



# The McCreary Centre Society

Celebrating 30 Years of Youth Health



[www.mcs.bc.ca](http://www.mcs.bc.ca)

Fall/Winter 2008

## Hot Off The Press!

### ***Making the Grade: A Review of Alternative Education Programs in BC***

The study took place in eight of the communities that participated in McCreary's marginalized and street-involved youth study (*Against the Odds*, 2007), and surveyed over 300 youth attending alternative education programs in communities where there is a high prevalence of youth street-involvement and sexual exploitation. The study also involved interviews with key adult stakeholders, including teachers, parents, school administrators, social workers and probation officers. The report focuses on the challenges to education that high-risk youth face, and how alternative education programs in the province address these challenges to meet the needs of their students and keep youth engaged in their education. The report can be downloaded at [www.mcs.bc.ca](http://www.mcs.bc.ca).

### ***Youth Included!***

Feedback collected in a series of youth consultations facilitated by McCreary is presented in the recently released report, *Youth Included! Youth Recommendations for Children and Youth Participation in British Columbia's Family Justice System*. Consultations were held with youth aged 13-18 to discuss suggestions for including the voices of children and youth in the family law process. The report, prepared by SPARC BC, aims to support youth participation in the Provincial review of the *Family Relations Act*. It can be downloaded at [www.sparc.bc.ca/resources-and-publications](http://www.sparc.bc.ca/resources-and-publications).

### ***Listening to Vulnerable Youth: Transitioning to adulthood in British Columbia***

This November, the BC Child & Youth Health Research Network released a report on the transition from youth to adulthood in BC. The report includes results from a

series of roundtable discussions facilitated by McCreary across the Lower Mainland and Vancouver Island in early 2008. During these roundtables youth discussed their experiences of transitioning to adulthood and offered suggestions on how to address challenges youth face during this period. The report combines these findings with results from similar discussions conducted in other parts of the province.

## Coming Soon...

### **Adolescent Health Survey IV (AHS)**

The fourth Adolescent Health Survey has been successfully completed in British Columbia schools. With the help of Public Health nurses, over 29,000 surveys were administered to youth across the province. The data has been cleaned and weighted to be representative of the entire population of Grade 7 to 12 students in BC, and analyses have begun. The Provincial Highlights report is expected to be released on schedule in the spring of 2009. Regional reports and specific population analyses will follow.

### **Moving Upstream: Aboriginal Marginalized and Street-Involved Youth in BC**

This report includes an introduction by Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond, BC's Representative for Children and Youth, and presents an in-depth look at the health of Aboriginal youth who participated in McCreary's recent survey of marginalized and street-involved youth (*Against the Odds*, 2007).

The study was completed by 762 youth, 410 of whom identified as Aboriginal (54%). The percentage of participants with Aboriginal heritage increased by over 20% from an earlier parallel study that took place in 2000.



Although the survey was not created with a cultural lens, a series of community discussions were held to guide this report and clearly emphasized the importance of such a lens when considering the research findings, including the legacy of colonization, cultural disconnection, the diversity of Aboriginal cultures, and the importance of culturally-relevant interventions.

## In the Community

### 12th Annual Breaking Barriers & Building Bridges Conference

This October, McCreary's Youth Advisory Council (YAC) hosted its 12th annual Breaking Barriers & Building Bridges Youth Health Conference (B4) at Evans Lake in Squamish. The conference was another great success and saw youth traveling from communities across BC to participate. While we had many new participants, we also welcome back several past participants who were eager to take part again.

The theme of this year's conference was "The Global Individual" and workshops were presented by a variety of youth-focused organizations from Vancouver. Workshops covered topics such as climate change, AIDS in the Media, healthy community development and anti-homophobia. In addition to attending workshops, youth had the opportunity to meet new people, participate in team-building activities, and express themselves creatively and artistically. Less than a month after B4 12, the YAC is already gearing for lucky number 13!

### Aboriginal Next Steps (ANS)

Aboriginal Next Steps (ANS) is successfully underway in 10 communities (Cranbrook, Hazelton, Bella Bella, Westbank, Courtenay, Prince Rupert, Lytton, Prince George, Skeetchestn, and Nisga'a). So far in each community youth have developed Action Plans to address the issues related to substance use in their community. They have also created Claymation films. In addition to presenting their Action Plans and film locally, youth facilitated a

community discussion and presented information about their topics, which included both health risk behaviours and protective factors.

One of the goals of the ANS is to assist youth to turn their ideas for change into action and to develop a sustainable community project with a \$5,000 grant and support from McCreary's Project Coordinator, Sherry Simon. Two youth from each community are sitting on a Provincial Youth Advisory Council (YAC) for the project. They are now working with other youth in their community to move their project ideas forward.

Visit our website to learn more about their community projects and see their films.

### Assistant Deputy Ministers' Committee on Prostitution and Sexual Exploitation of Youth Multi-Year Funding Initiative

Community Development Coordinators, Kathy Powelson and Sarah Hunt continue to work with the 14 organizations around the province funded through this initiative to address the issue of sexual exploitation in their communities. As the final year draws to a close, communities are busy working towards sustainability plans and celebrating the success of this three year initiative to mobilize communities to address sexual exploitation. A final one day conference will be held in March to showcase this successful model of community healing and development.

