



**MEDIA RELEASE | October 2014**

## ***Local students feel safer at school and in neighbourhood***

Following the release earlier this year of the provincial results of the McCreary Centre Society's 2013 BC Adolescent Health Survey (BC AHS), local results are now available.

Results for the Thompson Cariboo Shuswap area, which included students in Kamloops-Thompson, North Okanagan-Shuswap, Revelstoke, Cariboo Chilcotin, Nicola-Similkameen and Gold Trail, 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.

One of the positive findings was that youth felt safer in every area of their school in 2013 than in previous survey years. Local youth were also more likely than their peers across BC to always feel safe in their neighbourhood during the day (68% vs. 64%) and at night (36% vs. 28%).

Although only one in five local students aged 12–17 met the Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines for daily physical activity, local youth were more likely to meet these guidelines than youth in BC as a whole.

One concerning finding was that in the past year, 24% of males and 16% of females reported they had suffered a concussion. Almost 1 in 5 youth (19%) who experienced a concussion did not seek medical help.

Local youth were more likely to try alcohol, marijuana, or tobacco than their peers across BC. However, they were less likely to try these substances than in previous years. Among those who did try substances, more waited until they were older and less binge drank than in previous years.

Annie Smith, Executive Director of McCreary commented on the report: *“One of the consequences of students being more active in this part of the province is we see higher rates of injuries and particularly concussions. This is concerning when we see such a direct correlation between concussions and helmet use. However, local improvements in injury prevention behaviors such as seat belt use show us that we can improve these statistics.*

*As with the rest of the province bullying, mental health and the amount of sleep students are getting stood out to me as other areas where we should be focusing our efforts. What was encouraging about the local survey results was the identification of a number of protective factors which seemed*

*Society is a non-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**

*Annie Smith  
Executive Director*

*3552 Hastings Street  
East  
Vancouver, B.C.  
V5K 2A7*

*604-291-1996  
ext 225  
Tel: 604-291-1996  
ext 225  
Cell: 604-728-9494*

*annie@mcs.bc.ca  
Email:  
annie@mcs.bc.ca  
www.mcs.bc.ca*

***www.mcs.bc.ca***

*to be linked to better health for even the most vulnerable students, including supportive and caring relationships, physical activity, and nutrition, as well as school, family, community, and cultural connectedness.”*

A copy of the report *Thompson Cariboo Shuswap: 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 **Thursday October 16th at 3:00 pm, Wednesday Oct 22nd at noon, and Monday Oct 27th at 8:30 am**. Log-in details are available at [www.mcs.bc.ca](http://www.mcs.bc.ca).

## **BACKGROUND**

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. As in previous years, all school districts in this region participated in the BC AHS.

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.

### ***Key Findings: Thompson Cariboo Shuswap***

- In comparison to previous years local students generally felt safer at school. They also felt safer in every location at school. For example, in 2013 93% felt safe in their classroom compared to 81% in 2008.
- Despite these improvements in school safety, there was an increase in the rate of female students experiencing bullying through teasing and social exclusion compared to 2008. Additionally, females in Thompson Cariboo Shuswap were more likely than females across the province to be cyberbullied (25% vs. 19%).
- The percentage of students who did not expect to graduate dropped from 2% in 2008 to 1% in 2013.
- Although youth in this area reported higher rates of some health risk behaviours than seen provincially, there were many local improvements. For example, there were decreases in the percentage of youth trying alcohol, marijuana, or tobacco; and

decreases in the percentage of youth who reported engaging in oral sex or having a sexually transmitted infection.

- Compared to the provincial picture, youth in this area were more likely to be engaged in physical activity and exercise, including weekly informal sports (such as road hockey, hiking and skateboarding; 63% vs. 58% provincially).
- The survey showed that local students were less likely to miss out on needed medical care than their peers in 2008. However, there was no such improvement in missing out on mental health care. Also, as was seen provincially, there was a local increase in the percentage of youth who did not seek necessary mental health care because they did not want their parents to know.
- Mental health, particularly for female youth, was an area of concern highlighted by the survey findings. Females were more likely than males to report a mental health condition (such as depression or anxiety). They were also more likely than males to report extreme stress, extreme despair, self-harm, suicidal ideation, and suicide attempts.
- Results also showed the link between sleep and mental health, and highlighted that most local students (77% of males and 83% of females) were doing something such as homework or using their cellphone after the time they were expected to be asleep.
- Sixty-eight percent of students (65% of males vs. 72% of females) in this region reported having an adult in their neighbourhood or community (beyond their school or family) who cared about them. This was higher than the provincial rate of 61% (59% of males vs. 63% of females).
- More than three quarters of youth had an adult in their family they could turn to if faced with a serious problem, which was also above the provincial rate.
- Youth with a caring adult in their life were more likely to report positive mental health, as well as positive aspirations for the future.
- The survey identified protective factors that appear to be linked to better outcomes for even the most vulnerable youth. These included physical activity, nutrition, and sleep.
- Local results also highlighted the importance of supportive relationships with peers and adults including family, teachers, and other professionals.