



REPORT

Year End Report 2023

Prepared by Cindy Lise

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Our Cowichan -Facilitating Connections for Good Health

Connected in Health

Our Cowichan Communities Health Network is a locally formed group of individuals and organizations representing the diverse peoples of the Cowichan Communities. Network members strive to optimize the health and wellbeing of all citizens in the Cowichan Region by:

- Exploring issues related to health
- Identifying concerns that can either improve or impede achieving optimum health
- Planning actions that enhance our quality of life through education, healthy living, health care and health services delivery
- Ensuring the community's voice is heard on matters related to health and wellness.

We are guided in our work by the World Health Organization's 12 Determinants of Health and research related to the determinants of health within the region.

For good health, people need more than good health care: they need adequate income, employment, education, social connections and healthy places to live. In fact, all 12 Determinants interact and affect health.

By considering the whole picture and working together, all citizens of the Cowichan communities can enjoy improved health.

Our Cowichan Welcomes You

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Leadership Team: Anita McLeod, Catharine Berghuis, Elizabeth Croft, Valerie Nicol

Good health is more than good health care

Executive Summary

Our Cowichan has much to celebrate with its 2023 accomplishments. The impact of years of relationship building and partnerships that are manifested throughout the region and our ability to be innovative and creative continues to remind us what can be accomplished when working together. This was another year to build on the momentum and sustain our efforts in existing initiatives and projects. Here are our key accomplishments in 2023:

- Collectively bring in over \$167,120.00 in grant funding and resources.
- Through the COVID Response Task Force work with Cowichan Housing Association, Local Governments, Cowichan Tribes, Island Health and many community partners, we were able to demonstrate the impact of the Village at 610 Trunk Road where residents and the neighbourhood is thriving. Funding is now secured until December 2026 to allow for ongoing planning and solutions.
- EPIC (Eldercare Project in Cowichan) focused on reconnecting and engaging seniors in preventative care which included the development of a brochure called, “Where Will I Live?”
- The Our Cowichan 3-year strategic plan has goals that include:
 - Recognize and responding to emerging issues in Cowichan
 - Promote health and wellness
 - Continue to focus on identified issues and opportunities
 - Foster the health, vitality and sustainability of the network
- Leading or supporting Collective Impact Initiatives that align with OCCHN priorities. These initiatives now bring together over 350 diverse community partners. They are:
 - Temporary Shelter Task Force (continuing from housing and homelessness coalition)
 - Youth at Home Team
 - Community Stream of EPIC (Eldercare Partnership in Cowichan)
 - Cowichan Regional Airshed Roundtable
 - Cowichan Community Action Team (CAT)
 - Play Cowichan Physical Literacy
 - Ladysmith and Cowichan Lake Poverty Reduction Strategies
 - Extreme Weather Shelter Planning
- Active participants representing a community voice participating at the Collaborative Services Committee, Cowichan Primary Care Network, Cowichan Regional Airshed Strategy Round Table, Community Action Team, and Cowichan District Hospital Planning and Poverty Reduction Teams. Participating in this myriad of groups helps us build integral relationships and knowledge of what is taking place in the region.

The Network

- We continue to grow, the Network consists of over 75 active members and 17 members at large.
- Meeting structure includes delegations, spotlight speakers, strategic dialogue and member input.
- 26 OCCHN meetings and sub committee meetings were held in 2023.
- 44 Community meetings related to Extreme Weather Shelter, Poisoned Drug Crisis, Housing First for Youth, COVID Emergency Shelter Task Force, EPIC and Airshed Roundtable were held that were planned or supported by OCCHN.
- Our website was revitalized and experienced 9,908 visits and 211,494 hits in 2023.
- 47 weekly newsletters were delivered to OCCHN members to keep them informed of meetings, events, granting opportunities and health related information.
- The Pathways Resource Guide and Website is active with growing number of viewings

Accomplishments

- The Our Health, Our Community Health and Wellness Survey launched in 2023.
- OCCHN in collaboration with numerous community organizations supported efforts that brought in multiple grants and leveraged resources to our region.
- The small grants initiative supported 11 community projects.
- As one of the Community Leads, OCCHN supported the COVID Response Task Force that created the Village at 610 Trunk Road providing housing for those who were living in the temporary shelter sites. This is transforming lives and is now a model being replicated in other communities.
- Engaging in health care round table with Jagmeet Singh and Alistair MacGreggor.
- 1 Airshed Roundtable was held and 5 Airshed Leadership sessions were held. Incentives to remove wood burning appliances and address wildfire smoke were the focus of 2023.
- OCCHN continues to lead the community component of EPIC working to support frail and isolated seniors. EPIC has played an important role in the Island Health- Health and Care Planning Project.
- The fall Community Action Team Symposium brings together over 100 community partners to learn and come together to address the poisoned drug pandemic.
- OCCHN leads the planning and development for a safe space for youth with high risk behaviours
- OCCHN transitions from leading the extreme weather response which is now led by the CVRD.
- Just because we care, OCCHN members rally's to assist a woman and her daughter fleeing violence and helps her set up a new home. The power of connection and relationships transformed their lives

