

Celebrating 35 years



**YOUTH HEALTH
YOUTH RESEARCH
YOUTH ENGAGEMENT**

McCreary
Centre Society 

**ANNUAL REPORT
2012**



MESSAGE FROM MICHELLE HAWCO

Chair, McCreary Centre Society

The year 2012 marks the 35th anniversary of the founding of the McCreary Centre Society. The year has been a very exciting and productive one for the Board of Directors and the McCreary staff team. Our efforts have focused on strategic business development planning.

In June, the Board engaged Emblematica Brand Builders to support its initiative to continue to grow the organization's public profile and public awareness around the Society's programs and services. Following up on its strategic business development planning, the Board is now establishing several new working groups and sub-committees to support the organization in achieving strategic objectives.

In 2012, McCreary has been involved in a number of initiatives that give reason for celebration as the organization takes stock of its 35th year in operation and service to its community, including:

- Development of a toolkit for teachers, public health nurses, and youth workers to engage young people in discussions to promote positive mental health.
- The addition of five new independent evaluations to its evaluation portfolio, which included a three-year longitudinal evaluation with the PLEA Community Services Society of BC. The Society also continues to provide independent evaluation services to the CitizenU project—a three-year initiative aimed at reducing racism and other discrimination within the city of Vancouver.
- Three publications: *Raven's Children III*, a review of the health of Aboriginal youth in BC; the *Métis Youth Health in BC* report; and *Fostering Potential: The lives of BC youth with government care experience*.
- Representation of McCreary staff and the presentation of McCreary research at international health conferences, particularly the 10th Annual International Conference on Urban Health in Belo Horizonte, Brazil, and the 12th International Conference of the European Scientific Association on Residential Foster Care for Children and Adolescents in Glasgow, Scotland.
- Receiving the 2012 Special Recognition Award from the North Shore ConneXions Society for the inclusion of people with developmental disabilities into the workforce.

As the organization begins to move into its most active period with the fifth BC Adolescent Health Survey (AHS V), the Board of Directors would like to acknowledge the work of the McCreary staff team and their efforts to increase the number of school districts involved in the Spring 2013 survey. This survey will include several new school districts, joining to support research in youth health. The Board is very excited to welcome them as well as to welcome back all the school districts that have supported this project for many, many years.

Congratulations and Happy 35th birthday to the McCreary Centre Society!

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

1977 seems to me like a particularly cool year to be born even if at that time your name was “The McCreary Institute for the Study of the Ecology of Childhood.” It was the only year snow ever fell in Miami, as well as the year Elvis played his last concert, a new youth culture exploded with the birth of punk rock and air travel went supersonic with the arrival of Concorde.

For me 1977 was all about paper rounds, Friday night safety pins and hair-spray, the ever present but still seemingly unreal threats of the IRA and the Yorkshire Ripper, and a one-sided love affair with Manchester United heart throb Steve Coppell. I fully expected that when I finished school I would be a wildlife photographer, a tennis professional or spending half the year travelling and the other half working at the local chocolate factory (preferably in the nut room where my grandma worked but I was also open to considering the career opportunities available within fruit gums, mints and fancy boxed chocolates).

While things didn’t quite work out as I thought they might, and in fact 1977 was the one and only time a British woman won Wimbledon, I did fulfill my dream of travelling the world and working in the chocolate factory (until it closed and production moved overseas).

It is safe to say that in 1977, I would never have guessed that 35 years later I would be the ED of a not-for-profit half a world away from where I grew up. Thirty five years ago career advisors didn’t suggest such careers even locally, although depressingly in that regard little has changed. A career in our sector is still not valued in the way that a career in other professions may be, despite the incredible diverse skill sets that are required, the flexible nature that is a characteristic of anyone who succeeds in our world and the dedication to making the world a better place that sees so many not-for-profit employees suck up long hours, low wages and poor or nonexistent benefits packages.

I therefore as always wish to honour and thank the people who make working at McCreary such a pleasure—my colleagues Maya, Colleen, Duncan, Stephanie, Kelsi, Kate, Preeti, Alex, Brynn, Ashley, Jim and Elizabeth.

With their dedication and hard work, it has been another successful year at the Society. Five of us were lucky enough to go to Brazil to share our data and learn about child and youth programs from around the world, including a visit to a regeneration and community development project in the slums of Belo Horizonte. We have also had the opportunity to meet with experts in the field of youth health from Surrey to Scotland to share our research, youth engagement, and evaluation work and to learn from them about emerging issues, successful interventions and new ways of working.

We have solidified our partnerships with many organizations and communities, released reports that are being used to make improvements in young people’s lives through policy and programming, and been overwhelmed at the support we have received from school districts and public health nurses as we gear up for the next BC Adolescent Health Survey. Through all this we have also managed to balance the books, improve our social media presence, hold on to key staff, and increase our role as an independent evaluator.

I might never have dreamed I would end up here, but I am so very glad I did. I have even had the opportunity to take some photographs of wildlife along the way.



Annie Smith, 1977

Annie Smith,
Executive Director

HOW IT ALL STARTED

Excerpt from Dr. Roger Tonkin's book *Little Engines That Did! The Story of Two BC Non Profits*

The founder of McCreary Centre Society, Dr. Roger Tonkin wrote a book which details the history of McCreary from the Society's earliest days through to his retirement and the 2008 BC Adolescent Health Survey. The book is available upon request at mccreary@mcs.bc.ca. An excerpt is below.

A UBC PROPOSAL

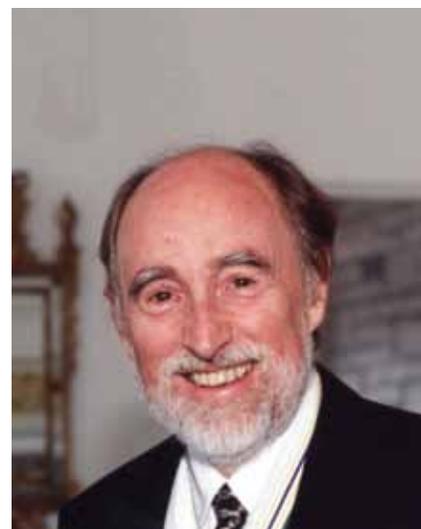
In the fall of 1975 Dr. Sydney Israels, on behalf of the Department of Pediatrics at UBC, commissioned a feasibility study for an academic program in "Child Development".

Despite the very general nature of the study's terms of reference Dr. Roger Tonkin agreed to survey the field, assess its potential for academic and clinical growth within the Department, and submit a proposal for action. Five months later, Tonkin's report covered three broad areas: service programs that "would enrich and round out the spectrum of child development services"; teaching programs "in the skills appropriate to the diagnosis and management of the contemporary problems in child development"; research programs to foster "an interdisciplinary approach to the problems of child development and . . . a better understanding of the ecology of childhood". Worthy of note is the

report's focus on infants and children. Adolescents were only mentioned once and youth not at all!

In reviewing the state of the art circa 1975 Tonkin reviewed the contemporary literature and, based on that review, selected a number of academic/clinical centres of excellence in child development in Canada, the USA, and the UK and arranged to visit them. These visits included centres in Bristol, Toronto, Berkeley, Palo Alto, New Haven, Los Angeles, Seattle, Ithaca, and Boston. In addition, an active network of correspondence with leaders in the field was developed. In those days there was no internet, Google, or e-mail.

After submitting his February 1976 report Tonkin continued to promulgate his ideas and explored the idea of creating a "Centre" or "Institute" for the study of childhood developmental and behavioral problems. It was proposed that this be an interdisciplinary approach housed in the Faculty of Graduate Studies. After consultation with members of the Department of Pediatrics, the Faculty of Medicine, the Dean Larkin of Graduate Studies, and with Dr. Jack McCreary, Coordinator of Health Sciences at UBC, it was agreed that a proposal on behalf of the new program be submitted to the UBC Senate.



