

Communities Invest in

HEALTH PROMOTION

Welcome to the sixth edition of the BCCHP newsletter. In this issue we will update you on the activities of the Coalition and feature articles by our members and supporters.



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Established in June 2000, the BC Coalition for Health Promotion is a group of volunteer citizens dedicated to the advancement of health promotion in BC. Our Core Team members are experienced in participatory research, evaluation, health leadership, community development and funding in the nonprofit sector.

ELSE STRAND: FRIEND, MENTOR, COLLEAGUE



On Friday, February 13, 2009, Else lost her second battle with cancer.

Our group, the community, the province and, in fact, the country lost a dedicated and tireless worker. An absolute powerhouse at governance, Else worked with CMHA at the local, provincial and national level. She was the first and only chair of the Central Vancouver Island Regional Health Board when health care regionalization was in its early stages. Else joined the BC Coalition for Health Promotion in 2003, at a time when the Coalition was getting non-profit society status, and took on the job of chair, which she held until she passed away.

Else brought with her the same skilled, efficient and quiet wisdom that was so much a part of her professional life. She made room for everyone, family, friends and colleagues, and she always had time for fun. We will miss her and always remember the contributions she made to our organization and to the community in general. But more than that, we will miss Else's warmth, her genuine concern for people and her friendship.

Irene Dutton



Cindy Carleton is Coordinator of Understanding the Early Years Cowichan (www.cowichankids.ca), a three-year initiative funded by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada. The project enables communities to better understand the needs of their young children and families so that they can determine the best programs and services to meet those needs.

BELONGING FROM THE START

I recently attended a Gordon Neufeld parent conference in Richmond on the importance of Building Attachment Community. You would think that it would be hard to fill a room with parents, on a Saturday, to talk to them about how it “takes a village to raise a child.” But, the room was packed and the parents were buzzing. They were interested in learning how to be “social inclusion” advocates for their children.

It’s natural for parents to want their children to have friends and feel like they belong. Current research is also finding that parents want this for themselves. In fact, “parents crave community” according to the report Vital Communities, Vital Support: How well do Canada’s communities support parents of young children? (2007 Invest in Kids) The report summarizes a National Survey of Parents of Young Children.



The key findings of this report indicate that parents yearn to be welcomed, valued, recognized and supported in their role as parents. Parenthood and childbirth trigger a search for community but the community is not meeting their needs and parents feel isolated and expected to fend for themselves until their children reach school age.

For parents, the intangible characteristics of neighborhoods and communities are as important as the tangible programs and services. Opportunities for peer interaction, sharing and providing emotional support to other parents, safe and welcoming public places and a feeling of belonging and interdependence all work to create a sense of a community where parents can and do feel supported.

We all want to create more welcoming communities for families with young children, but there is more to it than providing open arms or more programs and services. We first need to understand how children develop attachments with their parents, families, caregivers and members of the community.

Neufeld describes two child rearing methods that define how children interact with their world through the attachments they develop. One style is Home-based and the other is Village based. But both require a village of support.

Developing children’s attachments beyond their primary caregiver needs to be cultivated in our society, because for the most part, our cultures no longer provide the rituals and contexts in which to do this. And it is a bit of an art – a process that Neufeld refers to as matchmaking.

Sometimes it seems that we are going backwards in our efforts to develop communities that include and support healthy, happy children and families. But there is a growing body of wonderful resources available to help us turn the key and move in the right direction.

According to author Jack Shonkoff, to say that parenting is “all about personal responsibility is kind of putting your head in the sand - because nobody raises kids alone” (Neurons to Neighborhoods: The Science of Early Childhood Development).

So one thing we can do now is to respect our relationships and interdependence by letting go of our belief in our separate existences – what Albert Einstein called our “optical delusion.” For every one of us, early childhood experience is an indicator of lifelong health.

Linda Hill is a retired community psychologist who has spent over thirty years building bridges across differences in partnership with schools and organizations in the Cowichan Region and internationally. She has written many articles and manuals about building welcoming and inclusive communities including her two books: *Discovering Connections* (1998) and *Connecting Kids* (2001).

INCLUSIVE JOURNEYS INTO THE HEART OF HEALTH PROMOTION

Each Fall and Spring since 2003, volunteer Inclusive Travel Guides from Cowichan Intercultural Society have been guiding intergenerational groups on weekend “Inclusive Leadership Adventures” that lead right into the heart of health promotion.

The forty or so participants in each adventure learn that by bringing our differences together we can build more welcoming and inclusive communities – starting with our own homes, neighbourhoods, schools, youth groups and other community organizations.

Through cooperative games, conversations, creative arts, outdoor education and other experiential learning activities, participants quickly learn skills for connecting with differences, communicating with compassion and applying anti-discrimination First Aid when needed.



