities, youth/elder dinners, and workshops on health issues have provided a variety of **learning opportunities**.

OWEEKENO NATION

Beginnings

Forty people live on the Oweekeno Nation's reserve on B.C.'s central coast. Located 120 miles from the nearest hospital in Port McNeill and 80 miles from the nearest public health services in Port Hardy, the reserve is extremely isolated and accessible only by boat, float plane, or helicopter.



The reserve has a temperate climate and a lush marine environment with abundant natural food resources.

A one-room school serves 10 children in grades K to 7. Enrollment has increased this year to ten students, up from a previous average of six or seven. Older students go to school off the reserve and are separated from their families most of the year, except for holidays and the summer break.

In an effort to combat economic problems and social problems related to addiction and violence, community leaders developed a plan to initiate a process of healing based on pride in the community's cultural heritage.

Actions

The project's first action was to hold a series of community meetings to identify community-based solutions that would meet specific needs and complement existing community health services. These meetings were a way of involving the elders of the community in developing culturally relevant solutions.

"The planning committee recognized that the key to successful change lay in the wisdom and experience of elders who hold intact the integrity of traditional ways, explains Healthy Communities Coordinator Karen Walkus.

These meetings resulted in a number of other actions:

- A joint-venture "Challenge 94 Program" has given young people from Oweekeno and neighbouring communities an opportunity to work under the direction of elders to catch fish to supply the needs of the people.

- Community members have worked with elders to construct a seagoing canoe and to plan the construction of a long house.

- Community members have helped complete a feasibility study for a cultural program for the community.

"Through the planning process, residents of the community were exposed to the need for increased involvement in order to take control over the social and economic problems facing the community," says Walkus.

Determinants of Health

- The involvement of elders has increased **healthy personal connections** and addressed the mental health needs of the community by fostering personal growth and development and instilling pride in the traditional ways and values.
- The "Challenge 94 Program" and the building projects have provided **employment opportunities** for community members.
- The interaction with elders and traditional activities has provided **learning opportunities** for young people in the community.

PARKSVILLE

Beginnings

When the municipal government in Parksville asked for input into the Official Community Plan (OCP), the Healthy Communities Committee saw an opportunity to make a difference in the future development of their community.

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- A small but relatively prosperous retirement and tourism centre on the east coast of Vancouver Island,
- Parksville has approximately 8,000 permanent residents, 30 percent of whom are over 64. Faced with rapid population growth (due largely to heavy immigration from Victoria, mainland B.C., and other areas), residents wanted to take charge of the change process and turn it to their advantage.



Land Use-Development in our neighbourhood; "Kitchen" table meeting

Actions

The 21-member Parksville Healthy Communities Committee supervised a process of public input into the writing of the OCP. The committee

- operated a storefront office and information centre where residents could review the proposed community plan and give their opinion. The committee also helped organize neighbourhood meetings to canvass residents' opinions and ideas. In the four months following the release of the first draft of the OCP, over 1,000 people visited the Community Visions office to offer their input.
- Through this intensive process of public consultation, the community identified a set of commonly held values that have become part of the revised OCP. These values focus on economic diversity, conservation of ecosystems, accessible human services, and a mixture of housing options for a socially and economically diverse population.
- With encouragement from the Parksville Healthy Communities Committee, the municipal government in Parksville has established a permanent structural link between City Council, the

municipal planning department, and the community. The link, which was created by bylaw in October 1993, is called the Healthy Communities Advisory Commission. The 15-member official body is responsible for helping with the development of the strategic plan that will implement the policies in the Official Community Plan. The Commission will be ongoing and has the same status as the Advisory Planning Commission and the Parks and Recreation Commission.

In April 1994, the city also appointed a Healthy Community Coordinator for a one-year term as a full-time member of the city staff.

Working under the mandate of the new OCP, the Healthy Communities Advisory Commission has formed three broad-based committees to do strategic planning in relation to the core community values. Committees on the environment, economic development, and housing are focussing on developing environmental impact assessments, processes for conducting an environmental inventory, a housing policy, and a long term economic development strategy that goes beyond business development.

In line with the city's commitment to broad participation, the committees include a total of 65 members from different sectors of the community, including youth, seniors and families, as well as people who deal professionally with environmental, economic, and social issues. The Commission's link with the municipal council also ensures the presence of a political voice in the process.

Other actions have also resulted from the partnership between the



community and the municipal government. These include

- a tree planting program and tree protection bylaw,
- a burning bylaw and wood-waste chipping program,
- a community committee to improve the accessibility of public facilities, and
- a skateboarders planning group.

Future action plans include participating in the municipal strategic planning process and facilitating the formation of neighbourhood associations and linkages with schools.