Dr. Roger Tonkin

Professor Jack McCreary kindly agreed to allow his name and his reputation as an advocate of child development and multidisciplinary undertakings to be linked to the Centre proposal . . . In their submission to Senate the original name proposed was changed from "The McCreary Institute for the study of the Ecology of Childhood" to the "UBC Centre for the Study of Childhood"... The early development of the Centre moved forward unusually quickly...The Society was established in 1977 and its original name was the "Friends of the McCreary Centre Society."

1977

UBC Department of Paediatrics formally endorses the creation of the McCreary Centre for the Study of Childhood.

4

1982

After a period of dormancy, the society reactivates itself as "The Friends of the McCreary Centre Society".

"Back Seat Drivers", a toolkit for parents of new drivers begins to take shape.

1987

McCreary partners with BCCH Youth Clinic to establish Camp Elsewhere, a summer camp for youth with disordered eating. The camp ran successfully from 1988–1994.

TREASURER'S REPORT

It is pleasing to be writing this treasurer's report and noting that once again we are able to report a modest surplus of revenue over expenditures. This is particularly gratifying not only given the ongoing global recession and fiscal constraints at all levels of government but also because the Society's 35 year history has not always been so rosy.

For example a note in the Board meeting minutes for May 1999 notes "our anticipated revenue has fallen from \$500,000 to nil...Without this contract we will be able to operate until September."

This has not been an uncommon theme in the Society's history and one particularly challenging financial period occurred in the summer of 1994 when the July 21st Board minutes included an item entitled "Review of current financial crisis." These minutes revealed a shortfall of \$32, 347 and the ominous decision that the Society would "use existing cash to fund the balance of the July and August operational costs. No additional commitments are to be made beyond August 31st 1994 unless extra cash flow becomes available."

The Society weathered this storm but there were many more to come, and as recently as the mid 2000's the Society was unable to make a fiscal plan more than six months ahead. It is therefore reassuring to have been in a more stable fiscal position over the last few years. Having said that, this is not something that can ever be taken for granted and I am indebted to book keeper Jim Lee, the Executive Director Annie Smith and the rest of the McCreary team for their fiscal restraint and the safeguards that they use on a daily basis with the ongoing operations.

The Society receives very little funding from private donations and this year the Board spent time considering a strategic name change as a possible way to attract additional revenue from sources that may not know the work of the Society from its name. This is not the first time this has been considered. In 1985 McCreary had \$6,700 in the bank, outdated office equipment and was struggling to fund projects it wished to undertake. Consequently, a fundraising strategy to attract private donors was developed. In 1987, the Board hired a fundraiser who recommended that the Society change its name to the Vancouver Institute for the Study and Treatment of Adolescents as this would be clearer and more appealing to potential donors. A Board meeting later that year decided against this proposal. Instead the Board voted to keep the name McCreary but use it as an acronym for McCreary Centre for Research, Education, Assessment and Rehabilitation on Youth.

The acronym did not stick but the McCreary name did and over time, it has become much more widely known which has coincided with increasingly diverse funding streams. This year alone, we have received funding from several federal and provincial government Ministries, three Foundations, seven service delivery organizations and one municipality.

Troy Peart,
Treasurer

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

McCreary Centre Society would like to take this opportunity to thank all our funders, project partners, volunteers, students, YAC-ers and staff for their fantastic contributions over the past year. It would not have been possible without you. Here's to the next 35!

THEN AND NOW

RESEARCH DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Thirty-five years ago, the McCreary Centre Society was established with a primary focus on promoting multi-disciplinary research activities, better health care and awareness of child and youth health needs in the wider community. The Society published a series of reports created by Dr. Roger Tonkin, the Executive Director, on child and youth health, pulling together government statistics and other people's research. The first report was published in 1979, and the entire series served as a small source of revenue for the Society. They also held conferences to bring scholars together—the first focused on adolescent risk-taking in 1984—and published the proceedings.

It wasn't until more than a decade after its founding that McCreary took on original research projects as a Society, drawing together community and academic partners in 1990–1991 to plan and secure funding for the first Adolescent Health Survey in 1992. It was also at this point they conducted their first evaluation project, of Camp Elsewhere, the summer camp for youth with eating disorders on Gabriola Island that Dr. Tonkin developed, as well as a project on preventing sexual abuse among youth with disabilities. These early studies had the same hallmarks that are still part of most of the research McCreary does: they were located in the community, they drew on the expertise of academics from

several disciplines in different universities, they often involved youth in the research process, and they developed creative ways of bringing the research back to youth and the community.

Conducting that first province-wide BC Adolescent Health Survey in 1992 was a pivotal event that put McCreary Centre Society on the map. It almost didn't happen, just as the survey was about to launch, the Vancouver Sun released a series of negative stories about the upcoming survey, and several school districts withdrew their participation. McCreary kept up the advocacy and education over the summer, and in the fall 1992 launched the survey again. The reassuring results, published in spring 1993, eased fears and changed attitudes about adolescents in BC.

From that first AHS, McCreary developed a series of important topical reports over the next several years, focused on youth with disabilities, youth and AIDS, sexual abuse, and smoking, all using the survey data. McCreary also secured BC Ministry funding for the first of their special group surveys, a street youth survey in Vancouver (1993), and funding for the first Next Steps project, to bring the data to youth across the province. Special surveys of sexually exploited youth and lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth soon followed.



Elizabeth Saewyc, 1977

In 1997, McCreary began working on developing the second AHS. It became an even bigger and even more rigorous survey, drawing on consultants from Statistics Canada to help with the random sampling and weighting. During the following years, there were many more community reports and fact sheets, and a growing number of student theses and dissertations, but no papers published in professional journals. In 1998 McCreary developed The Doctor Project, a partnership with the Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks. Coordinated by two youth researchers, the project surveyed youth in care about their experiences with health care providers.

With the turn of the millennium, the research conducted with McCreary

We asked BC students where they hope to be when they are 35. They told us about their goals, dreams and plans for the future. Their responses are included throughout the report.

“When I’m 35 I want to have achieved something I never thought I would.”

expanded in leaps. There were the other special population surveys: the 2000 youth in custody survey, 2000 Street Youth Survey, and the 2001 survey of older street youth in Vancouver, all of which were built on the AHS, augmented with other questions, and all of which resulted in the now-familiar community-friendly reports. In 2001, McCreary also saw the first international academics, Dr. Elizabeth Saewyc and Dr. Carol Skay, coming to use the 1992 and 1998 AHS data for an NIH-funded study, which resulted in the first McCreary data access fees for academic researchers, a model which has continued to foster connections with academics across Canada.

At this time, while community reports were always valued there was a growing demand for McCreary to produce professional journal articles as evidence of scientific rigour. The first full paper in a professional journal reporting McCreary research was published by Roger Tonkin in 2002, in *Paediatrics and Child Health*, about marijuana use from the 1998 BC AHS.

In 2004, Elizabeth Saewyc was recruited as McCreary’s first Research Director, with a mandate to increase the diversity of scholars and students using the data, to foster professional publications, and provide ongoing support for rigorous and youth-engaged research. In 2008, Elizabeth received CIHR funding for a

Chair in Applied Public Health for 5 years to support her role with the Society.

Over the past few years, McCreary has completed studies of homeless youth, youth in alternative education and the fourth AHS, as well as partnering with community organizations, colleges and universities, and increasing connections to other researchers from a variety of different disciplines who work with our data for specific projects.