Just like the impact of traveling to different countries around the

world, the impact of participating in an Inclusive Leadership Adventure is transformational and life-changing. Hundreds of youth and adults have been involved, and the outcomes of action plans have included documentary films, community plays, dozens of diversity education workshops, community dinners, fund raising for local and international projects, and volunteering for community events such as the North American Indigenous Games. We invite you to sign up for our next Inclusive Leadership Adventure on October 22 to 25th.

On August 9-14 we are holding an Inclusive Leadership summer institute. This is a gathering of professionals, volunteers, students and other community members from many different backgrounds who are passionate about diversity and the potential of youth and adults working together to change the world. Contact Linda McDaniels at 250-748-3112, lindamcd.cis@telus.net or check our website at: <http://sites.google.com/site/welcometoinclusiveleadership/>.

As one of our youth participants said, “Inclusive Leadership is like the journey to the other side of the rainbow in the Wizard of Oz except you wake up and it isn’t a dream. This stuff really works.”

“We have learned that to achieve equal human rights means focusing on understanding our differences instead of making everyone the same. We are all unique. We have been going to schools to teach children about standing up for diversity and one of us has her own child to think about. We want children to grow up not to be racist. We don’t need more assimilation” (Leadership students from Cowichan Valley Open Learning Cooperative).

Chrystal Ocean is co-author and administrator of the popular non-partisan blog *Challenging the Commonplace*. The following was posted to the blog on May 21, 2008. Of 800 articles, it ranks in the top ten for number of downloads.

MEANINGS: BELONGING, HOME, COMMUNITY

I filled out a survey yesterday on community meaning. For each question, respondents were to give the first answer that came to mind. Along with questions about the respondents' understanding of various concepts, including belonging, home and community, was this question, the last one:

When do you most feel a sense of community?

Here was my response:

It has been a very long time. I'm 57 years old now and the last time I felt a sense of community was at the age of 14. Then, I was in an environment in which to be and express who I am was permissible; it was the first time in my life I'd experienced that. Unfortunately, it lasted for only 11 months, after which I had to leave that community. When I think of belonging, I think of home, and that's the place I associate with the latter.

I went for a walk after completing the survey and began reflecting on my answers. I soon realized that underlying my sense of the meaning of belonging, home and community was a single, uncomplicated idea: **acceptance**.

It was nothing so robust or overt as 'welcoming'. Just acceptance, manifested in an environment in which everyone adopts a live-and-let-live attitude and respect for difference.

In that place, I was FREE TO BE ME, without pigeonholing or labelling.

Actually, the latter isn't quite right. ALL of the residents at that place were labelled, which meant that we ended up undistinguished from one another. That is, being labelled made us all equal – at least in each other's eyes, which was all that mattered to us.

You see, that place was Lakeshore Psychiatric Hospital, which doesn't exist anymore. In the 60's, that location on Lakeshore Blvd. in Toronto was a 'mental institution' or 'looney bin'. I'd more describe it as a warehouse for undesirables and strays, people who society was happy to throw away.

Now given the horror of that place, how could I possibly recall it to mind whenever triggered to think of home or belonging or community?

It's because the patients were expected to have an emotional life and licensed to exhibit eccentric behaviour. We were permitted to be normal, as judged by our own standards.

The relief to be who we were was enormous, and the sense of freedom intoxicating. Never before or since have I felt anything like that degree of acceptance and with it, the freedom to stretch my faculties, explore who I was and who I could potentially be. It was mind expanding in the best sense of that term.

As bad as most of these institutions were, including Lakeshore Psychiatric Hospital, they got some things right. For LPH, it was its failure to psychiatrically treat certain of its residents – to leave us alone. Its failure to treat summed up, in a word, acceptance of us just the way we were.

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Reflections on inclusion: It's not really about participation - we're not all extroverts. It's about having the *freedom and resources* to participate. These enable choice, whether to choose participation or not. --Chrystal Ocean

Curious about Lakeshore Psychiatric Hospital?
Begin here: <http://www.newtorontohistorical.com/Mimico%20Asylum.htm>

Kyla Muir and Emma Koch are coordinators of Cowichan Independent Living's summer recreation program: Adaptive Recreation Cowichan. They are university students funded by Service Canada. The two, who have known each other since kindergarten, share a passion for working with others and enjoying the outdoors.

RECREATION & SOCIAL INCLUSION: IMPORTANT INDICATORS OF HEALTH

The World Health Organization recognizes that a person's status of health is more than simply the presence or absence of disease. Instead, it names twelve factors that together complete a larger picture of health. One aspect of these factors is the idea of social inclusion. According to this idea, a person who does not feel included in society to some degree may be missing an important aspect of emotional health that, in turn, can affect their quality of life.