### PLEA/Douglas/McCreary Partnership

The evaluation and research project stemming from the partnership between PLEA, Douglas College and McCreary has been granted ethics approval through Douglas College's Research Ethics Board. McCreary has begun the program evaluation component at PLEA, and students are assisting with data collection and entry. Douglas College students, with support from McCreary staff, are also analyzing archival PLEA data to gain a better understanding of the characteristics of PLEA service recipients and how the programs are assisting them.



## Students at McCreary

The McCreary student group resumed with the start of the new academic year. The first meeting was well attended and students currently working with McCreary data plus those interested in doing so got together to hear the latest McCreary research results, and to talk about their own projects.

In addition to the student group, McCreary currently also has four Langara nursing students and four Douglas College students on practicum placement, as well as two student librarians. All are making significant and thoughtful contributions to the projects in which they are involved including the PLEA project, Aboriginal Next Steps, Youth Vital Signs, and the Adolescent Health Survey.

## Young Decision Makers

McCreary Youth Advisory Council members got the opportunity to represent BC youth for the second year running at the national Young Decision Makers Conference in Ontario. The packed weekend covered a range of issues important to youth across the country, as well as providing participants with the chance to meet youth leaders from the different provinces.

Congratulations to YAC member, Sandy Chu, who was selected by conference participants to sit on a committee for the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse. Sandy will represent the voices of Canadian youth on the committee formed to address youth substance abuse.

## Youth Vital Signs

McCreary recently coordinated the administration of the Vancouver Foundation's Youth Vital Signs (YVS) survey. YVS is a youth-driven project that aims to facilitate the inclusion of the voices of young people in planning, policy and funding decision-making processes that directly impact their lives. The results of the survey will be published in the Youth Vital Signs Report Card in February 2009.

## Publications and Presentations

Knowledge transfer is a key element of the work at McCreary, and October was a busy month with Research Associate Maya Peled and Executive Director Annie Smith offering three presentations on the recent alternative education report and other McCreary studies.

One presentation was to the Federation of BC Child and Family Services in Vancouver; another was at the Young Parent Program Conference in Victoria and emphasized the experience of young parents ("Overcoming the odds: Research evidence on the education, housing and support of young parents in BC"); and the third was a poster presentation at the 7th International Conference on Urban Health.

More presentations are planned for the rest of the year including one highlighting McCreary's contribution to the CHYRNet report, *Listening to Vulnerable Youth: Transitioning to adulthood in British Columbia*, which will be launched at the CHYRNet conference in Vernon on November 24th.

Another important element of the Society's knowledge dissemination work is ensuring that McCreary data reaches an international academic audience through peer review journals. A paper by McCreary Research Associate Colleen Poon and Research Director Elizabeth Saewyc, *Stigma management? The links between enacted stigma and teen pregnancy trends among gay, lesbian and bisexual students in British Columbia*, recently appeared in the Canadian Journal of Human Sexuality, Vol 17 (3) 2008.

Two papers will appear in the January 2009 edition of the American Journal of Public Health - *Out yonder: Sexual minority adolescents in rural communities in British Columbia* (Colleen Poon and Elizabeth Saewyc) and *Protective factors in the lives of bisexual adolescents in North America* (Elizabeth Saewyc, Yuko Homma, et al.)



## Annual General Meeting

### Facts, Food & Films

McCreary celebrated 31 years in youth health at its Annual General Meeting on October 15th 2008. Forty five members and guests got together to share an evening catching up on the latest McCreary research and youth engagement projects. They also had the opportunity to enjoy a screening of six short Claymations films, made by youth in communities across BC as part of the Aboriginal Next Steps.

The films were followed by the AGM business meeting at which two new Board members were elected: Renata Aebi and Frances Kolotyluck. Both new members have strong backgrounds in youth issues and are warmly welcomed to McCreary.

### Donation Form

The McCreary Centre Society (MCS) is a not-for-profit organization that is committed to improving the lives of BC youth. This organization has a 30-year tradition of developing youth engagement and leadership models, engaging in research and community-based projects and ensuring that the voices of youth are heard by policy makers and program planners.

I would like to contribute to the McCreary Centre Society

Name..... Address.....

Postal Code..... Phone Number ..... Email.....

Enclosed, please find my donation of:

- \$50
- \$75
- \$100
- \$150
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

Please send donations and forms to: The McCreary Centre Society, 3552 E. Hastings, Vancouver, BC, V5K 2A7 (Registered Charity # 1294218632 RR0001) A tax receipt will be issued to acknowledge your generosity.

Thank you for making a difference in the lives of young people in BC.



## Congratulations!

McCreary's Summer Fitness Challenge was a tremendous success! The event, held in partnership with the Astoria/Fraser Arms Boxing Club, consisted of a grueling 3 ½ hours of fitness training followed by 30 minutes in the boxing ring. Congratulations to all participants and thank you to everyone who supported us! We raised over \$1,700.

## Partner with Us Today!

The support of government, business and community members is critical as we look toward funding more priority initiatives, conducting future research and implementing community-based youth leadership projects. McCreary needs your support to ensure that we can continue to address the unmet health needs of young people and their communities.