Our Cowichan has been making a difference in the health of our community

We are Better Together. Here's How

We are a conduit to Island Health, Local Governments, First Nations and Community. Now well established throughout the region our network has moved into a phase of maintaining the good work underway.



Pictured above: Visual graphic of Island Health Network Gathering and the role of networks across Vancouver Island.



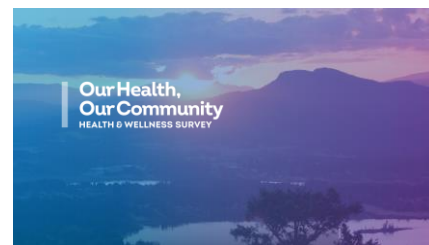
Through the relationship building of our community partners and a deeper understanding of each other we have become a platform where health and community work together synonymously to enrich the lives of our residents. OCCHN has grown to over 75 active members and 17 members at large who are informed on community issues, guide responses, share meaningful relationships, friendships and comradery.

Pictured: Our Cowichan Regional gatherings continue in 2023. www.ourcchn.ca

Our Health, Our Community Health and Wellness Survey



Building on the Cowichan Communities Health Profile, OCCHN undertakes its largest project to date. In partnership with Island Health, OCCHN pilots the development of the Our Health, Our Community Regional Health Survey. We were thrilled to launch the survey in July of 2023. Data will be released in the spring of 2024. It will be the foundation for other surveys across the Island Health region in years to come.



Pictured: Traditional welcome from Dorreen Peters to the launch of the survey. Members of the survey project planning team, Vanessa Daether, Cindy Lise, Caitlin Hickman, Angela Reid, Denise Williams, Jennifer Jones, Dr Shannon Waters

EPIC -Eldercare Partnership in Cowichan



We have changed our name from “Project” to “Partnership”. The Community Stream of EPIC continues to meet and work together to find ways to address isolation and prevent frailty. The focus of EPIC in 2023 has been to increase engagement in preventative activities and actions to ensure seniors can remain healthy and supported in the home of their choice. The latest addition of information resources included the development of the “Where will I live?” which provides information on housing. Efforts to address suitability, safety and the ability to remain in one’s home as they age

prevents a crisis should housing needs change over time or in an instant.

Where will I live?

Your housing needs can change over time or in an instant.

Getting support or finding housing can take 2+ years.

How would you answer the following questions?

COVID Emergency Shelter Task Force-The Village



The Village under the operation of Lookout Health and Housing Society has now been in operation since the spring of 2022 and has received approval for services to continue until December 2026. During this time the transformation of a neighbourhood, community and the lives of the residents who live there has been astonishing and is now being recognized as a successful initiative to be replicated across the province. Immediately the effects of the housing first approach began to have an impact as individuals stabilized. Residents are healthier, happier, use less substances and are flourishing. Residents have moved from a painful existence on the street to engaging in employment opportunities, street outreach, gardening, beautifying the neighbourhood through art projects and promoting harm reduction and awareness of the poisoned drug pandemic. RCMP and bylaw officers reported a significant reduction of 18% in crime in the area and public nuisance calls to the sites and with the individuals that the project was able to house. (It is important to note that this is not the case for people who remain unhoused). The success of the Village at 610 Trunk has been the result of the contributions of many people and organizations across the region. This year we would like to highlight many of these significant partnerships.

The power of Collective Impact. The success of the Village is built on partnerships and working together.



Youth Safe Space

Although significant efforts are underway it is clear that there continues to be challenges related to homelessness, mental health and substance use in youth between the ages of 15 and 24. Our Cowichan has been working with community partners; Ministry of Children and Family Development, Canadian Mental Health Association, Cowichan Tribes, Island Health, School District 79, Discovery Youth and Family Substance Use Services (YSTAR), and Cowichan Valley Youth Services to build strong relationships and plan how we can support vulnerable youth in our region. The team led by OCCHN continues to advocate to funders and decision makers that a safe space for youth in our region is desperately needed so youth can access supports and reduce their exposure to the elements, exploitation and harm. We are one step closer to being able to acquiring the much-needed funding for this project.