Today, we have had several academics from universities across BC and across Canada who access the BC AHS data for specific projects. For example, this last year we were funded as part of CIHR’s largest 5-year study on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth health. Increasingly, our Student Group students, academic partners, and our own McCreary staff have been presenting research using McCreary data at professional conferences around the world, and are publishing papers in a variety of peer-reviewed journals. Papers that focus on our data were cited this past year in a special U.S. Institute of Medicine Report about lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender people’s health, and our data have been cited more than 1,000 times in other people’s scientific journal articles. Our research reports and results are influencing policy and practice in BC and beyond; we have such name recognition we were even listed in a survey by the Canadian

Centre on Substance Abuse as a source where people might get their research evidence! Between 2000 and 2005, 5 papers and 3 abstracts were published in professional journals; from 2006 to 2010, this increased to 16 papers and 9 abstracts, and in the past 18 months, we have had 4 more abstracts and 5 papers published, with another 4 abstracts and 1 paper in press. McCreary’s data is being presented dozens of times a year to audiences across BC, across Canada, and even in other countries around the world.

As we look back over these 35 years, McCreary can say it has achieved that original dream of a Centre dedicated to promoting multidisciplinary research on youth health.

Dr. Elizabeth Saewyc,
Research Director

“When I’m 35 I want to have made the world a better place to live!”

1992

15,549 students complete the first ever BC Adolescent Health Survey in 48 school districts across the province.

1995

The Youth Advisory Council (YAC) is formed by a small group of youth volunteers.

1996

The YAC hosts the first Breaking Barriers & Building Bridges conference (‘B4’).

YOUTH ADVISORY & ACTION COUNCIL

THE YAC IS BORN

In 1994 McCreary organized the first Youth for Youth Health Conference. It was an international youth conference that was tagged onto two international health conferences.

I was invited to be involved in planning it, since I was the president of Canadian Intramural Recreation Association (CIRA) BC. I went to the first steering committee meeting and Roger Tonkin asked me to chair all the local steering committee meetings. I did, and called around looking for other youth who could help organize the conference. Opreet Kang was recommended. We met and she agreed to join the steering committee as well.

Opreet and I got asked to be the first two youth speakers at the conference. We addressed the ballroom of 1,000 people together; it was scary but it went well! After the conference, the Youth Coordinator Brian Hill suggested that we have a meeting to decide how to move forward and not let the energy of the conference die. Brian was doing his thesis on the conference and youth participation so he coordinated a focus group for us to discuss what should happen next. The original idea was to do a two



Minda Chittenden and Sinead Wynne, B4 Conference, 1998

day workshop that would focus on youth health. Opreet, Terence, Lima, Sinead, Lena, Vanessa, Vinny, Nigel and I all got together and planned the first ever B4 (Building Bridges, Breaking Barriers).

We are all floored that we created a B4 that has continued, and we all remember the heart attack we caused Aileen and the Board when we hosted our first one—and yet it went amazingly well.

Many of us are still in touch and we are all doing well. Sinead is married with 3 kids, and is a qualified teacher and nurse. Lima gained a masters in medical illustration, illustrates textbooks and does illustrations for court cases. Terence got a masters from the University of Toronto.

I moved to the UK to do my masters. When I came back I contacted Aileen and when she found out I knew SPSS she asked if I wanted to analyze the 1998 AHS. After that, I moved back to the UK to work until 2003 and this time when I returned I wanted to work for a data entry company but I got convinced to come back to McCreary and work on the 2003 AHS. I moved to Vernon before the 2008 survey but still managed to get hooked in to training the nurses to administer the survey and helping with the analyses preparations. I have even helped out at the more recent B4 events and with last year's YAC fundraiser at Art on the Farm in Chilliwack.

Minda Chittenden

1997

The *Open Door Project*, a youth-led study of youth-friendly communities takes place.

1998

AHS II is completed by 25,838 students in 43 BC school districts.

2000

The First Raven's Children report on the health of Aboriginal youth in BC is released.

AND THE YAC TODAY

Diversity marks this year for the youth council. The YAC had some amazing opportunities to work on different exciting and engaging projects in health and leadership. From attending a presentation from the Youth Injection Prevention (YIP) project on harm reduction and resiliency for ‘at-risk’ youth to organizing a youth forum at McCreary.

Continuing our efforts from last year, the YAC facilitated a number of workshops in preparation for the next BC Adolescent Health Survey (AHS) in 2013. Community youth groups such as Britannia Youth committee and South Burnaby Neighbourhood House provided valuable feedback on the youth perspective of what’s relevant in adolescent health today, and on what should be included on the survey.

In March, the YAC hosted a “Pizza and Politics” event with the MLA for Vancouver–Hastings, Shane Simpson. Youth from the YAC as well as from the community talked about what was important for them while growing up and how to better include youth in the decisions our provincial government is making. Later in the year, the YAC had the amazing opportunity to be part of the City of Vancouver’s CitizenU project. The members joined other youths from various backgrounds across the city to discuss issues around discrimination, hate crimes and active witnessing. Not only was it an amazing learning experience,

CitizenU also provided the YAC a platform to connect with other youth. In the coming year, the YAC will be collaborating with youth from other organizations in the project to host youth-led events throughout Vancouver.

In addition to CitizenU, the YAC has a few projects in their early stages for the coming year. The members are currently creating a youth granting initiative, where we can offer grants to other youth to support projects which improve youth health in areas identified from the AHS. Other projects to watch out for next year include the We-Cycle program to raise more awareness about biking among young people. Stay tuned!

Finally, as you might have noticed from the report title, we recently changed our name from Youth Advisory Council (YAC) to the Youth Advisory and Action Council (Still YAC!). With the youth council becoming more involved in community projects and events, this name change truly reflects the direction the council is heading. Thank you to our youth participation staff, Stephanie Martin, Carly Hoogeveen, Kelsi Cox and Preeti Prasad, for the incredible help and support they have provided the YAC over the past year. We wouldn’t have been able to do this without you! The YAC is thrilled to celebrate McCreary’s 35th anniversary. Cheers to many more years of youth empowerment!

Lucy Shen



Lucy Shen, YAC member & Board representative

“When I’m 35 I’d love to see every child happy and healthy.”

“When I’m 35 I would like to see no child labour and no poverty! & I will be rich”

IN PARTNERSHIP

ABORIGINAL YOUTH AND COMMUNITIES

As we look back to 1977 and what the life of a teenager was like 35 years ago, it is hard to imagine that as recently as 1986 Aboriginal youth in our province were still being separated from their families and were spending their teen years within the residential school system. Not until planning for the second BC Adolescent Health Survey was well under way did the last federally run residential school close its doors.

It was therefore particularly pleasing that our 35th year has been marked by the release of two Aboriginal specific youth health reports, the launch of the third Aboriginal Next Steps program and the development of an evaluation partnership with Aboriginal Community Policing and the Aboriginal Front Door Society.

The third Raven's Children report was released in March at the Aboriginal Friendship Centre in Vancouver. The report included the voices of Elders, youth and community members as well as the data from over 3,000 Aboriginal students who completed the 2008 BC Adolescent Health Survey (BC AHS). The inclusion of these perspectives helped to frame the findings and highlighted the importance of cultural connectedness and language revitalization, as well as the need to focus on the different health pictures of youth growing up on and off reserve, and on the positive role of Aboriginal Education workers within the school system. These conversations not only provided context to the report but have also led to some significant changes to the 2013 BC AHS and the data that will be collected.

One of the key themes to emerge during the community consultations was the

need for a report looking specifically at the health of Métis youth. Overseen by an advisory committee of Métis youth, service providers and community members, the first ever McCreary report on the health of the 700 young people who self-identified as Métis on the BC AHS was released in September, 20 years after Métis people were officially recognized as a First Nations people in Canada.

