

In 2008, over 29,000 Grade 7-12 students across British Columbia filled out a survey about their health. Some of the questions asked about how youth spent their free time and how much physical activity they engaged in. Inside are a few of the results.

McCreary Centre Society is committed to improving the health of BC youth through research and community projects with young people aged 12-25.

If you want to read more about the results, you can download the full report for free at www.mcs.bc.ca. The report is called *Moving in the right direction: Physical activity among BC youth*.

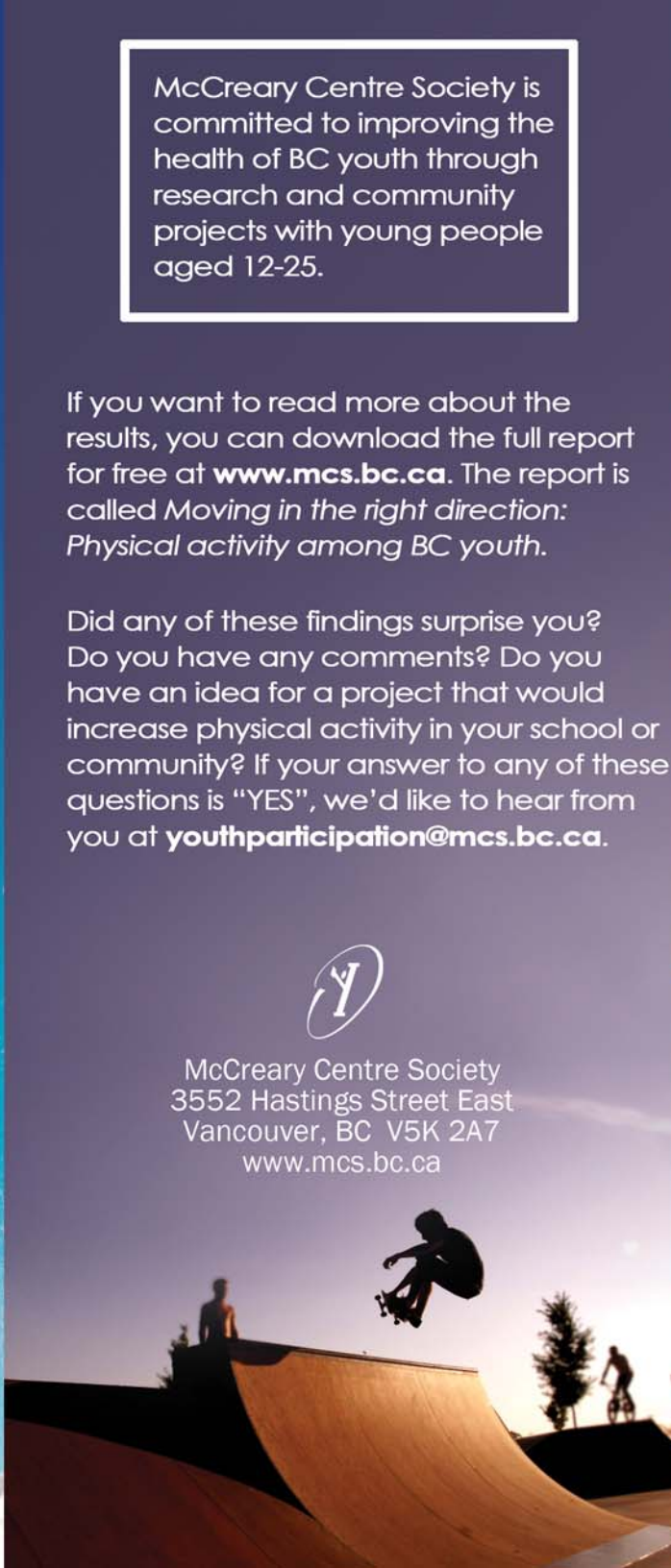
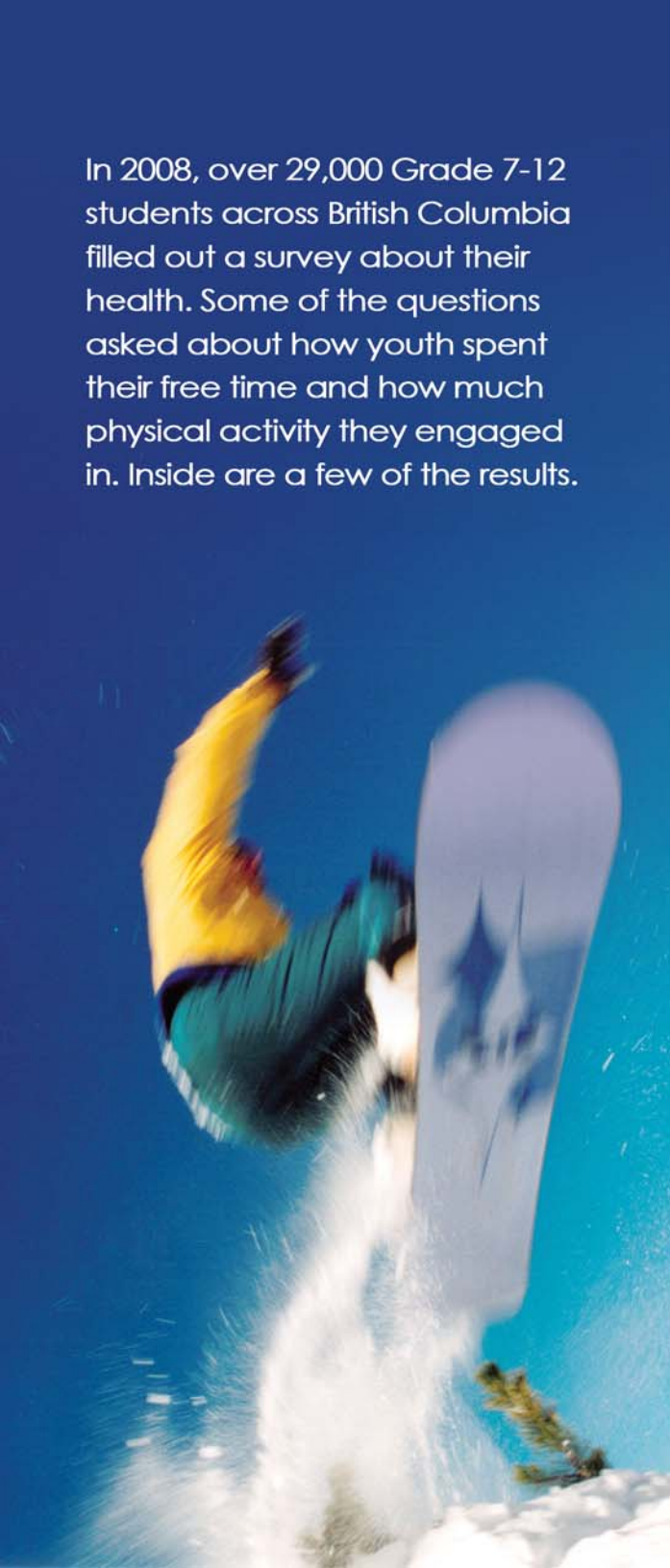
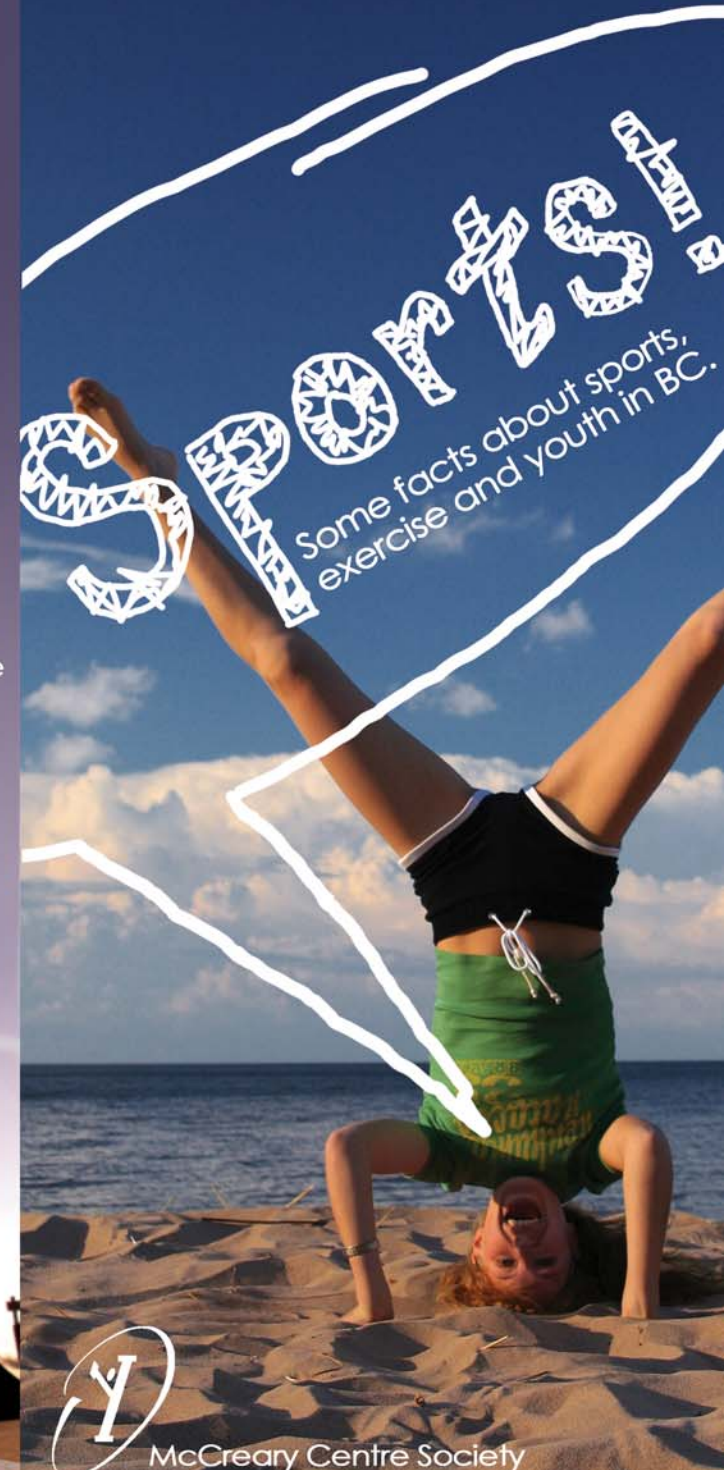
Did any of these findings surprise you? Do you have any comments? Do you have an idea for a project that would increase physical activity in your school or community? If your answer to any of these questions is "YES", we'd like to hear from you at youthparticipation@mcs.bc.ca.