Determinants of Health

As developed through the public participation process, the Official Community Plan will have an impact on a number of determinants of health. The plan includes a commitment to "an economic development strategy with a long time horizon and a focus beyond business development." The plan also includes commitments to the preservation of ecosystems, accessible human services, and a mixture of housing options for "a socially and economically diverse population." When these commitments are implemented in the city's planning policy, they will have a long-range effect on **employment opportunities** and the **creation and distribution of wealth**.

The organization and implementation of the public participation process has had an impact on the number and quality of **healthy personal connections** between individuals and groups in the community. The success of the process has also given residents a

greater sense of control over decisions that affect the quality of life in their community.

PENELAKUT TRIBE (CHEMAINUS)

Beginnings

The Penelakut Tribe has two reserves, one in Chemainus on southern Vancouver Island and one on Kuper Island, a small island in the same area. Most people live on the Kuper Island reserve, where services such as the community health representative, provincial social worker, and the National Native Alcohol and Drug Abuse Program (NNDAP) are located. The population of the two communities totals 430 people.

The tribe's Healthy Communities initiative started with a community survey to identify objectives for the community.

"We developed specific questionnaires for each age group," says Healthy Communities Coordinator Pam Sam. "For example, we asked the youth to describe their dream or vision for our community. For the elders, we asked questions about the times when they remember us being healthy and strong. This enabled us to capture the history of our elders, as well as looking at ways of regaining our cultural and traditional lifestyles."

Actions

Youth from the community attended a Christmas dinner party to discuss the results of the survey. At the dinner, the youth elected two young people to represent them at community meetings and to speak for them on issues of concern to

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- youth. The youth questionnaire led
- to other actions by and for youth,
- such as an AIDS awareness
- workshop for teens, young adults,
- and concerned parents.

- Survey results from the other
- sections of the community will have
- an impact on all community
- programs, says Sam. The Healthy
- Communities Committee will liaise
- with the Chief and Council and
- other programs to address the
- community's issues and concerns.
- The committee, which presently
- consists of two youth,
- two concerned parents, and two
- elders, will work on involving
- more members of the community,
- including the two elected
- youth representatives.

- "The study showed that many
- members of the community are
- willing to take part in the Healthy
- Communities Committee on a
- volunteer basis," says Sam. "Our
- youth are also very willing to
- volunteer their time to support
- changes and promote health."

Determinants of Health

- • The Healthy Communities survey
- has increased **healthy personal**
- **connections** by involving youth,
- elders, and the general community
- in the research process.
- • The AIDS awareness workshop
- promoted **physical health** and
- **learning opportunities** for
- young people and their parents.
- • Participation in the Healthy
- Communities Committee has
- enabled youth, parents, and
- elders to have a **greater sense of**
- **control** over their lives.
- • Ongoing liaison with the Chief and
- Council and other community

programs may have an impact on
determinants such as **physical**
safety and security, physical and
mental health, and healthier
beginnings for children.

PENINSULA COMMUNITIES

Beginnings

The Healthy Communities Committee on the Saanich Peninsula works with youth in three neighbouring communities located near Victoria on Vancouver Island. The communities of Sidney, North Saanich, and Central Saanich are located in semi-rural surroundings within a few kilometres of an urban area where tourism and government are the major industries. The area is also a popular retirement centre.

The Healthy Communities Committee has acquired broad-based support for its objectives from local merchants, community organizations, seniors groups, churches, schools, and the Sidney town council.

"We wanted to enable young people to assume leadership on behalf of their peers and to accept responsibility and ownership of the youth planning process," says Deryck Thomson, the committee chair.

Actions

With support from the community, the youth on the Saanich Peninsula have formed a society, the Youth Establishing Entertainment Society (YEES) to develop activity programs, raise funds, make submissions to council, and plan for an eventual Peninsula Youth Council with the goal of securing "a place to hang."



Deryck Thomson says the formation of the Society has benefitted both youth and adults.

"Local youth have established a focal point for achieving their objectives," he explains, "and adult leadership cooperated in the process, without interfering with youth ownership of the program."

Thomson says the initiative has also heightened community awareness of the potential contribution of youth to the wellbeing of the community, and it has started to lessen the communication gap between youth and older adults.

Determinants of Health

"The participation of youth did not take place in isolation from other constituencies in the community," says Thomson.

As a result of this interaction, the biggest impact on health determinants so far has been to increase **healthy personal connections** and to give citizens a **greater sense of control** over decisions affecting their lives and communities.

The process itself has been a **learning opportunity** for youth—a preparation for future leadership roles in society.

