

**MEDIA RELEASE | January 2015**

## ***Report on the health of North Shore/Coast Garibaldi youth released***

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Following the release last March of the provincial results of the McCreary Centre Society's 2013 BC Adolescent Health Survey (BC AHS), local results are now available. The BC AHS was conducted in 56 of BC's 59 school districts, with almost 30,000 students in Grades 7–12 taking part.

Results for the North Shore/Coast Garibaldi area, which included students in North Vancouver (SD 44), West Vancouver (SD 45), Sunshine Coast (SD 46), Powell River (SD 47), Sea to Sky (SD 48), and Central Coast (SD 49) showed that the majority of Grade 7–12 students reported good physical and mental health; felt connected to their family, school and community; had positive plans for the future; and were engaging in health promoting behaviours which will assist them to transition successfully to adulthood.

The survey also highlights some differences between this region and the province as a whole, as well as identifying some groups of students who may need additional support.

In comparison to youth across the province, North Shore/Coast Garibaldi students reported better nutrition and were more physically active. However, although they were more likely than those throughout the province to have taken part in organized and informal sports on a weekly basis, they were less likely to have done so than students in this area five years ago.

There were also local improvements in the rate of students who had tried alcohol, as the percentage who had ever drunk alcohol decreased from 64% in 2003 to 60% in 2008 to 52% in 2013, although this remained above the provincial rate of 45%.

Declines seen provincially in tobacco and marijuana use were not seen locally. Although as with alcohol, youth were waiting longer to use marijuana than their peers in previous years.

Mental health was an area of concern highlighted by the survey, particularly for girls. Males were more likely than females to report higher rates of self-confidence and lower rates of extreme stress, despair, self-harm, and suicide attempts. Females were more likely than five years ago to have considered or attempted suicide in the past year.

Annie Smith, Executive Director of McCreary commented on the report: *"It's encouraging to see that many youth in the North Shore/Coast Garibaldi are taking steps to be physically healthy and active. The survey also really shows us where we should be targeting our efforts to make sure students are getting the support they need when they are experiencing bullying or mental health challenges."*

*McCreary Centre Society is a non-government, non-profit organization committed to improving the health of B.C. youth through research and community-based projects.*

*Founded in 1977, the Society sponsors and promotes a wide range of activities and research to address unmet health needs of young people.*

### **Contact**

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A copy of the report *North Shore/Coast Garibaldi: Results of the 2013 BC Adolescent Health Survey*, as well as the provincial report *From Hastings Street to Haida Gwaii: Provincial results of the 2013 BC Adolescent Health Survey* can be obtained at [www.mcs.bc.ca](http://www.mcs.bc.ca).

A series of webinars to share the findings have also been scheduled for **Friday January 23<sup>rd</sup> at 11:00am, Monday January 26<sup>th</sup> at 3:30pm** and **Thursday January 29<sup>th</sup> at 8:30am**. Login details are available at [www.mcs.bc.ca](http://www.mcs.bc.ca).

## **BACKGROUNDER**

Between February and June 2013, almost 30,000 students in Grades 7–12 completed the BC Adolescent Health Survey (BC AHS) in schools across British Columbia. This is the fifth time students have been asked to complete the survey. It was conducted previously in 1992, 1998, 2003 and 2008.

The survey results are used by federal and provincial policy makers and program planners, as well as by local decision makers and others with an interest in youth health.

The survey is designed to consider emerging youth health issues and to track trends over time. It included 130 questions asking youth about their perceptions of their current physical and emotional health, as well as risky behaviours and health promoting practices. Healthy development for youth includes many contributing factors, and the survey also asked about broader issues such as feelings of safety, relationships, and engagement in a variety of activities.

This is the first year that all six school districts in North Shore/Coast Garibaldi have participated in the survey at the same time. Therefore additional analyses were conducted to ensure that reported trends were not influenced by changes in school district participation.

### ***Key Findings: North Shore/Coast Garibaldi***

- Most youth rated their mental health as good or excellent. However, consistent with provincial findings, students were less likely to rate their mental health as good or excellent than their overall health.
- Males generally reported better mental health than females, including higher rates of self-confidence and lower rates of extreme stress, despair, self-harm, and suicide attempts.
- Consistent with the provincial picture, 11% of local students (5% of males vs. 16% of females) reported not accessing mental health services in the past year when they thought they needed to, and 9% did not access medical help when they thought they needed it. Common reasons for not accessing services included not wanting their parents to know, and thinking or hoping the problem would go away.
- When compared to their peers across the province, North Shore/Coast Garibaldi students were more likely to have eaten fruit and vegetables the previous day, and were less likely to have eaten fast food. Local females were also less likely than females across BC to have consumed pop or soda (22% vs. 27%).

- In the past year, 36% of males and 28% of females were injured seriously enough to require medical attention. Also, 20% of students had experienced a concussion during this time period (23% of males vs. 14% of females). Sixteen percent of youth who had experienced a concussion had not accessed needed medical help.
- Forty-nine percent of youth who had ever tried smoking reported smoking in the past month.
- Fifty-eight percent of local students slept for eight or more hours the night before taking the survey. Most youth (78%) were online or on their phone after they were expected to be asleep.
- Local students were more likely than those throughout the province to have participated in organized sports and informal sports (such as road hockey, hiking, and skateboarding; on a weekly basis. However, they were less likely to do so than local students five years earlier.
- The percentage of youth who were underweight increased over the past decade, from 2% in 2003 to 3% in 2013. Similarly, the percentage of youth classified as obese rose from 3% in 2003 to 5% in 2013. After a decrease in 2008, the percentage of youth who were overweight returned to 2003 levels (14%).
- The percentage of students who had tried alcohol decreased from 64% in 2003 to 60% in 2008 to 52% in 2013. This rate remained higher than seen provincially (45%). However, local youth were waiting longer to first try alcohol than five years previous, with 67% having their first drink before turning 15 years old, compared to 76% in 2008.
- Declines seen provincially in tobacco and marijuana use between 2008 and 2013 were not seen locally. Although as with alcohol, youth were waiting longer to use marijuana than their peers in previous years. For example, in 2013 41% of those who used marijuana had first used it when they were 15 or older, compared to 36% in 2008 and 28% in 2003.
- Local students felt safer in every area of their school in 2013 than in previous survey years. However, when asked about bullying experiences at school or on the way to or from school, there were no improvement in the percentage of students reporting that they were teased, or social excluded and no improvements for females in the percentage who were physically assaulted. Rates of cyberbullying did decrease.
- Rates of verbal and physical sexual harassment were lower in 2013 than in previous years, for both males and females in this region. The rates of physical and sexual abuse remained constant.
- Protective factors which appeared to improve outcomes for even the most vulnerable youth included physical activity, meaningful engagement in activities, nutrition, and getting eight or more hours of sleep. Local results also highlighted the importance of supportive relationships with peers and adults, including family, teachers and other professionals.

- Local students were able to report the presence of many protective factors in their lives. For example, more local students reported feeling connected to their community and feeling safe in their neighbourhood than was seen provincially.
- Also, more students in North Shore/Coast Garibaldi reported high levels of family connectedness. Specifically, they were more likely than those across the province to feel their family paid attention to them (80% vs. 75% provincially), and understood them (66% vs. 60% provincially). Local females were more likely to feel their family had fun together (75% vs. 69% of females provincially).