



A STEP FORWARD

Turning youth health research
into community action

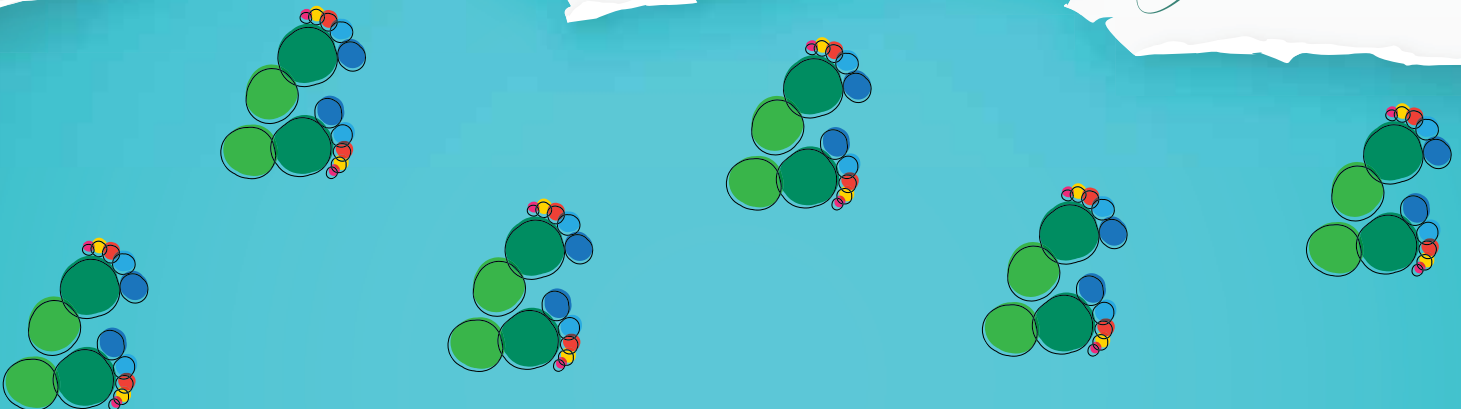
BC ADOLESCENT HEALTH SURVEY

NEXT STEPS

2014–2016



McCreary
Centre Society



A STEP FORWARD:

Turning youth health research into community action



YOUTH HEALTH • YOUTH RESEARCH • YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

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vancouver
foundation



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INTRODUCTION

In 2013 almost 30,000 students in Grades 7–12 completed McCreary Centre Society (McCreary)'s BC Adolescent Health Survey (BC AHS) in schools across the province. These students answered 130 questions about their health and about the risk and protective factors in their lives. This was the fifth time the survey was conducted since 1992. Survey results are used by schools, communities, government agencies, health professionals, and by young people themselves in planning youth programs and services.

McCreary research has shown that meaningful connections and participation in activities promote young people's healthy development.

Feeling engaged in activities, connected to community, and having supportive adults to turn to in their community have all been linked to more positive mental health, future aspirations, feeling safe at school and in their neighbourhood, and a lower risk of missing out on needed health care.

McCreary is committed to taking the results back to the young people who completed the survey. One of the ways McCreary engages youth in the data is through the Next Steps workshop series.

Since the Next Steps was created in 1998, McCreary has taken the results back to thousands of youth in communities across BC. The goals of the Next Steps are to:

- ★ Share results of the BC AHS with youth in communities across the province.
- ★ Collect youth's feedback and perspectives on the results.
- ★ Support youth to design and deliver sustainable projects which address health issues they identify through the BC AHS results.

Since 1998, there have been many different versions of the Next Steps, ranging from a half day workshop to projects that have run for two years. Between 2014 and 2016, this initiative was designed to engage youth for three to six months, and took place in eight communities.

"I really enjoyed being part of a project that brought people together and gave people the opportunity to meet new people and express their creativity."

— YOUTH PARTICIPANT



Participants take part in an energizer activity at the start of the Next Steps workshop series.

NEXT STEPS OVERVIEW

In each of the eight communities, the Next Steps project followed a four-step process:

1 SHARING THE BC ADOLESCENT HEALTH SURVEY RESULTS

A total of 193 youth participated in one of eight workshops across the province where they learned their local BC AHS results and engaged in a dialogue about youth health issues in their community. The workshops took place with youth in Chemainus, Coquitlam, Penticton, Powell River, Rossland, Sechelt/Pender Harbour/Gibsons, Vancouver, and Victoria.

The results were shared through a range of interactive activities including a trivia game where youth commented on the results and how they related to what they saw in their community.

2 PROJECT PLANNING & GRANT WRITING

After learning about the results of the survey, youth picked out a youth health issue/need in their community that they wanted to focus on. They worked together to create a project which addressed that issue with support from local adult allies and McCreary staff.

After deciding on their project, the youth completed a grant application and received up to \$2,000 to deliver their project. Through the grant writing process, youth learned skills such as event organizing, budgeting, creating project timelines and deadlines, evaluation, and working as a team.