Feeding and Reaching out to Youth with High Risk Behaviours

The poisoned drug pandemic does not discern between youth and adults. For the third year, OCCHN was able to secure a grant from the Mischa Weisz Foundation in the amount of \$35,200.00. This grant has been critical to connect with the most vulnerable and high-risk youth in our region by providing healthy meals. The funds are held with Cowichan Green Community who works with community members such as those with lived and living experience that produce the meals. Meals are then provided to Discovery Youth and Family Substance Use Services Outreach Team and Cowichan Tribes outreach teams that deliver them to youth on the street. The relationships that have been established between the youth and service providers is saving lives. It is estimated that 4,500 meals have been served each year.

Pictured: Healthy meals being prepared in the Cowichan Green Community kitchen to be distributed to youth.

Truth and Reconciliation



Truth and Reconciliation is a life-long journey for all of us. Each time we gather as a network we reflect and learn about the calls to action and our role in community. Together we review the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. We follow local protocol when we gather and we continue to strive to educate ourselves and our Health Network to do all we can to improve cultural knowledge and relationships within the Cowichan Region. We continue to strive to address systemic racism by providing space for conversation, to learn, to identify where racism exists, and to act to change our ways.

Pictured: a young Tzinquaw Dancer opens an event with the traditional welcome song.

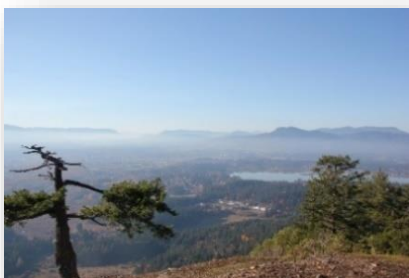
Working with the Community Health Networks on Vancouver Island

Communities across Vancouver Island face many of the same challenges. Building a community of learning and regional connections with other community health networks is an important component of improving health outcomes across Vancouver Island. Network facilitators meet regularly to share experiences and engage in knowledge translation. Collectively networks share information with regional governments and community agencies via opportunities such as the Association of Vancouver Island and Coastal Communities, (AVICC) and a bi annual Island gathering. Our Cowichan has been providing mentorship to communities outside of Vancouver Island so they can build health networks too. This year we have supported Salt Spring Island, Whistler and Terrace.



The Air We Breath -Cowichan Regional Airshed Roundtable

Work at the Airshed Roundtable continues. The Cowichan Region by the nature of its topography is known to have some of the poorest air quality in BC as the smoke settles in the valley bottom. Efforts continue to mitigate the impact of wood burning via incentives to switch to heat pumps, policy and bylaw changes and educating the public about the effects of



wood burning on human health. To add to the complex challenge, our province has been faced with the harmful impact of devastating wild fires in the past number of years. Wildfire smoke can affect an entire province. Exploration of safe air spaces and refuge are currently under way for times when emergencies such as wild fires take place.

Pictured: Smoke lies in the valley floor when open burning occurs in the Cowichan Valley. Harmful smoke can impact thousands of lives.

Royal Roads Masters in Health Leadership Project # 2



Once again, Our Cowichan along with community partners who are engaged in the Village Project were given the opportunity to work with Masters in Leadership students at Royal Roads University to take a deep dive into the project. Their efforts were to help us find ways to have the Village Model adopted as an important resource in the spectrum of housing that lands between shelter and supported housing. Students were given time to explore the benefits of the Village and the impacts that it has on the residents, neighbourhoods and health systems. This was a very thought-provoking project with a reframing of

the project to be more than housing but to also include a key component to the prepare residents for the successful move towards treatment and recovery. We are grateful that our community was selected for this project.

Small Grants Initiative

This was an exciting year as OCCHN was able to bring back the small grant initiative. Small grants of up to \$2,000.00 may not seem like a lot but in fact have created some of our most impactful initiatives that have leveraged millions of dollars in community resources. We have now allocated a total of \$157,500.00 in grants over the past decade. Some of this year grants included:

- Bringing community health and wellbeing conversations and education to rural Thetis Island
- Healthy cooking classes to support resilient families in Ladysmith
- Building the foundation of the Cowichan Primary Care Society
- Creating the “Soup’s On” initiative bringing seniors together over healthy meals
- Getting Seniors active and back together again after COVID with in person activities in a local assisted living centre
- Healthy food hampers are delivered out to isolated community members and larger families with no transportation
- Providing physical literacy and play mentorship program via Play Cowichan
- Building a library to support family caregivers
- Training for speech and language teams supporting children
- Youth sport drop in opportunities via the Municipality of North Cowichan
- Training for volunteer counselling services

Our Impact Beyond Data

Each year community partners reflect on the impact that OCCHN has on their organization or work in the community. Here's what they have to say.