SAANICH

Beginnings

Saanich is the largest of the five neighbouring municipalities that make up Greater Victoria on Vancouver Island. Rapid population growth is changing the character of Saanich from a largely rural community to a relatively densely populated residential and retail centre.

The municipality of Saanich has been a strong supporter of the Healthy Communities process over a period of years. Calling itself Healthy Saanich, the project has involved community-based initiatives led by volunteer citizen action committees and staff-driven initiatives, such as developing a long list of healthy public policies in several municipal departments.

Actions

"In the past year or so, most of our successes have been the result of the development of strong partnerships," says Ron Kirstein, Coordinator of Community Services for the Corporation of Saanich.

- **Western Saanich Family Place**
The Saanich Family Place came into being through the combined efforts of Capital Families, Saanich Parks and Recreation, Healthy Saanich, Queen Alexandra Centre for Children's Health, Saanich Kiwanis, and other supporting community agencies. The Family Place will occupy space in the new Recreation Centre at Queen Alexandra.
- **Saanich Volunteer Services**
Healthy Saanich accepted the challenge of developing a concept for a volunteer service for Saanich. Initially, the program was set up as a direct support for seniors.
- **Youth Services**
A youth drop-in centre was created through a partnership with Healthy Saanich, a local Parent Action Committee, and Saanich Parks and Recreation Department. In addition, a youth

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- group has been formed to
- organize and run events and
- programs for youth. Many
- community and business partners
- have come on board to assist
- youth programs.

- • Saanich Festival
- With the support of Healthy
- Saanich and the municipality, the
- Saanich Festival Society has been
- able to expand the annual Saanich
- Festival to 34 events, all
- organized and operated by
- volunteers or Saanich Parks.

- • Community Association Network
- The growing spirit of partnership
- engendered by the Healthy
- Saanich initiative has resulted in
- the formation of the Community
- Association Network, an
- "umbrella" group of community
- associations and ratepayers
- organizations.

Determinants of Health

- • The activities at Western Saanich
- Family Place can have a positive
- impact on **healthy beginnings**
- **for children.**
- • The Volunteer Services Society
- can promote **safety and security**
- for the elderly and other users of
- the service. It can also increase
- the number and quantity of
- **healthy personal connections.**
- • The development of partnerships
- in support of community
- initiatives enables people to take
- effective actions and have a
- **greater sense of control** over
- their lives.

SUNSHINE COAST

Beginnings

Although ferries are the only means of transportation along this area of the south coast, the population has risen in recent years to approximately 24,000 permanent residents. Because of the location, tourism and recreation are increasingly important industries, along with the traditional logging and fishing.

Rapid population growth has led to concerns about how to sustain a healthy community in a time of change and development. In its first year, the Healthy Communities process identified specific concerns through an intense survey campaign using variety of methods, from one-on-one interviews and meetings with interest groups to open meetings and questionnaires distributed through the schools and the local newspaper.

The survey produced over 6,000 responses, comments, and suggestions on a range of concerns—transportation, environmental protection, recreation, health care facilities, employment and the economy, policing and public safety, drugs and alcohol, and families and parenting.

Actions

After the excellent response to the survey, the Healthy Communities Steering Committee sponsored a public forum (the "Next Step Forum") to discuss the issues and give direction to the community-building process. The forum brought a number of existing groups in the community together to work on action plans in specific areas such as "community visioning," community planning, transportation, recreation, input into the New Directions process, and improving and



coordinating government and health services in the area.

The process is moving ahead with strong support and cooperation from volunteers, community groups, schools, the local health unit, and local government, says Peggy Connor, chair of the the Healthy Communities Steering Committee. The steering committee is developing strong links with groups charged with making decisions, and there is growing awareness on the part of groups and local government of the need to coordinate and cooperate.

"Local government is beginning to see community groups in a new light," Connor explains, "and people are beginning to understand more about what Healthy Communities means to people personally and in their organizations. There is a clearer understanding in the community about the need to shift our thinking around who bears responsibility for health, particularly in a rural community that is undergoing rapid growth."

Determinants of Health

The Healthy Communities process has "planted the seed for a more holistic appreciation" of the relationship between health and the social, physical, and economic environment, says Connor.

- The group's actions support **healthier beginnings for children** by building links to Healthy Schools and parent advisory groups.
- The group promotes **learning opportunities for young people** by helping to organize programs that stress the importance of job skills for youth.

- By **networking and building stronger links between** community groups, the Healthy Communities process is helping to increase **healthy personal connections** in the community.
- Workplace and group programs on skills such as stress management and communications promote **better physical and mental health**.
- Working with individuals and community groups on enhancing their "voice" and their decision-making skills is helping them to develop a **greater sense of control** over their own lives.