3 YOUTH-LED PROJECT

Youth developed and delivered a diverse range of projects in response to the BC AHS results. Projects focused on building connectedness, reducing stigma around mental health, increasing awareness about gender and sexuality, and creating alternatives to substance use. The eight community projects are discussed in more detail later in this report.

4 EVALUATION & SUSTAINABILITY PLANNING

After completing their community project, youth came back together to evaluate its success and potential sustainability. This included discussing challenges they faced and how they overcame them; project successes; lessons learned; and how they might continue, change, or further develop their project.

NEXT STEPS EVALUATION

Youth completed evaluation surveys to canvass their feedback about the Next Steps.

Participants ranged in age from 12 to 19. The majority were 16 or 17 years old (55%).

Fifty-six percent of participants identified as female, 41% as male, and the remainder as transgender, gender fluid, or genderqueer.

Half of the participants identified as being of European heritage, 28% as East Asian, and 16% as Aboriginal. Other backgrounds included African, South East Asian, West Asian, Latin American, and Pacific Islander.

See pages 20–22 for more evaluation results.

YOUTH'S RESPONSE TO BC AHS DATA

Youth discussed a range of health topics during the Next Steps workshops. They offered their insight into the statistics and what might be driving local and provincial trends. Some examples are discussed below.

PHYSICAL HEALTH

16% OF YOUTH EXPERIENCED A CONCUSSION IN THE PAST YEAR, WITH 18% OF THESE YOUTH NOT ACCESSING NEEDED MEDICAL CARE (2013 BC AHS).

Participants talked about the prevalence of under-reporting concussions and explained it was often because they knew it would mean missing out on an activity. Some youth also noted that when they had experienced more than one concussion, they chose not to seek medical care because they felt they knew how to manage it themselves.

"If you've had a concussion before, you know the symptoms and you don't need to get it checked out."

"People don't want to report [concussions] because they want to keep playing sports."

— YOUTH PARTICIPANT

YOUTH WHO ENGAGED IN PHYSICAL ACTIVITY WERE MORE LIKELY TO SLEEP FOR 8 HOURS THE NIGHT BEFORE TAKING THE SURVEY (2013 BC AHS).

Many youth who played team sports were surprised that physical activity was positively associated with getting the recommended amount of sleep. They felt that youth who played team sports would likely miss out on sleep because of training early in the morning or late at night. Youth in rural communities also talked about losing sleep because of the travel time required for games and tournaments.



'Panda facts' was created by youth in response to BC AHS data as part of the Next Steps workshop series.

MENTAL HEALTH

In each of the eight communities, mental health was the most discussed topic, with many youth stating that there was not enough support or understanding of mental health challenges in their community.

In smaller communities, youth raised concerns about accessing mental health services because of fears that their information would not remain confidential.

FEMALES WERE MORE LIKELY THAN MALES TO REPORT EXPERIENCING EXTREME STRESS, EXTREME DESPAIR, SELF-HARM, SUICIDAL THOUGHTS, AND SUICIDE ATTEMPTS.

THE PERCENTAGES OF MALES WHO ATTEMPTED SUICIDE IN THE PAST YEAR DECREASED BETWEEN 2008 AND 2013, AND INCREASED FOR FEMALES (2013 BC AHS).

Peer counselling with trained near-age peers was suggested as a way to give youth someone to talk to.



Participants work on a banner to spark discussion about BC AHS data of importance to them.

EXPERIENCING EXTREME STRESS WAS MORE COMMON AMONG OLDER YOUTH THAN YOUNGER ONES (2013 BC AHS).

In each community, youth reported feeling stressed because of the amount of activities they participated in and the pressure they felt to do them all to a high standard.

"You choose between hygiene, sleep, activities, studying and homework. There's so many reasons why youth would be stressed, you can't narrow it down."

— YOUTH PARTICIPANT

WHEN ASKED HOW SOME OF THE BC AHS MENTAL HEALTH STATISTICS MIGHT BE IMPROVED, SUGGESTIONS INCLUDED:

- ✓ "Have speakers come to school to talk about managing stress."
- ✓ "Students listen to people talk about their own issues and I've seen people talk to speakers after and ask questions or talk and say something that helped them."
- ✓ "We could hold activities that are healthy at school."
- ✓ "Raise awareness, show people what mental health is and does, let everybody see."

SUBSTANCE USE

THERE WAS A DECREASE IN THE PERCENTAGE OF YOUTH WHO HAD TRIED ALCOHOL, TOBACCO, MARIJUANA, AND OTHER SUBSTANCES FROM PREVIOUS YEARS (2013 BC AHS).

Many youth were surprised by the decrease in the percentage of youth trying alcohol and other substances over the past decade. In several communities, participants were interested in the differences in substance use among certain groups of youth. For example, youth in rural areas suggested that more youth may be using substances locally than in urban areas because of a lack of alternative activities.

SEXUAL HEALTH

IN 2013, 81% OF YOUTH HAD NEVER HAD SEXUAL INTERCOURSE, COMPARED TO 76% IN 2003. RATES OF ORAL SEX ALSO DECREASED, FROM 26% IN 2008 TO 23% IN 2013 (2013 BC AHS).