"The Our Cowichan Communities Health Network has been a crucial partner with Island Health in the development and implementation of the Our Health, Our Community, Health and Wellness survey over the past 18 months. Through the collaborative efforts and extensive community engagement and partnership we were able to come very close to meeting an ambitious response target and gathering feedback from a diverse population across the region, and we look forward to being able to share the results. The knowledge, expertise and reach of the OCCHN is so valuable within the Cowichan Region and has been such an important partnership for Island Health in this work".

*Martia Gully
Director, Population and Public Health Assessment*

"Addressing the magnitude of the need in our communities while also facing funding and capacity challenges is a formidable task for groups seeking to improve the lives of the most vulnerable. OCCHN provides its members the opportunity to connect, confer, collaborate and celebrate. I come away from every meeting full of admiration not only for the individual members and the important work they do, but also for the powerful synergy they have created together".

*Karen Deck,
CVRD Director Area I (Youbou/Meade Creek)*

"OUR Cowichan Communities Health Network has been vital to the success of the Cowichan Women's Health Collective (CWHC) to date. Cindy Lise, as the coordinator, is a wealth of information and is generous with her time, and her ability to connect people who need to speak to each other. She assisted CWHC with our first community consultation, and the Network supported our second major research project. The network is held together by the members' commitment to enhancing the health of our community. We, as an organization, have benefited from being able to sit with Network members at the regular meetings. In a small community such as ours, communication is vital ... and the Network provides the opportunity for many necessary conversations."

*Beverly Suderman, Executive Director
Cowichan Women's Health Collective*

2023 Contributions of volunteers and in kind services have great value for Our Cowichan. By working together we are more effective.



1. Island Health service contract and top up \$130,000.00
2. OCCHN Leadership in kind contributions \$8,400.00
3. Island Health in kind contributions for Our Health Our Community Health and Wellness Survey \$26,580.00
4. OCCHN membership in kind contributions \$133,245.00
5. Grants leveraged, supported or written by OCCHN \$167,120.00

*NOTE Average wage per hour of members is \$30.00 per hour * \$19.00 volunteer members; \$27.00 Managers; \$45.00 Directors, Executives, Physicians (based on "provincial averages" of indeed employment postings). **Actual wages are significantly higher than "in kind" wages.** Amounts noted are estimated based on the number of meetings, number of representatives and number of occurrences in 2023.*

Partnerships that Make Our Cowichan Possible

Health Networks such as OCCHN build the foundation of a strong community-based approach to challenges we all share. Intersectoral collective action via the Health Network is working and we are busier than ever! We thank Island Health for the funding that allows us to engage in this important effort as well as the Cowichan Valley Regional District for their contribution by providing administration and staff support. We are also grateful for the opportunity to work with multiple sectors within Island Health from Executive, to Directors to talented employees at all levels in ways we have never done before. Success does not just happen so we recognize the thousands of hours of volunteer time of Co-Chairs, Leadership Committee Members, Task Force Members, and the numerous committee members that are committed to this work and who are the core drivers of OCCHN.



Budget January 2023 to December 31, 2023

Account Description	Our Cowichan Communities Health Year to Date	Network Budget Amount
General Revenue		
Grants		
Provincial Conditional	-80,000.00	-80,000.00
General	-54,492.49	0
Total Grants	-134,492.49	-80,000.00
Surplus Deficit Current Year	-60,849.18	-60,849.00
Community Health Survey	-196,949.75	-146,550.00
Total Surplus Deficit- Current Year	-257,843.93	-207,444.00
Total Operating Revenue/Exp	-392,336.42	-287,444.00
General Expenditures		
Contract Services -Survey	159,883.53	146,550.00
Consultants	0	0
Training and Development	850.00	0
Contract Services Lead	85,830.59	80,000.00
Contract Services Support	1,800.00	1,800.00
Alloc- General Government	1,898.00	1,898.00
Meeting Expenses	4,518.57	5,000.00
Office Supplies	500.00	1,000.00
Airshed Strategy	0	0
Opioid Dialogues	0	0
Grant in Aid	16,000.00	18,000.00
Contingency	0	32,196.00
Community Forums		
Advertising	0	0
Rentals/Building	0	0
Refreshments	0	0
Communications		
Community Information	1,241.80	0
Web Page	1,000.00	1,000.00
Total Operating Expenses	273,522.49	287,444.00

This financial statement reflects OCCHN expenditures as well as the funding for the Our Health Our Communities Health and Wellness Survey. We are also grateful for a one-time top up grant from Island Health in the amount of \$50,000.00 which allowed us to continue to do our good work and to meet and engage with community organizations and partners.