We are currently seeking funding for our first ever Métis specific Next Steps program, which will take the results of the report back to youth and engage them in projects to improve Métis youth health.

When the first Aboriginal Next Steps was conducted in 2001 following the release of the first Raven's Children report, the top issues identified by Aboriginal youth in communities across BC were a lack of recreational activities, drug and alcohol use, a loss of cultural connectedness and a lack of communication between youth and adults in their community.

This year we launched our third Aboriginal Next Steps program, and the first communities to take part were on the North Shore. The program brought together youth from Tsleil-Waututh Nation and Squamish Nation to learn about the *Raven's Children III* results, create films highlighting local health issues and develop and deliver a community project to improve youth health.

Ironically with no knowledge of previous Next Steps projects the participants chose to create a project to build cultural connectedness, which not only offered recreational activities as an alternative to drug and alcohol use but also created a dialogue between youth and adults in



Samantha Tsuruda,
Raven's Children III consultations, 2011

"When I'm 35 I want to see a better future for the children of the world."

each community. The finale to the project came with a boat trip up Indian Arm to visit sites where Tsleil-Waututh people used to live. Elders joined the youth and shared some traditional teachings and stories as well as sharing their skills on the water and land, including demonstrating the use of traditional plants in cooking and as medicine. A film made by the youth during the trip was then used to advocate for the inclusion of an annual cultural connectedness trip in local community budgets.

We are incredibly grateful to former staff members Carly Hoogeveen and Samantha Tsuruda who led these projects and have made a huge contribution to McCreary over the past year.

EVALUATION

Who would have thought in 1977 that independent program evaluations would become such an integral part of our work?

We embarked on our large-scale evaluation adventures 30 years after McCreary was founded, when we were told by National Crime Prevention Centre that our 2007 Aboriginal Next Steps project needed a formal evaluation and they were prepared to fund it. This was new territory. We had long been doing workshop evaluations and had even supported a retrospective youth led evaluation of the B4 youth conference in 2006 but we had never been asked for logic models, outputs, outcomes and formal evaluation plans before.

Shortly after we had started work on this internal evaluation, our first external evaluation was secured thanks to our research partnership with PLEA Community Services and Douglas College's Faculty of Child, Family and Community Studies. McCreary spearheaded a three-year longitudinal evaluation of PLEA's alternatives to custody and addiction treatment programs. Douglas College students on practicum at McCreary helped with collecting, analyzing, and reporting the data.

We learned a lot from our first multi-year evaluation project. We made mistakes and encountered unanticipated challenges along the way. Yet evaluation data was successfully collected and the results continue to inform service delivery and the direction of new research projects. It also inspired us to take on more evaluations.

Since 2009, we have had the opportunity to evaluate a number of homelessness



TTIP Celebration, Watari Youth, Family & Community Services, 2012

initiatives funded by the Vancouver Foundation, including a housing program for pregnant and parenting youth. Other evaluations we have been involved with include an employment program for gang-involved young people; a film project for youth with mental health challenges; and a city-wide anti-discrimination initiative. Several of these reports are now available to download on our website.



Maya Peled, 1977

We are also currently evaluating a program supporting young Aboriginal women exiting the streets, and a three-year federally funded project looking at services and supports for youth with FASD. As well, we are doing our first evaluation outside the Lower Mainland looking at programs for sexually exploited young women in the Interior.

We still make mistakes and encounter unanticipated challenges along the way as we continue to adapt our methodologies to meet the needs of each program we evaluate and the youth that are being served. However, we also learn and grow because of the organizations we work with. We are grateful to them for entrusting us with evaluating their services, and we look forward to taking on more evaluations in the years to come.

For more information about our evaluation services, please contact evaluation@mcs.bc.ca and visit www.mcs.bc.ca/program_evaluation.

ADOLESCENT HEALTH SURVEY

TWENTY YEARS OF THE BC AHS

McCreary's 35th year of operation is also of note because it marks the fifth cycle of the BC Adolescent Health Survey. In its twenty year existence the survey has grown from 64% of school districts and 15,490 youth taking part in 1992 to a new high of 85% of school districts and over 29,440 youth in 2008.

Although final numbers are not yet in for 2013 it is looking like that record will be broken again as Haida Gwaii, Stikine, Peace River North, Peace River South, Chilliwack and Abbotsford have all indicated they will be taking part after previously declining.

It would have been hard to imagine in 1992 that by 2008, 88% of youth would have spent their leisure time on the Internet on a typical school day, and that being the victim of Internet bullying would be a reality for one in six BC students.

The 2013 survey will carry additional technology questions including cell phone use, online gaming, social networking, and blogging which were not included in the 2008 survey, let alone the 1992 version.

The 2013 survey will also ask about mixing alcohol and energy drinks for the first time. The use of energy drinks became a new area of concern on the last survey as manufacturers were targeting young people and more and more youth were using them to stay awake and study. In 2008, 11% of BC youth drank energy drinks on the day before completing the survey. When we did our recent series of community consultations to gather input into the 2013 survey, we consistently heard about the need to not only retain our questions about energy drink consumption but also to find out how many youth are mixing them with alcohol and other substances.

While some questions from the 1992 survey are likely never to return (e.g., parents' occupation, frequency of unsupervised swimming and urinary infections) it will be interesting to see which of the 2013 new additions will be around for the 2018 and 2023 versions of the survey. While the question about the impact of the 2010 Olympics will definitely be time limited, it would be nice to think that the new questions about lack of sleep, discrimination experiences and poverty would also become unnecessary in time.

Other new questions which will be included in the survey reflect the increased awareness and interest in topics such as concussions, access to dental care, neighbourhood safety and cultural connectedness.

There have been many changes to the survey over time as our understanding of adolescent health has increased and new areas of concern have emerged. Yet some results have stayed remarkably consistent since that first AHS. These include the rate of youth reporting they are in good or excellent health (84%) and the percentage who had tried cocaine (4%).

While no one knows what the 2013 results will show us, we do know that the survey is a huge undertaking and would not be possible without the support of the Superintendents, Principals and teachers in the participating school districts.

We are also indebted to the already over-worked Public Health Nurses who will oversee the administration in each health region of the province, and to the nursing students who will support that administration process.

2002

Between the Cracks, a qualitative study of street-involved youth is completed.

2003

The AHS III is completed by more than 30,500 students in 45 BC school districts.

2005

McCreary completes second study of youth in custody.

The YAC delivers workshops on starting a Youth Advisory Council to youth in Powell River and Tla'Amin.

“When I’m 35 I want to see the world changing to a better place.”

“When I’m 35 I want to be a billionaire.”