Participants in every community were initially shocked at the high percentage of youth who were not sexually active, but reflected that the results were likely accurate. Many felt the media portrayed sex as something *"everyone is doing"* and they felt pressure to conform. While initially surprised, youth reflected on these statistics and agreed that they made sense *"because there's more awareness."*

"More people talk about [sex], there's more education."

SEXUALITY & GENDER IDENTITY

MALE AND FEMALE STUDENTS WERE LESS LIKELY TO IDENTIFY AS STRAIGHT IN 2013 THAN STUDENTS IN PREVIOUS SURVEY YEARS (2013 BC AHS).

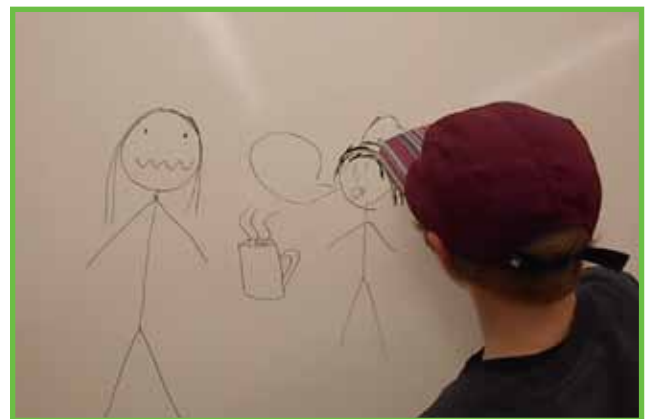
Participants were not surprised that youth were more likely to identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual, citing growing awareness as a reason for this.

"More people know about sexuality now."

Discrimination based on gender identity and sexuality was present in some communities. Youth suggested that gender-neutral washrooms and using respectful language would help to improve the experience of LGBTQ2S youth in their school and community.

"Do pronoun check-ins—you can always do this with youth, don't be shy to ask!"

— YOUTH PARTICIPANT



'Draw My Life' film created by youth.

TECHNOLOGY

14% OF STUDENTS HAD MET SOMEONE ON THE INTERNET WHO MADE THEM FEEL UNSAFE (2013 BC AHS).

Next Steps participants were often dismissive of feeling unsafe online or about concerns of privacy, security, and cyberbullying. They regularly stated that dealing with unsafe situations was simply part of the experience of being online and felt there was nothing teachers, parents, or the government could do to help. Cyberbullying was unfortunately treated as common and uncontrollable. However, youth were still hopeful that with increased awareness and open discussions, people would better understand the effects of cyberbullying, and victims could seek help more easily.



'Think before you type' claymation film.

SLEEP

24% OF STUDENTS SLEPT FOR AT LEAST 9 HOURS THE NIGHT BEFORE TAKING THE SURVEY.

MOST YOUTH USED THEIR PHONE OR WERE ON THE INTERNET AFTER THEY WERE SUPPOSED TO BE ASLEEP.

LACK OF SLEEP WAS LINKED TO POOR MENTAL HEALTH (2013 BC AHS).

Participants were not surprised that the majority of youth did not get the recommended amount of sleep the night before taking the survey. They spoke about the role that technology played in their lives, and how technology use (such as online gaming and messaging with friends) negatively impacted their sleep schedule.

"There's so much to do!"

"I had more than 8 hours of sleep is something you rarely hear."

— YOUTH PARTICIPANT



'Panda facts' shares data of concern to Next Steps participants.

YOUTH-LED PROJECTS

CHEMAINUS

13% OF FEMALES AND 5% OF MALES REPORTED EXPERIENCING DEPRESSION (2013 BC AHS).

Members of STYLE (Small Town Youth Leadership and Empowerment) at Chemainus Secondary highlighted three major issues in their community: mental health, substance use, and cyberbullying. Although they felt all these issues should be addressed, due to time constraints they decided to focus on mental health and developed a project to raise awareness about depression.

PROJECT GOALS

"Our project is intended to raise awareness of mental health in youth. We are doing our project to raise awareness and help remove the stigma from talking about mental health. We hope that our project will help youth understand what may be happening for themselves, their friends, or even perhaps their family members. We are also including local resources which youth can use to access mental health supports."



Participants work on their 'Draw My Life' film.

As part of the project the youth created a 'Draw My Life' video to share with their peers and school. They launched the video at an assembly at Chemainus Secondary and invited Grade 7's from the elementary school as well as Grade 8's and 9's from their school.

A total of 148 youth attended the assembly and watched the Next Steps participants present their 'Draw My Life' video. The video was about a 15-year-old girl with depression who found ways to connect with a counsellor and improve her situation by doing things she loved.

Audience members received STYLE drink bottles, stress balls, '#fightdepression' bracelets, and wallet cards with a list of local resources where youth could seek help.

A local hip hop artist performed and shared his experiences with suicide and depression.

Next Steps participants evaluated their project and felt it successfully raised awareness about mental health and depression. They hoped to continue to share their video and promote dialogue. They enjoyed working together and learning more about supporting people with depression.



Students attend an assembly hosted by STYLE.