Barriers such as physical and mental disability can restrict a person's ability to participate in societal norms such as socialization and physical recreation. Through the use of adaptive equipment and sensitivity training we are able to meet the needs of participants of all abilities, enabling them to be included in activities that may otherwise be inaccessible or exclusive.



The two main components of our recreation program are sailing and hiking. Additionally, we also aim to facilitate several social and cultural outings each summer, including picnics at local parks and trips to local attractions. Our goal is to provide a fun, social opportunity in the outdoors for people who, at times, suffer from isolation in the community, or who don't often get a chance to access nature.



Leisure opportunities are extremely important for people who live with disabilities. Our program offers independence to people who may feel they lack it in many aspects of life. Some participants would never have imagined that they could experience such freedom in beautiful, natural places that are usually so difficult for people with mobility issues to reach. Not only are we able to help participants overcome physical disabilities using adaptive equipment, we also help many to overcome financial barriers associated with disabilities, such as lack of access to funds and transportation.

By making recreation opportunities accessible to people of all abilities, we like to think that we are making our community more inclusive and contributing to a larger picture of holistic health.

Daphne Moldowin is a social activist who has lived in the Cowichan Valley since 1979. She is involved in a number of community organizations, lives a life of voluntary simplicity, is a vegan, an artist and a burgeoning writer. She supports the food security initiative by promoting and selling locally grown produce and takes great pleasure in living on and maintaining a small wooded lot in the middle of a suburban neighbourhood.

THIS IS COMMUNITY

My Friend is living with terminal cancer. He is indigent. His family is too far away to help.

Friend reached out to the community for support.

An amazing occurrence has taken place. Within one evening a few close friends gathered together to devise a plan that would enlist many loving hands to honour Friend's request that he live at home with his beloved son and dog by his side, eating the food he likes, listening to favorite music and spending time with as many of his friends as possible.

Registered Nurses make daily visits, the Doctor makes house calls and LPN's come to spend the nights. The community of friends come at scheduled times, so Friend is never alone.

Very few of us have money but there is an abundance of love available, which is freely given. It is awesome, in the largest sense of the word, what has transpired. We rented a hall, had a pot luck dinner, silent auction, Tango and Salsa dance demonstrations, poetry reading and five live Bands to entertain us. Friend was there, even managed to dance the Tango. Enough money was raised to cover Friend's expenses and pay for his choice of a Green Burial.

THIS is what "poor" people can do. THIS is what love is. THIS IS COMMUNITY.



"The healing of our present woundedness may lie in recognizing and reclaiming the capacity we all have to heal each other, the enormous power in the simplest of human relationships: the strength of a touch, the blessing of forgiveness, the grace of someone else taking you just as you are and finding in you an unsuspected goodness."

Rachael Naomi Remen, 1996. *Kitchen Table Wisdom: Stories that Heal*, p.217, Berkeley Publishing Group, New York.

MESSAGE FROM RONNIE PHIPPS, BCCHP COORDINATOR

I am pleased to say that the past few months have been busy and highly productive for our small organization.

The Coalition has been working hard to complete our educational documentary about community-inspired health promotion. We are most fortunate to have documentary film maker and Cowichan Bay resident, Tom Shandel in the director's chair. Tom is working closely with members of the Coalition to capture the determinants of health from a unique local perspective.

We are using the Cowichan Valley as a focus for the documentary although the concepts and examples are relevant to any community. I am constantly reminded of what an extraordinary part of the world we live in. You don't have to go far to see examples of local organizations and individuals who are passionate about making their communities a healthy place to live, on so many fronts.

On a sad note, we mourn the loss of long-time health advocate and board member Else Strand. Else was a remarkable person whose strength lay in her years of experience, in her consistency and quiet dedication. We miss her a lot.

We hope you enjoy this issue of our newsletter. Our theme – *inclusion and community involvement* – is in keeping with recent interviews for the video.

Wishing you a safe, healthy and happy summer!

Ronnie

JOIN THE COALITION

Annual fee:

No one is refused membership because of inability to pay.

Individuals	\$10.00
Groups	\$25.00
Corporate	\$50.00

Membership:

Apply online: www.vcn.bc.ca/bchpc/
Mail cheque to: Peter Kiessling
Membership Coordinator
BC Coalition for Health Promotion
306 - 245 First St
Duncan BC V9L 1R3

Benefits:

- Participate in events with well-known speakers in the health promotion field
- Invitations to BCCHP forums and conferences
- Opportunities for networking and input into BCCHP priorities
- Voting privileges at the AGM
- The opportunity to hold office in the Society
- Bi-annual newsletter, *Communities Invest in Health Promotion*

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