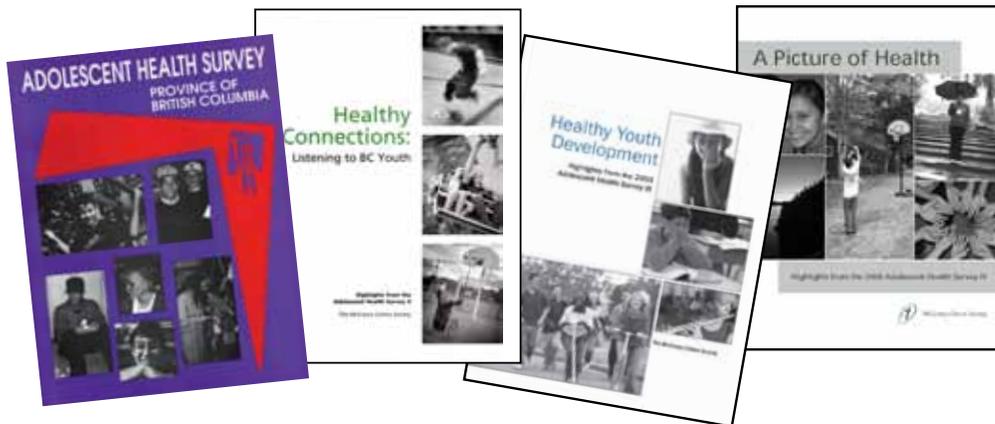
CHANGES IN YOUTH HEALTH: 1992 TO 2008

- Six out of ten youth in 1992 had ever tried smoking, and 26% smoked every day. By 2008, only 26% had ever smoked at all.
- Among sexually active youth, the rate of using birth control pills as a method to prevent pregnancy almost doubled between 1992 and 2008 from 25% to 46%.
- There was a decrease in the rates of young people considering suicide, down from 16% in 1992 to 12% in 2008. There was also a drop in the percentage who actually attempted suicide from 7% to 5%.
- More youth in 2008 were trying to lose weight and fewer were trying to gain weight.
- The percentage of students who had been in a physical fight in the past year decreased from 33% in 1992 to 24% in 2008.
- Although fewer students tried alcohol in 2008, those who had were more likely to be binge drinking. In 1992 35% of students who had tried alcohol binge drank in the past month, up to 44% in 2008.
- The percentage of youth reporting that they were religious decreased from 63% in 1992 to 49% in 2008.



AHS I in 1992

- The most commonly reported trouble with health or appearance was acne, a concern for 36% of BC youth.
- 84% of students had been taught about AIDS in school, yet, 9% still held the incorrect belief that you could get AIDS from insects.
- While 9% of youth brushed their teeth less than daily or never, 17% reported brushing three or more times every day.



BC Adolescent Health Survey Provincial Reports (Left to right: 1992, 1998, 2003, 2008)

2006

The second study of street-involved and marginalized youth in BC is conducted by youth researchers in 9 communities across BC.

2007

McCreary Youth Foundation merges into the Society.

McCreary surveys over 300 youth attending alternative education programs in BC.

Community research partnership begins with PLEA Community Services Society and Douglas College’s Faculty of Child, Family and Community Studies (CFCS).

YAC members represent BC youth at the national Young Decision Makers Conference in Ontario.

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

THE NEXT STEPS

The Next Steps program has been engaging youth in McCreary data since the mid 1990's when a single workshop format shared report findings and facilitated a dialogue to generate youth's ideas for improving health in their local community. There has been a Next Steps after most of McCreary's surveys since and while single workshops are still offered, there are also programs that run for considerably longer. Toolkits and other resources have also been created which are used by teachers and others to engage youth in the data.

One BC AHS Next Steps program started in late 2010 with a series of one-day workshops on the Sunshine Coast. Inspired by what they learned, a partnership between students, schools and the local health authority was formed to address key health issues identified by the students. With a small grant from McCreary, three communities—Gibsons, Sechelt and Pender Harbour—developed a photovoice project for youth to present their communities from a youth perspective. Key areas of interest were access to safe transportation, including drinking and driving and street safety for pedestrians, and stigma associated with attending the youth centre.

The project was put on hold during job action in the schools, but picked up again at the beginning of the 2012 school year. The students have since completed their photo submissions and are organizing a community showcase this fall.

Following the release of McCreary's report *Making the Right Connections*, a Next Steps program was developed focusing specifically on promoting positive mental health.

In Nanaimo, youth at Junior Learning Alternatives wanted to promote positive mental health by increasing protective factors such as cultural connectedness and learning new skills. For their final project, the youth engaged in a carving workshop with a local Aboriginal carver who helped them develop a carving that will serve as an award for students graduating from the school. The project was funded by Coast Capital Savings Community Investment program.

Meanwhile in Aldergrove, youth from Aldergrove Neighborhood Services identified a lack of affordable and accessible recreational opportunities and safe spaces (such as shelters), and negative stereotypes towards youth as issues

which negatively impacted youth mental health in their community. They created Claymation videos to highlight the issues they were passionate about and are now planning a recreation event which will include a hockey game where youth will play with local RCMP, teachers and service providers. They hope that this event will raise enough money to make it sustainable and provide an opportunity for youth to connect with adults in their community. This project was funded by Bell Let's Talk Community Fund.

Over the summer, McCreary teamed up with Stephanie Davis, a teacher at Burnett Secondary School in Richmond, to develop a peer-mentorship project on mental health. She is taking on the project with her senior Psychology class over the fall semester. The students began the process by participating in the Positive Mental Health Next Steps workshop series, and are now creating their own workshop. The theme of the workshop is 'What I wish I'd known in grade 8', and will explore a range of topics such as healthy relationships, bullying, stress and embracing individuality. The workshop will be a part of a one day school event taking place in December, and will be delivered to seven classes of Grade 8 students.

2008

McCreary's first ever Claymation films are created by youth participating in the Aboriginal Next Steps in 10 BC communities.

The BC AHS IV is conducted with over 29,400 students in 50 school districts across BC.

McCreary coordinates the administration of the Vancouver Foundation's Youth Vital Signs (YVS) survey.

McCreary conducts focus groups for projects with SPARC BC and the University of Victoria, asserting itself as a leader in youth-engaged research.

Next Steps workshops with street-involved and marginalized youth take survey results back to youth in the communities that participated.

EXPLORING RISK AND RESILIENCY WITH THE YIP

Over the past year, youth researchers from the BC Centre for Disease Control's Youth Injection Prevention (YIP) Project have worked with McCreary to turn their research into a youth-led workshop. Four dedicated YIP members developed the workshop to engage youth from across BC in a dialogue on risk and resiliency and factors that help prevent the transition into injection drug use. The workshop is modeled after McCreary's successful Next Steps, which uses research as a springboard for discussion and community engagement. The YIP team will complete their workshop series this fall, after delivering their workshop to youth in 5 communities in the North, Interior, Lower Mainland, Fraser Valley and on Vancouver Island. Findings from the workshop will be shared with professionals working with at-risk youth in each of these regions.



Positive Mental Health Next Steps, Nanaimo, 2012

“When I’m 35 I want to be a very famous singer songwriter.”

“When I’m 35 I want to travel around the world!”

“When I’m 35 I want to be a doctor.”

RURAL AND REMOTE YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

Many of our youth engagement resources are available free to download on our website. From time to time we hear reports of our toolkits being used to create a workshop or start up a youth advisory council, but rarely do we have the chance to hear the outcomes of these projects. So we were naturally excited to find out that our Next Steps workshop toolkit had been used by the Health Promotion Unit at the Yukon Government to deliver the results of the Health Behaviour in School-aged Children study (HBSC) in 2011. We were even more excited to be invited up to Yukon to see the workshop in action and to share experiences and best practices

of youth engagement in rural and remote communities. In March of 2012, we visited Whitehorse and participated in a workshop in Watson Lake, a community of 600 people, about 400 kilometres outside of Whitehorse.

Based on our shared experiences, several suggestions were brought forward to assist communities to overcome challenges of engaging youth in non-urban settings and on the role of a successful adult ally. Plans are underway to further our partnership with community organizations in Yukon and with the Yukon Government.

STUDENTS

THE STORY OF THE STUDENT GROUP

Regular involvement of students at McCreary began in the Fall of 1994 with the formation of the SFU Psychology Research Group. The group was supervised by SFU faculty members, Drs. David Cox and Roger Blackman, and McCreary's Dr. Roger Tonkin and Aileen Murphy. With this collaboration, students became involved with a community organization focused on youth health and were able to use the Adolescent Health Survey to explore and discuss topics of interest, most commonly for their theses and dissertations. At the same time, McCreary had the opportunity to increase their partnerships with the academic community and have questions researched which they may not have had the resources or time to do themselves. The group developed a Letter of Understanding which outlined the roles and responsibilities of its participants. Seven undergraduate and graduate students were part of the inaugural group in 1994.