COQUITLAM

83% OF BC YOUTH EXPERIENCED STRESS IN THE PAST 30 DAYS AND 9% WERE SO STRESSED THAT THEY COULD NOT WORK OR FUNCTION PROPERLY (2013 BC AHS).

In Coquitlam, a large and enthusiastic Family Studies class at Centennial Secondary took part in the Next Steps workshop series. The class had many ideas and issues they wanted to tackle, but settled on a project to reduce stress for Grade 8 students transitioning to a new larger high school.

The class divided into two groups. The first group worked with a local artist to create a mural about protective factors to help youth deal with stress. The mural will be hung in the new school when it opens.

The second group designed a presentation which they then delivered to 78 Grade 8 students. The presentation included answering questions and addressing concerns such as “Will I get lost?”, “Do we all get a locker?”, “I’m worried the courses will be too hard and I’ll have too much homework,” and “What did you find you struggled with most?”

Members of the group shared their own experiences with depression, anxiety, and being an English Language Learner in a new school, and how they overcame those challenges. The Grade 8’s were asked to write down what they had learned about dealing with stress, and these were collected to be included in the mural.

The group also created a film to be used during the presentation and to leave a legacy of the project. The film used humour and personal stories to highlight the differences between the myths and realities of high school.

Feedback from the Grade 8’s showed that 96% felt the presentation had helped relieve their stress about coming to high school.

PROJECT GOALS

“We want to make a film and an assembly to address the most critical issue for youth coming into high school. Our project is to inform the youth in tips, tricks and strategies to deal with mental wellness. Being high school students we all have experienced stress and strive to help others unlike us who didn’t have any help. We believe youth coming into high school struggle with this the most and we would love for them to have the knowledge we have now to deal and cope.”

“Our community also wants to create a mural to help show and spread positivity. We want this mural to be vibrant and speak for itself. Half of us are planning a mural. The other half are planning a trip to Maillard Middle School to see the grade 8’s. During this trip, we are hoping to reduce the common fears and stress people have about going into high school.”



Coquitlam youth collect quotes from Grade 8 students to be included in their mural about positive mental health.

PENTICTON

YOUTH WHO FELT LIKE A PART OF THEIR SCHOOL
REPORTED BETTER MENTAL HEALTH (2013 BC AHS).

Having learned about risk and protective factors associated with mental health, youth from three different high schools in School District 67 met in Penticton to work together to raise awareness and spark dialogue about youth mental health. A local adult ally explained:

"The group wanted to produce some type of promotional material, and initially thought of making posters or other resources. After some research into this option, they felt that a multitude of such resources already existed and students weren't paying attention to them. They also wanted other students to be more involved with the campaign. They chose to raise awareness of the issue of mental health stigma by taking part in an activity together that they could then teach to other students, and spread awareness this way. They decided to create a series of flags that they could hang in their school called 'compassion flags.'"

The students organized an after-school session where a local artist taught participants to make compassion flags which were sewn together and hung on display at Summerland Secondary School. The students are planning to engage other groups of youth in their respective schools to make flags and to continue the dialogue.

"After we participated in the workshop we realized that mental health was something that we were all concerned about, and from the data we heard, it was also important to other youth."

— YOUTH PARTICIPANT

PROJECT GOALS

"We want to fight stigma around mental health. We think that this project will help people to care more about other people, regardless of mental health. We think that also the act of making flags together and then stringing them together will create a sense of unity against mental illness."



Youth discuss findings from the BC AHS through an interactive trivia game.



Compassion flags created by youth in School District 67.

POWELL RIVER

19% OF FEMALES AND 10% OF MALES HAD BEEN CYBERBULLIED IN THE PAST YEAR (2013 BC AHS).

After discussing the results of the BC AHS, youth in Powell River split into five small groups to create clay animation videos about a youth health topic they felt most passionate about.

In total, five claymation films were created and shared with youth and adults in the local community to raise awareness and spark discussion.



'Complete the Rainbow' claymation film.



'Pass It' claymation film.

- ★ **COMPLETE THE RAINBOW** is about social exclusion. One of the colours of the rainbow is excluded by its peers, but eventually they come together as friends to complete the rainbow. The film ends with the line *"It's not a real rainbow until everyone is included."*
- ★ **PASS IT** follows two youth taking a math test. One of the youth has been using marijuana and the other has not. The youth who has been using marijuana does not do as well on the test. The aim of the film is to spark a conversation about how substance use can affect learning.
- ★ **BREAK FREE** encourages youth to talk to a supportive adult or friend if they are experiencing mental health challenges.
- ★ **STEP IN BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE** addresses the difficulties of leaving an abusive relationship, and how friends can support youth if they are experiencing dating violence.
- ★ **THINK BEFORE YOU TYPE** considers the relation between cyberbullying and mental health. It encourages viewers to switch off their computer and think before they type something potentially hurtful. It also shares the number for the Kids Help Phone for youth to call if they need to talk (1-800-668-6868).



Watch these and other claymation films made by youth in response to BC AHS results on our YouTube Channel:
www.youtube.com/user/McCrearyCentre

ROSSLAND

MOST YOUTH FELT GOOD ABOUT THEMSELVES AND THEIR ABILITIES (2013 BC AHS).