TLA'AMIN (SLIAMMON) BAND

Beginnings

With a present membership of approximately 760, the Tla'Amin (Sliammon) Band is a small, closely knit community located on the coast, within a few kilometres of Powell River. Because of its location, which is accessible only by plane or ferry, the community is somewhat isolated. However, the sense of community is strong, and the band is involved in a number of economic development projects related to fishing and forestry. Band members are also active in developing home-based businesses.

The band has a coordinated health team of front line workers and a number of successful community programs, including a leisure service program, a community development committee, and a health board. "Overall, the band is committed to a process of community development whose focus is the pursuit of a healthy

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- community – physically, emotionally,
- mentally, and socially” says the band’s
- health and human development
- coordinator Laurette Bloomquist.

• “We want to take responsibility both

- individually and as a community for
- building respect, trust, and
- compassion among our people,” she
- explains. “We promote broad
- community participation to enhance
- our traditional values and customs,
- and we strive to establish equality
- among our members.”

• Specifically, the focus of the Healthy

- Communities initiative has been on the
- relationship between the band elders
- and the youth of the community.

• “Everyone concerned has identified

- the need to encourage our young
- people and our elders to work
- together on developing some
- common goals for a healthy
- community,” says Bloomquist.

• Actions

• Last year the band used its Healthy

- Communities funding to hire a part-
- time coordinator to support the
- development of a youth and elders
- program. This process resulted in a
- number of activities based on the goal
- of enhancing mutual understanding
- and awareness of traditional values
- and customs. These included:

- • workshops that brought both
- groups together to discuss issues
- that concern them
- • counselling on needs identified
- by the youth and elders, such as
- family relationships, drug and
- alcohol abuse, and other lifestyle
- style issues
- • involving the youth and elders in
- activities that are traditional and
- cultural in content

- supporting youth and elders in
- out-of-town trips that are
- culturally appropriate

- supporting youth and elders
- at various service agencies
- when required.

Determinants of Health

- The youth and elders program
- promoted **healthy personal**
- **connections** between adults
- and youth in the community.
- By focusing on family
- relationships, lifestyle choices,
- and the value of traditional
- customs, the youth and elders
- program promoted **physical**
- **and mental health.**
- By encouraging broad community
- participation in problem solving
- and decision making, regardless
- of age, income, and health status,
- the program is helping to give
- people a **greater sense of**
- **control** over their lives.

VICTORIA DOWNTOWN

Beginnings

Like most urban centres in Canada, Victoria is “home” to many homeless people. As both the provincial capital and a centre of international tourism, Victoria is a prosperous community. Yet hundreds of youth and adults are at risk because of unemployment, poverty, drug abuse, and homelessness.

Because these issues are most apparent in the downtown core, service agencies and community organizations have focused efforts on helping to strengthen the sense of community in this area. With



support from the city and province, these groups formed the Downtown Victoria Community Development Project. The goal of the project is "to support the homeless and at risk of inner Victoria to establish their own priorities and to help them to achieve their own goals," explains coordinator Jannit Rabinovitch

Actions

The DVCA helped to support the formation of the Victoria Street Community Association (VSCA), whose membership is made up exclusively of street people. The Street Community Association led the effort to create Medewiwin, a 16-unit apartment complex designed by and for the homeless. Medewiwin opened in March, 1994.

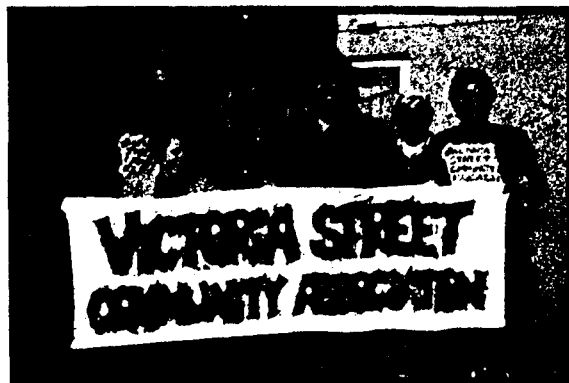
Members of the Street Community Association also participate in the Downtown Working Group, an ad hoc committee working on issues of health and public safety in the downtown core.

As a result of these actions by people in the street community and the support of the city, social service agencies, and provincial government staff, the sense of accomplishment is strong in Victoria's inner city.

Determinants of Health

"Enabling people to have a **greater sense of control** has been a central theme of this project," says Rabinovitch. "The interest and willingness of the street community has played the central role in all the positive actions we have seen in this area."

The project has created **employment** by hiring youth at risk to help operate a storefront information centre in the downtown area. And the Medewiwin housing complex, where a resident has been hired to work as a caretaker, provides **physical safety and security** for vulnerable people in the area.



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