Ten years after it first began and with the arrival of Dr. Elizabeth Saewyc, the group was renamed the Student Group. Under her direction and supervision and with the continuing support of SFU's Dr. David Cox, the McCreary Student Group expanded to include participation from universities other than SFU and included 14 students. Dr. Saewyc developed data access policies and procedures for student use of McCreary data and became a member of many students' supervisory committees. Today, the group consists of six student members and is facilitated by post-doctoral fellow, Dr. Chiaki Konishi.

Through the years, students in the group have met on a monthly or bi-monthly basis to explore and discuss students' particular research areas, to update each other on their progress, to share feedback, and provide support to each other. The group has also served as a forum for professional development with Dr. Saewyc and other members of the group doing presentations on issues related to ethics, writing, and statistical analysis.

Several student group alumni have remained active in youth health. Among the inaugural members, Natalie Franz is a clinical psychologist who works with a local adolescent treatment centre; Trisha Apland serves on the Board of Directors of a non-profit organization that provides support to children and youth who have been abused; and Colleen Poon has continued her work with McCreary as a Research Associate. Other student alumni have also worked as research assistants or acted as consultants on subsequent McCreary projects including Brittany Dixon and Kim van der Woerd.

Since its inception, over 40 students have been involved with the student group at McCreary. These students have been primarily affiliated with SFU and UBC, but the group has also had members from other institutions such as the University of Victoria, Carleton University, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (U.K.), and Maastricht University (Netherlands). The students have come from a wide range of disciplines including psychology, nursing, public health, education, geography, and social work.



Research Associate Colleen Poon, 1977

“When I’m 35 I want to be a mechanical engineer.”

“When I’m 35 I want to be a video game designer.”

Their research has focussed on a variety of issues such as eating disorders, suicide, peer victimization, obesity, pregnancy, non-suicidal self-injury, HIV risk, and youth assets; and the populations of interest have included youth in general as well as street youth, Aboriginal youth, Asian youth, and sexual minority youth. The students' secondary analyses of McCreary's Adolescent Health Survey and special surveys have contributed to over 20 theses and dissertations as well as over 45 conference presentations and journal articles.

NURSING STUDENTS PRACTICA LOOKS DIFFERENT TODAY

Amanda Miller and Don Vergara are fourth year nursing students completing a practicum placement at McCreary. They considered the role of their practicum at McCreary in relation to the development of community nursing.

Community nursing started to evolve in the early Twentieth Century, when Public Health Nurses began to be seen as “the front-line workers of health education and promotion”. In the late 1970s, as McCreary was being established, the effect of life style choices on morbidity and mortality was highlighted, and nurses began to explore different strategies for health promotion and harm reduction through research and evidence-based practice. These changes resulted in an increase in Community and Public Health Nurses (PHN), and more community-based student practicums.

As adolescence is usually a healthy time, and relatively few young people come to the attention of inpatient services, youth were often ignored within children’s services. Little of the student nurse curriculum was devoted to adolescent care and development. We now know that many lifelong health behaviours can start in adolescence.

It is now recognized that in order to provide effective and individualized care, student nurses require both knowledge and interpersonal skills to choose age appropriate interventions and to support youth and their vulnerable sub-populations. A placement at McCreary allows students the opportunity to not only develop the research skills they will need for finding and evaluating best practices in their chosen field of nursing, but also gives them a chance to meet



Don Vergara and Amanda Miller, 2012

with youth in a variety of community settings to better understand their lived experiences and developmental levels.

Like McCreary, community-based nurses create partnerships with communities and focus on recognizing and developing assets rather than deficits. Engaging youth in health promotion and policy development has become an area of focus, as early prevention is more effective and long lasting than acute treatment. This area of focus helps motivate youth to speak out about issues present in society, and also increases their potential to become future leaders.

Contemporary PHNs continue to develop analytical skills to promote youth health. A delicate balance of health promotion and prevention exists as nurses are able to specialize in areas of community, mental health and acute medicine. Past students who have honed their analytical skills at McCreary have gone on to specialize in rural nursing, ER and acute care, midwifery and working at youth clinics. Several have also volunteered to administer the Adolescent Health Survey

in areas where there are nursing shortages. Others have gone on to graduate degrees to develop research and shape future nursing care. All have left with a greater understanding of the factors that promote young people’s health.

Since 2007, McCreary has been indebted to the Langara nursing program and to Instructor Mary Kruger for the support they have offered the Society. Students produce at least two fact sheets a year using data from the BC Adolescent Health Survey, as well as supporting youth events, assisting with survey administration, data entry and data analyses on a variety of McCreary projects.

A fact sheet created by nursing students Tannis Meglaughlin and Stefanie Paludetto looking at energy drinks and substance use was released in November.

YOUTH CULTURE

A TALE OF TWO ERAS

From cassettes and bell bottoms, to iPods and skinny jeans, youth culture has seen drastic changes since the McCreary Centre Society was founded in 1977. In celebration of our 35th Anniversary, we decided to offer a comparison between a day in the life of a youth today and in the year of our establishment.

It's September 1977 and you wake up to Led Zeppelin blasting on your clock radio. You pull on your bell-bottom jeans and platform shoes, eat a bowl of Wheaties, and grab your school books. As you climb into your mom's '73 Honda Civic, you think to yourself how much you wish she had picked a car with a built-in tape deck because you've got the new Pink Floyd album on cassette and it would make for great road music. You're running a little ahead of schedule so you stop at the local diner on the way to grab a quick cup of coffee (the first Starbucks won't appear in Canada for another 11 years).

It's just another typical day of high school, although, you are excited to see the TV set up at the front of your third period class and spend the next hour watching a VHS of a man wearing glasses talking about how marijuana use causes blindness. These anti-drug "scare

videos" had become pretty popular in the past few years so this wasn't your first time seeing it. You're glad when the bell rings and you can head to the back of the school to meet up with your friends. You spend the next hour talking about music and the upcoming dance while passing around a cigarette, as you did most every day.

When you arrive home, you turn on the TV and see, for the first time, an advertisement for something called an "Apple Computer" and marvel at its colour graphics and two-disk floppy drive. You pick up the telephone to invite your friend over, but his mother tells you that he's not at home—at the mall, she guesses. You could drive there and walk around with the hopes of running into him, but instead you decide to play Pacman on your Atari game console until your mom calls you to dinner. Another evening of Hamburger Helper. You can appreciate how these new packaged foods are making meals easier, but sometimes you really crave home cooking.

Later that evening, you meet up with your friends in the parking lot behind the record store. A group of them are heading to the Sex Pistols concert tonight and, as they unload their backpack, you

see they are equipped to have a good time. They try to persuade you to join, but you've already broken curfew twice this week. You decide to head to the theatre with a few other friends instead and end up seeing the newly released flick, *Saturday Night Fever*. You walk home, reflecting on how fast the world seems to be changing. A desktop micro-computer? What would be next? You close your bedroom door, climb into bed, and fall asleep under the dim glow of your lava lamp . . .

. . . It's September 2012 and you awaken with a start to the sound of Kanye West coming through your iPhone speakers. Usually this would be the perfect tune to get you up and going for school, but today, you are exhausted from a late night of watching a live stream of Lady Gaga's latest concert in Berlin. With a flick, Kanye West is off and the more morning-appropriate sounds of Coldplay are on. You've only been up for minutes, but from a quick check of your Facebook account, you already know you weren't the only one of your friends that had a late night on the computer.

Breakfast is a toaster-warm Pop Tart from Mom and a Starbucks coffee on the bus, because, at the time, posting a

2009

McCreary launches *A Picture of Health*, the 4th BC Adolescent Health Survey report at the VanCity Theatre.