With support from a local artist, Next Steps participants in Rossland created four unique murals, each highlighting a youth health issue identified from the survey results. Topics covered in the murals included gender and sexuality equality, promoting self-esteem, and how society can change to promote youth health.

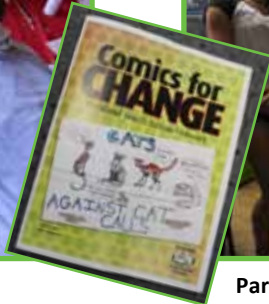
After making the murals, youth continued to meet weekly to draw comic strips relating to youth health. These were compiled to make a booklet that was printed in colour and distributed in the community following a launch event.

One of the local adults who supported the youth to create their art work reported that the project allowed young people to have “meaningful conversation about issues concerning them and their peers in the area...we gave them a space that allowed them to talk about all these issues.”

PROJECT GOALS

“We want to raise awareness of issues that affect the overall well-being of youth in our area. We also want to let youth who may be experiencing difficulties know that they are normal and not alone in their experiences. The entire community will benefit by gaining knowledge of youth issues. Youth aged 12–18 will be our target audience and will benefit by knowing they are not alone in the issues they may be experiencing and that there are people they can talk to.”

“We plan to create a series of comic strips or other visual art that highlighted or addresses specific issues affecting youth in our area. We will meet weekly to brainstorm and work on the comics. We will connect with our two local papers to have the finished pieces published (hopefully weekly) as well as post them to the Youth Action Network social media and website. At the end of the project we plan to publish a small booklet with all of the comics in it and distribute it to schools and the community.”



Participants create murals and comics to spark discussion about youth health.

SECHELT, PENDER HARBOUR, & GIBSONS

ONE OF THE MAJOR BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATING IN EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES IN RURAL AREAS WAS LACK OF TRANSPORTATION (2013 BC AHS).

YOUTH IN RURAL PARTS OF BC WERE MORE LIKELY TO HAVE TRIED ALCOHOL THAN THOSE IN URBAN AREAS (2013 BC AHS).

Youth in three Sunshine Coast communities came together to build positive peer connections across their communities, and create healthy activities to do on a Friday night. The original goal of the project was to do three events in the three different communities. Two events took place within the timeline of the project and another is planned.

The first event was a community scavenger hunt and the second was a carnival called 'Friday Night Freakshow.' Although the first event was hampered by bad weather and limited advertising, the second attracted 60 youth from four communities (Sechelt, Pender Harbour, Gibsons, and Robert's Creek) as well as adults from the school district, youth workers from the local youth hub, RCMP, and parents.

Youth organizers reported they "enjoyed seeing the final project completed and youth from all over were getting together and having fun. It was awesome that so many people showed up and were having fun."



Youth from across the Sunshine Coast gather together at the 'Friday Night Freakshow.'

PROJECT GOALS

"We want to bring the youth together to socialize and "mingle" in a positive environment. We would like to host a Carnival with games, food, prizes and staged entertainment from local youth and community groups. We chose this theme and love the idea of a Friday Night Freakshow as a good title to use as a metaphor of the youth experience."

"We feel like it is a great way to bring youth across the coast together. We have friends across the coast through sports, and it is difficult to see them. We would like a safe and positive environment. We want to do something interesting and not done before. We liked picking a theme that was relevant to us."



Youth take part in an activity designed by youth, for youth.

VANCOUVER

Students from Vancouver Technical Secondary School participated in the Next Steps through a Frog Hollow Neighbourhood House group called BASE (Building a Safer Environment). The students were particularly interested in the BC AHS data about the health of Grade 8 students and wanted to focus on improving the health of this age group.

The senior students split into groups and created four projects:

- ★ **'A STROKE OF THE BRUSH' PAINTING CLUB:** The aim of this project was to create *"a space for people to meet each other and provide peer support. Also to use art to express your feelings."* Four lunchtime sessions were held with 30 youth attending each one.
- ★ **BOARD GAME CLUB:** This club wanted to tackle shyness, depression, and anxiety by *"letting kids come together and connect through games."* Two sessions were held after school, with over 50 youth attending.
- ★ **AMAZING RACE:** This project focused on physical activity *"as a way to release stress and also create healthy relationships."*
- ★ **CURLING:** Youth organized a curling event outside of school. The purpose of this event was to increase *"physical health and social interactions, [and] interpersonal communication. It encouraged youth to try new things."*

Next Steps participants felt that all four groups were successful, and reported that the project strengthened their leadership skills and gave them experience in project and event planning. The youth hope to continue to offer some of the projects such as the lunchtime Painting Club.

PROJECT GOALS

"Vancouver Technical is an incredibly diverse inner-city school. By creating a safer school within which students support and respect each other, students can develop a sense of appreciation of their own as well as each other's individual and cultural identities."

"By using the results of the survey, we want to create various programs in the school to support the student body grow in learning about mental health resources, healthy options, creativity, de-stress options and physical well-being. The grade 8's are lacking in this area of health and by providing different programs and activities, we hope the grade 8's and the rest of the student body will make healthy choices throughout their life."