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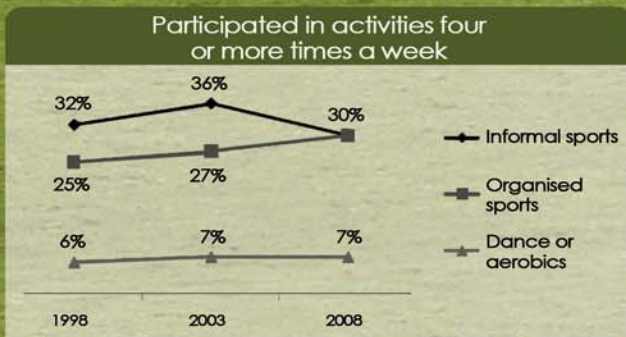
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Top marks: Most BC youth (88% of males and 81% of females) do some form of physical activity every week including organised sports with a coach (like swimming lessons or being on a soccer team), informal sports (like hiking, road hockey, hacky sack), dance and aerobics.

Getting fitter: The percentage of students who exercised hard every day or almost every day rose from 22% in 1998 to 26% in 2008.



Not the same across BC: Youth living in rural areas were more likely than those in the big cities to do informal sports. Rural females were also more likely than other females to play organised sports and take dance or aerobics classes.

Some youth miss out: Some youth were less likely to be involved in sports and exercise. Some examples are youth who lived in poverty, youth with an unstable home life, immigrant youth and youth who identified as lesbian, gay or bisexual.

It might keep you away from trouble: Youth involved in sports and exercise were less likely to use drugs (including the misuse of prescription pills).

...but not always: Older youth heavily involved in sports were more likely to have tried alcohol and to have drunk at risky levels than youth who played sports less regularly.

It's good for your body: Youth who were physically active were more likely to eat breakfast, eat healthy foods and to report their health was good or excellent.

...and your head:

Physical activity is linked to better mental health. Youth who were more physically active were less likely to intentionally hurt themselves, think about suicide, or attempt suicide. They also had higher self-esteem and were more likely to report feeling good about themselves and how they looked, compared to less active youth.