Reports are published for 14 of BC's 16 HSDA's.

The AHS IV Next Steps soon follows, partnering with youth in 4 communities across the province.

McCreary completes *A Seat at the Table*, a review of youth engagement strategies in Vancouver.



status update (“Anyone going to see *The Hunger Games* tomorrow?”) seemed far more important than a sit-down breakfast with the family. You hate being late for class and besides, you can’t wait to get to school to ask your friends if they caught the latest Lonely Island video, though, via Twitter, you already know your best friend has watched it 7 times.

You run through what used to be the smoke pit, and get to class just before your teacher begins a film on the role played by advertising in the obesity epidemic. You’ve seen films like this before, but you still watch intently. Biology has always interested you, and there is no question that, when you go to university next year, that will be your area of study. Unfortunately, all good things come to an end, and after a cafeteria lunch of pizza, you quickly drink a Redbull before heading to class—anything to help you stay awake through English.

With school done, it’s a rush to get to work, but you manage to slip in just in time. Music and movies are your passion, but everyone working at this HMV knows its days are numbered. Why pay high prices for a CD or DVD when the same thing goes straight to your computer instantly (and for half the price), on iTunes?

After work, it’s time to head home. Not looking up once, you get on the bus home and furiously text your best friend the weekend plans. Your parents are there when you get home, looking both amused and annoyed at your inability to stop checking your text messages, even at the dinner table. It’s time for bed and your mom sternly tells you she will be checking for the light of a computer screen under your door tonight. Just before you fall asleep with your iPhone in hand, you change your alarm, this time, deciding to start tomorrow off right with the classic vintage tunes of Led Zeppelin.

“When I’m 35 I want to be a millionaire rock star who annually donates to the Children’s Hospital!”

“When I’m 35 I want to be married & have kids.”

“When I’m 35 I want to have finished university and have a stable job.”

“When I’m 35 I would like to see more awareness about the effects that the media and the internet have on our society.”

2010

McCreary launches new website to improve access to a growing library of reports and youth engagement resources.

McCreary takes advantage of new WebEx technology to hold online presentations of recent reports.

McCreary’s YAC hosts the 13th annual B4 conference, the last B4 conference... For now.

McCreary partners with BC’s Office of the Representative for Children and Youth to gather feedback from youth and collect baseline data on youth health.

McCreary wins Solicitor General’s award for Youth Leadership for the Aboriginal Next Steps II project.

WHERE ARE ...

→ Sarah Cotman

I am currently working for the YMCA of Sydney in Australia as a Regional Community Development Officer. I have 17 centres in my region which I visit on a regular basis to ensure they are aware of and implement the six community strengthening streams—including connection and belonging, family programming, youth development, accessibility and volunteer involvement

I have very fond memories of my time at McCreary coordinating the YAC. I had moved to Canada six months before, having recently finished my studies at Sydney Uni studying for a Bachelor of Applied Science (Leisure and Health). The role provided me with the opportunity to apply my education and to further develop the core values I apply in my work today.



YAC Alumni, Sylvia Hua, B4 Conference, 2007

→ Sylvia Eskoy

Sitting on a boat on our way to an island where we would spend the weekend creating a workshop on how to establish a Youth Advisory Council, we played an icebreaker. We had to talk about why we were on the YAC and what we wanted to get out of it.

It came to my turn and I told the truth. I didn't know why I was there. I didn't plan to work with youth or health research when I got older. It was a series of events that led me to join the YAC. What drew me in was a group of people my age who were accepting and fun. We got to meet monthly to be ourselves, talk and eat pizza! And what teenager doesn't want to go to an island for a weekend of memories?

I looked at the papers everyone wrote messages on for me and read "I hope you find what you're looking for." We all knew it was more than socializing with each other. We were creating things. We were developing workshops and retreats so youth could have a safe environment to network, create and learn. The subjects at hand were things I felt passionate about and each event or workshop we created was another outlet for my creativity.

Joining the YAC paved the way to an internship at McCreary as a Graphic Designer. This played a role in my acceptance into the Design program of my choice as well as scholarships I have received. To the person who once hoped I would find what I was looking for, thank you. I did find what I was looking for. It changed my life.



YAC members & McCreary staff, B4 Conference, 2008

→ Hilda Tran

Before being on the YAC and participating in McCreary health projects, I knew I wanted to work with youth, however I was not sure about being in the health field. Being part of McCreary made me realize how much I wanted to be in the health field. I am now in nursing school, and I am able to use the skills I have learnt from being on the YAC and the information that McCreary published in my education and future career.

I helped organize and carry out 3 B4 conferences while I was with McCreary. My favorite memory of the conference is seeing all the happy faces of the participants at the end of the conference. Another favorite memory was seeing all of our hard work coming together.

2011

McCreary expands its role as an independent evaluator with CitizenU, a 3 year City of Vancouver initiative to reduce discrimination.

McCreary releases reports on positive mental health, and on physical activity among BC youth.

McCreary partners with agencies in Yukon to develop youth engagement strategies for rural and remote communities.

2012

McCreary receives award for inclusion of people with developmental disabilities in the workplace from North Shore ConneXions Society.

The YAC changes its name to the Youth Advisory & Action Council.

→ James Tanliao

My involvement as a YAC member and volunteer with McCreary has impacted my current studies in two major ways. First, it has provided me with relevant experiences and skills that helped me get into graduate school and have prepared me to work with and advocate for adolescents. Second, my experiences working with youth have helped to shape my current research interests. For example, I am keenly interested in how we can address victimization (and in particular, cyber-bullying).

My favorite YAC memory is there was a comment post-it wall on the last night of the 13th B4—great—this was an excellent representation of what we were trying to achieve: building bridges (i.e., community) and breaking barriers.

→ Nathan Penner

Being on the YAC helped me to develop as a community leader. It has helped me to create positive friendships with others who are interested in health and community and to be more healthy and successful. While on the YAC I also came across new opportunities for volunteering.

The YAC empowers you about the difference you can make in your community; the effect you can have on others is inspiring. It can also help you to develop

teamwork and leadership skills. The adults are really friendly and supportive in helping you to accomplish your goals.

I enjoyed the friendships that were created during my time on the YAC. We also got to keep up-to-date about all the things going on in the youth community and great opportunities to take advantage of. It was also awesome to meet new people every year at B4. My favourite ice breaker is butt spelling, it's always funny. Bus ride games are always fun!

→ Lily Zhou

I started at the YAC in grade 12, and it definitely has impacted my ways of thinking about youth engagement

and health issues. Through my time at McCreary, I learned that there are many things that shape and affect the health of individuals. Being part of the YAC and through exposure to various health-related initiatives at McCreary, I have developed interest in the area of public health and I am now pursuing studies in public health.

I have an older sister who started as a YAC member before me and referred me into the awesome network of people at McCreary. I later referred my younger brother, Michael, to join the YAC as well. Having my siblings on the YAC made the experience even more meaningful and memorable, because we got to plan and implement cool initiatives for the community, not just for ourselves or family.



YAC Alumni, Jourdan Tom and Golda Adjei-Achampong, B4 Conference, 2007

... THEY NOW?

The 1st ever McCreary report on Métis youth health is released.

McCreary partners on a 5 year CIHR funded study to reduce homophobia in schools and in communities.

Raven's Children III, a review of the health of Aboriginal youth in BC is released.

Aboriginal Next Steps workshops are conducted on the North Shore.

Fostering Potential, a report on the lives of BC youth with government care experience is released.

The third study of youth in custody begins.

Federal Minister Kerry Anne Findlay visits McCreary to hold a press conference and present funding to McCreary for FASD evaluation program in partnership with PLEA Community Services and Douglas College.