Participants take their projects from planning to action.

VICTORIA

YOUTH WHO IDENTIFIED AS LGB WERE LESS LIKELY THAN THEIR STRAIGHT PEERS TO REPORT GOOD OR EXCELLENT MENTAL HEALTH (48% VS. 84%; 2013 BC AHS).

Next Steps participants in Victoria were particularly interested in the associations seen in the BC AHS between sexual orientation and gender identity and mental health.

To continue the dialogue in the community, the group created a presentation titled, 'The impacts of hetero-normativity and cis-normativity on youth mental health,' which they presented at the Child and Youth Mental Health and Substance Use Collaborative Learning Session in March 2016. The presentation included personal stories and data from the BC AHS.

The presentation was very well-received, and several participants asked the group to deliver the presentation in other communities around BC. One participant noted, "A lot of mental health bloggers are older and aren't going through these issues now. You always have to manage your problems, but it might be better for youth to hear it from other youth."

The group also created a film to "show what's affecting the statistics on LGBTQ+ health." They hope to continue making films about youth health in the future.

"Overall, the experience of speaking up about their experience, and being recognized as experts about their experiences as LGBTQ+ youth, has been profound. I have observed an increase in self-confidence in all three of the youth leaders in this project."

— ADULT SUPPORT

PROJECT GOALS

"To create and have a video on YouTube and go around middle schools and high schools to present and talk about some of the subject matter. To create a presentation on the mental health impacts of hetero-normativity and cis-normativity on youth mental health."

"To have an easily accessible project for professionals, youth and parents, that's also more relatable for youth. As well as talking about things that aren't usually talked about within the media and such."



Top: Youth present about LGBTQ+ health at the Learning Session in March.

Bottom: Youth work on their project plan for a film.

LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE YOUTH-LED PROJECTS

YOUTH PARTICIPANTS

In each community, youth reflected on the successes and challenges of their projects. A common challenge in the larger groups was keeping everyone engaged and ensuring everyone felt valued and listened to.

"[The biggest challenge was] choosing a project that everyone can agree on and so that it fits in our time limit. It was difficult to organize things with so many people's thoughts/ideas involved. We had to settle down and make sure everyone had the chance to share their ideas."

"[The biggest challenge was] agreeing on ideas. We realized we needed to stop arguing."

Some youth expressed frustration at what had been possible within the time frame and budget available to them, and wished they had more guidance on what they might realistically achieve. One youth noted that they wished they had not "wasted time on planning things that won't work out."

Participants took different approaches to addressing timeline challenges including amending their original goals, narrowing their project's scope, meeting more regularly than originally scheduled, and working together to prioritize the most important tasks.

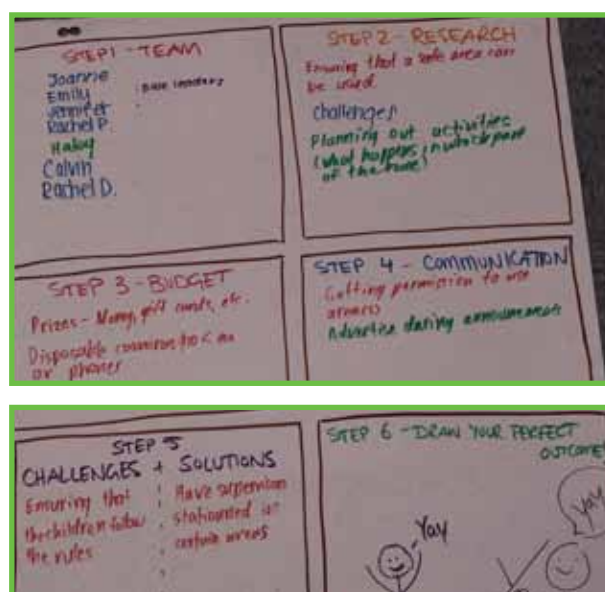
"The biggest challenge was time management and making time for prepping games [for a community event]. We figured out what were priorities and how long each task would take."

Attendance at initial events which youth organized was a challenge for a couple of groups. For example, no one attended the first Vancouver Painting Club, but after increasing their advertising, 30 youth showed up at each of the next four events. Similarly, youth in Pender Harbour are planning another scavenger hunt as they now felt they had a better idea of how to engage more youth.

Youth also reported learning about resources in their local community, and about where they could access support.

"[I learned] that adults sometimes really do want to listen. You go in assuming they don't want to, but they do."

— YOUTH PARTICIPANT



An example of the project planning process undertaken by each group.

ADULT ALLIES

Adult allies played key roles in supporting the youth through the project planning and delivery phases, and were instrumental to the success of each project. They provided valuable feedback about the challenges and successes of supporting the youth and their projects.

Finding a balance between offering guidance and letting participants have autonomy to organize and deliver their own projects was a challenge almost all adult allies faced at some point. Supporting youth to 'think big' whilst creating a project that could be delivered within the time frame and budget proved challenging in each community.

Adult allies reflected that setting concrete dates for when different parts of the project needed to be completed would increase the likelihood of future projects being successfully completed. They felt this would help overcome some of the challenges they faced with scheduling and keeping participants engaged over the course of several months.



A Next Steps participant holds up a T-shirt design inspired by results of the BC AHS.

"It was challenging for me [as an adult support] to help them morph their ideas into manageable tasks without changing their direction. Having an end time goal helped to make this happen and create some accountability."

"My challenge as an adult ally was in providing the appropriate level of scaffolding to support a youth-led project when the youth were increasingly wanting to take ownership and complete the project independently."

Through the delivery of the community projects, adult allies noted specific improvements in leadership, team work, financial literacy, organization, planning, and self-confidence among the youth.

"It was really amazing to see the anxiousness some participants felt about standing up in front of their school melt away as soon as they saw how well their finished project went!"

"An unexpected outcome of this increase in self-confidence has been that two of the three are now working part-time jobs in addition to going to school... The youth have been invited to do additional presentations and so the positive impacts of this project will continue!"

— ADULT SUPPORT

NEXT STEPS EVALUATION

IN TOTAL, 193 YOUTH PARTICIPATED IN THE NEXT STEPS INITIATIVE AND AN ADDITIONAL 400 YOUTH AND 110 ADULTS JOINED IN ONE OF THE YOUTH-LED COMMUNITY PROJECTS.

YOUTH'S FEEDBACK

Evaluation results showed that 91% of participants in the Next Steps rated their overall experience as good or excellent, while the remaining 9% reported it as fair (no one reported it as poor).

Also, most participants reported they learned about the 2013 BC AHS and about risk and protective factors for healthy development.

The majority of participants felt the workshops were interactive and engaging, and encouraged interesting discussion.

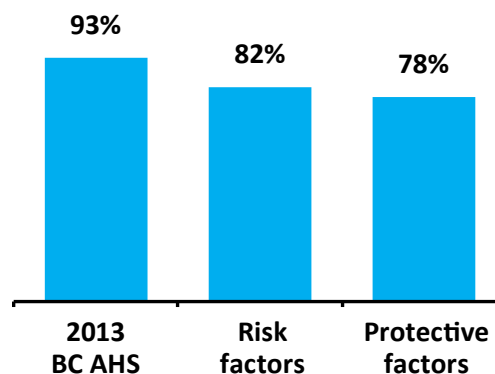
Reflecting on their community projects, 94% felt their ideas were listened to and valued, 87% felt good about how their project turned out, and 88% felt they had learned more about the youth health issue they focused on.

When asked if they had gained new skills through the project, 85% felt they had gained skills in project planning, 88% in working as a team, and 55% in budgeting.

"It was a really good experience, good to get involved with school, peers and the community."

— YOUTH PARTICIPANT

YOUTH WHO REPORTED THEY LEARNED 'QUITE A BIT' OR 'VERY MUCH' ABOUT...



In order to complete the Next Steps within the time frame, not all youth got the opportunity to work on the grant application or engage with the finances for their project. Future Next Steps will therefore spend more time teaching youth how to prepare and manage a project budget.

Evaluation results showed that most participants gained skills in leadership, team work, financial literacy, organization, and planning. They also noted improved self-confidence as a result of developing and accomplishing their projects.

"Nice to have other people try new things, it's an opportunity to find new things. Next Steps allowed us to plan an event and budget."

— YOUTH PARTICIPANT

Youth were also asked open-ended questions about what they enjoyed, what challenges they faced with their project, how they overcame them, and anything that they would like to change about the workshop series. Youth mentioned that they would have liked more time to engage with the BC AHS statistics and process the information they were learning. This will be incorporated into future Next Steps initiatives.

What I enjoyed most...

- ★ *"It was very good and educational!"*
- ★ *"I liked how the workshop was interactive."*
- ★ *"Being able to voice what we want to see change in our community."*
- ★ *"The openness and honesty of the kids that really came from the attitude and happiness of the incredible leaders from the Next Steps."*
- ★ *"It was fun and everybody got to participate."*
- ★ *"How we learned things but it was in a fun atmosphere."*
- ★ *"It was easy to talk with you guys."*

I learned about...

- ★ *"The more holistic side of health—not just physical."*
- ★ *"I found out information about the youth that I previously assumed I knew everything about already."*
- ★ *"The importance of seemingly small health factors (sleep etc.)."*

What I will do with the information I have learned...

- ★ *"Think about it in future situations."*
- ★ *"Use it to better my own and others' mental health."*
- ★ *"Make healthier choices in life like sleep for 9 hours."*
- ★ *"Probably be more aware about issues in youth."*
- ★ *"Help try and end the stigma with mental health as well as present the facts in an interesting way to others."*
- ★ *"I will try to improve my community based on new-found knowledge."*
- ★ *"Use it and create a positive environment."*



Participants prepare to present at a school assembly.

ADULT ALLIES' FEEDBACK

Adult allies were asked to provide feedback on their overall experience with the Next Steps initiative. For some the community projects had taken more time and commitment than they anticipated, but all reported it had been a positive experience.

"We are so thankful that we were given the opportunity to work on this project and we are looking forward to possibly work with the McCreary Centre Society again in the future!"