→ Dave Sadler

I worked at McCreary as the Youth Participation Coordinator during 2005–07, hired to work on the Next Steps. I had been a youth volunteer with the Vancouver Foundation’s Youth in Philanthropy Council, and it was through this group that I heard about the job opportunity.

I feel fortunate to have found myself at McCreary for what I consider my first real “youth job”. The atmosphere of teamwork and mentoring helped me make the difficult transition from volunteering as a youth to working with youth a very positive experience. This is where I learnt how to organize a youth council and conference, how to facilitate workshops, and how to design engaging activities in a variety of settings. I even had the opportunity to develop a basic understanding of design with some patient coaching. However, unlike everyone else in the office I never did learn to work with data tables (but I am quite okay with that—to each their own).

But by far, the most important thing that I gained in my time at MCS was the ideas and philosophy. My time at McCreary infused me with a particular and positive way of looking at youth development. I can see the research of McCreary present in the work that I do today, and it continues to inspire me in providing youth positive opportunities — and to walk-the-talk of youth engagement whenever possible by empowering youth to lead. I value the strong foundation that my time there provided me, and how it has contributed to the success of my initiatives by adding both theory and a sense of purpose.

I now work for the City of Surrey as the Child and Youth Engagement Coordinator. I work on policies and programs to get youth engaged in their community.

→ Sally Podmore

After leaving my job as Youth Health Projects Coordinator at McCreary in 2008, I went back to school to complete a Teaching Diploma. In the years since, I have been working as a teacher in Saanich, BC. What I learned during my time at McCreary greatly influenced my teaching and my connection with students. At McCreary, I gained an appreciation for the complex challenges many youth in our province face, as well as the incredible resilience that they demonstrate. I have seen this echoed in the diverse and exceptional students I have worked with.

In 2011, I became a mother. This, by far has been the best work of my life. While I am happy to be getting back into teaching, I understand now more than ever that nothing can replace the importance of unconditional family love and support.

At McCreary I began to understand from a research foundation, what we all know instinctively; one person, one connection, one ‘hello’ in the hallway can make a difference. This knowledge has given me confidence as a teacher and parent. I am committed to always remember the importance of our schools, and each person within them.



Sally Podmore, B4 Conference, 2008

→ Melissa Northcott

My involvement with McCreary began when I was an undergraduate student at Simon Fraser University where I had the opportunity to join the McCreary Student Group. I spent three years at McCreary either as a member of the Student Group or as a Research Assistant helping on projects and reports. I also had the opportunity to use McCreary data for my Master’s thesis. Over the years I learned so much about research and statistics at McCreary, especially from Elizabeth Saewyc, the Research Director.



Annie Smith & Dave Sadler, B4 Conference, 2007

I am now working as a researcher for the Department of Justice Canada in Ottawa, where I have been for the last four years.

I am forever indebted to McCreary for the experiences and opportunities that I was given. Without these, I don't think I would be where I am today. Thank you McCreary, for providing me with so many great learning opportunities and experiences. The work you do and the differences you make in the lives of youth is amazing. Here's to 35 more years!

→ Brittany Bingham

I first became involved with McCreary during my undergraduate degree in 2005 and worked on the Raven's Children II report and also coordinated the student research group. I was a junior student at this time with little or no research experience and the entire idea of research intimidated me. My undergraduate supervisor Dr. David Cox and my mentor Dr. Kim van der Woerd highly recommended that I pursue a research assistant position with McCreary and both said it would give me the best research experience.

As a junior researcher this experience was life changing. I decided through my experiences at McCreary to pursue a career conducting community-based research in health, Aboriginal health in particular. I then applied to do my Master's in Public Health and in the summer before my Master's began I worked with McCreary to write the *Moving Upstream: Aboriginal marginalized and street-involved youth* report. My experience working on this report allowed me again to gain experience in all stages of research and also provided me with the opportunity to travel to communities throughout BC and conduct community focus groups with Aboriginal youth. This internship allowed me to gain facilitation skills that are invaluable to me in my research endeavors now.



Raven's Children II launch, Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre, 2005

In my years of working at McCreary, I learned about conducting research from a supportive group of staff that is passionate about youth health and community-based work. Within this supportive environment my passion for youth health and Aboriginal health led me on the career path I am on today. Not only did I learn about research through my work at McCreary but I also learned about research mentorship. I believe learning to be a mentor can only be learned from having great mentors and I am fortunate to have had some great mentorship and support throughout my academic pursuits. I am now a PhD student, and I work with Aboriginal youth who hope to pursue health careers. I wish McCreary a Happy 35th Anniversary and hope there are many more years to come.

→ Kim van der Woerd

I started my relationship with the McCreary Centre Society in 1994 as an undergraduate member of the student research group. I maintained my membership with the group for 8 years, and was able to prepare and deliver numerous conference presentations and posters. I was hired by McCreary in 1998 to

conduct the data analysis for the first Raven's Children report. McCreary was very committed to conducting research in a sensitive manner, and made efforts to engage the Aboriginal community for this report, as well as hire an Aboriginal student for this work. They have continued to do this for the next two Raven's Children reports, which I have continued to play a role in.

It has been an incredible honour for me to be a part of these reports. I have had the opportunity to learn so much in terms of research and data analysis, as well as more about the youth in our province. I also had the opportunity to serve on McCreary's Board. My experience with McCreary has been foundational for my research career, not only inspiring my continued passion for Aboriginal Youth health issues, but also providing opportunities to build skills. Congratulations on your 35 years of amazing contributions to the knowledge base in our province!

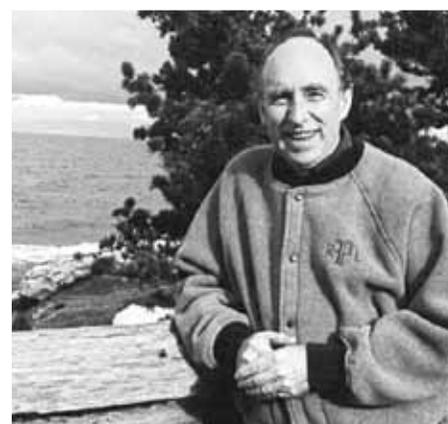
Kim is the founder of Reciprocal Consulting and a member of the 'Namgis First Nation of Alert Bay, BC.



Martin Tutt, B4 Conference, 2007



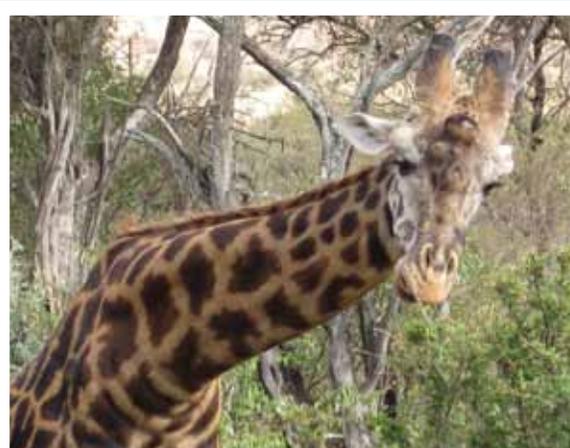
Opreet Kang, Sewy Hay & Poonum Kang,
B4 Conference, 2007



McCreary Centre Society founder,
Dr. Roger Tonkin



B4 Conference participants & YAC members, 1998



Annie Smith moonlights as wildlife photographer, Kenya, 2010



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The McCreary Centre Society is a non-government, non-profit organization committed to improving the health of BC youth through research, education 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. Areas of interest include:

- Health risk and protective factors
- Health promotion
- Positive youth development
- Youth participation and leadership skills development

All McCreary publications are available free to download at:
www.mcs.bc.ca