"McCreary's support was great. There was flexibility for the youth and... meeting with the youth gave them more power to do what they put their heart into."

"McCreary was very supportive throughout the process. They were flexible to the needs of our group and very accommodating. They provided a great structure of how to design and implement a project. They were very understanding of the dynamic nature of working with youth and in the school setting."



'Comics for change' is celebrated in the local newspaper in Rossland.

"It is a great opportunity to engage youth about youth health."

— ADULT SUPPORT

"This initiative is so valuable and has enabled significant positive impacts."

— ADULT SUPPORT

SUMMARY

In each of the eight communities that participated in the Next Steps, youth reported learning about BC youth health and about risk and protective factors for healthy development. Through designing and delivering a project based on what they learned from the BC AHS they also enhanced their skills in areas such as leadership, team work, event organization and planning, and they reported increased self-confidence.

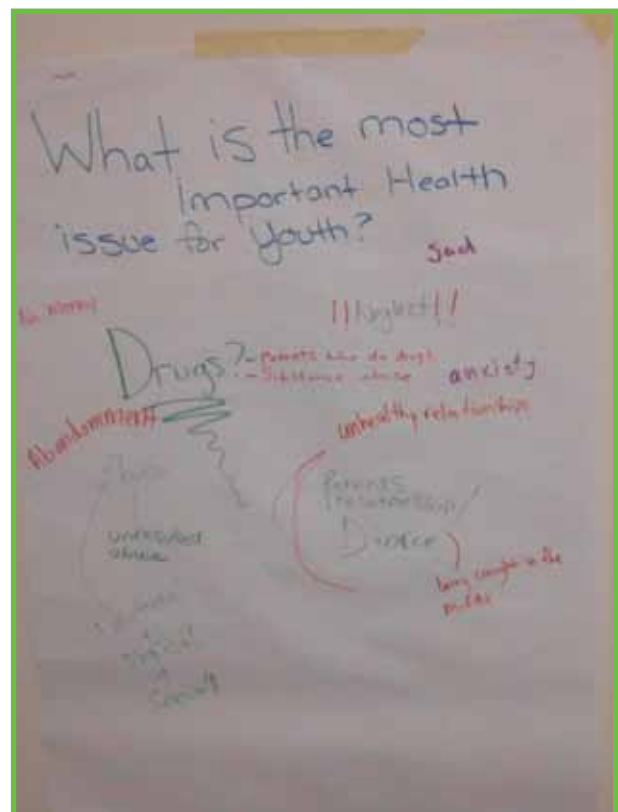
The Next Steps methodology of engaging youth in statistics about their health continues to be successful. The youth's responses to the data always provide valuable feedback and inform the development of the next BC AHS.

Youth in every community were concerned about the BC AHS data regarding mental health and felt it reflected what they saw among their friends and classmates. As a result, most projects sought to decrease stress, reduce stigma around depression and anxiety, and create community and peer connections to support students facing these issues.

While short time frames, youth autonomy, and feasible goal-setting were challenges faced in many communities, youth and adults reported gaining transferable skills and learning from these experiences.

With the support of local adult allies, youth in each of the communities delivered successful projects, many of which will be sustained for the foreseeable future.

The success of each of these projects speaks to the commitment of young people and adults to improving the health of youth in communities across BC.



Next Steps participants brainstorm health issues important to them before hearing results of the BC AHS.

ADDITIONAL McCREARY RESOURCES

BC AHS REPORTS



From Hastings Street to Haida Gwaii: Provincial results of the 2013 BC Adolescent Health Survey, and 16 regional reports, can be downloaded at www.mcs.bc.ca.

BC AHS fact sheets and posters covering a broad range of topics are also available, as are full length reports on specific topics including sexual health, harmful levels of alcohol use, the health of Aboriginal youth, and the health of youth in government care.

DIY MANUAL



A Do-It-Yourself manual is available for anyone who would like to share the results of the BC AHS with youth. The manual includes interactive and engaging activities to encourage dialogue about the survey results and discuss risk and protective factors for healthy development.

Youth Health in BC: A DIY Guide to sharing the results of the BC Adolescent Health Survey is available at www.mcs.bc.ca/pdf/ahsv_diy_manual.pdf.

YOUTH ACTION GRANTS



The Youth Action Grants (YAG) are a project of the McCreary Youth Advisory & Action Council (YAC). The YAGs are a \$500 grant available to BC youth (ages 12–19) in school districts that participated in the 2013 BC AHS. The grants are aimed at youth who would like to deliver a project to improve youth health in their school or community.

Watch a video about YAGs at www.youtube.com/watch?v=DZ6zBfdPhbY or download an application form at www.mcs.bc.ca/ahs_youth_resources.

OTHER REPORTS/PROJECTS

In addition to the BC AHS, McCreary conducts a range of research and evaluation projects. All published reports are available at www.mcs.bc.ca.

NEXT STEPS

If you would like to enquire about a Next Steps project in your community, please contact: nextsteps@mcs.bc.ca.

These and other BC AHS resources are available free for download at www.mcs.bc.ca.



