

Delta Recreation Makes the Grade, cont...

DELTA STEPS OUT

Following the lead of the Penticton Steps Out walking program, Delta started up a similar initiative in 2005 to raise awareness about the benefits of daily physical activity. Delta Steps Out completed its first successful year in November 2006 with 160 enthusiastic participants. The program offers monthly prize incentives to participants in addition to its grand prize trip in the Walk to Whistler contest.

The 2006 Walk to Whistler winner, North Delta resident Debra Morris, walked 1,152,265 steps between April and November, exceeding the draw's minimum requirement. Recreation staff reports the Delta Steps Out program has made a

huge difference in Morris' life by motivating her— as well as her friends, family and colleagues who have to keep up with her.

"This program got me off the couch and out walking; it has helped me become more physically active again," Morris said. Morris remains in Delta Steps Out and is regularly swimming at local pools.

Participants can buy log books for \$5, pedometers for \$15 and register at the Delta Steps Out website to track their steps for free. The website also displays maps of walking routes and stretching tips. The minimal cost of running the website is absorbed into the fitness budget, while Delta's Fitness Programmer sets up on-

line accounts as part of her regular work.

Halfnights has noticed people ages 45 and up are the most active participants. The program has also taken off among staff at the municipal hall, where designated walk leaders and incentives get people moving daily.

McMurphy anticipates the program will continue to grow with city plans to develop a trail system connecting residential areas and parks.

After leading the Active Community team for a year, John McMurphy has passed the baton to Julie Halfnights to keep the momentum going.

Seabird Island Sets the Pace for First Nations

Written in June 2007

The Seabird Island Indian Band's Recreation Department has been getting people walking and running out the door with its Active Communities programs and events.

Seabird's Nutrition Educator Noy Khounviseth and Community Services Supervisor Stacy McNeil have started working together to link healthy eating and active living. It's part of the promotion of their local Active Communities program called the Active Seabird initiative.

"It's really exciting to see because Noy, with the nutrition background, is starting to get more people coming to talk to her about healthy eating, then she's referring them to me for activity and vice versa," McNeil said. *"We're getting*

people that we traditionally wouldn't ever see active or in the fitness centre, they're actually coming out now and approaching us and saying, 'My cousin did this and I think I can do this.'"

"Stacy has had a lot of success with people losing weight, but not going on a diet per se; they are losing weight by being active and looking at their nutrition," Khounviseth said.

An Active Seabird Active Communities Plan lists the planned events from March to August 2007 and beyond. To get the word out, Active Seabird events and programs have been listed in a monthly Seabird Island Community Newsletter (www.seabirdisland.ca/news/newsletters.htm).

Since registering as an Active Community in January 2006, the Active Seabird team has kept existing annual events going and has created a host of new active events and programs for all ages. This has been accomplished with the support of a \$5,000 BCRPA Active Communities grant.

RUNNING AND WALKING FOR HEALTH

The fourth annual Nutrition Run and Walk in March brought out approximately 240 people. Participants could choose to do a 5, 10 or 15 kilometre course. It also featured a nutritious lunch for everyone and a massage for the 15-kilometre runners. Neighbouring First Nations communities were also invited.

“Every March, because of [Dieticians of Canada’s] Nutrition Month, we try to promote healthy active living with a nutrition component,” Khounviseth said. A March 28, 2007 news story in the Agassiz-Harrison Observer previewed the walk/run. Khounviseth was quoted saying, *“Seabird is also registered as an Active Community which tries to promote getting 20% of the community to be more active by the year 2010.”*

The number of people running in the 15-kilometre course increased in 2007. One of the Seabird elders ran in the 15-kilometre course in 2006 and again in 2007. About 15 high school students began training for the 15-kilometre Nutrition Run in February 2007 at least twice a week. Thirteen of them went on to run the Vancouver Sun Run.

“One person had done the Sun Run before, but for the rest it was their first time,” Khounviseth noted. *“Running was fairly new to them. All of them want to go back next year and a lot of them are still training.”* For the 2008 run, training will start earlier, in fall 2007.

Active Seabird has been working in partnership with the BC Ministry of Health, Aboriginal Health Branch’s Honour Your Health Challenge to train its community members for the Sun Run.



THE WHEELS ARE TURNING

A new addition to Seabird’s active initiatives was the first annual Active on Wheels event, which McNeil organized

for Move for Health Day on May 10, 2007. The event brought out approximately 100 participants who were cycling, rollerblading, skateboarding, riding a scooter, or riding anything with wheels that was non-motorized. Like the Nutrition Run and Walk, the course lengths were 5, 10 and 15 kilometres. Students, teachers and staff from the high school participated in the event. In addition to getting moving at the Active on Wheels event, the students were also educated about ways to get active, such as biking to school.

Because the event was held during the day, many working people in the community couldn’t participate. McNeil plans to approach employers well in advance next year to seek an hour where staff will be allowed to participate.

EDUCATING SEABIRD

To further bring the Active Seabird initiative into the schools, local teachers attended a HIGH FIVE® workshop in May, funded through a \$5,000 Active Communities grant from BCRPA. The teachers will also be participating in an Everybody Gets to Play™ workshop during an upcoming professional development day.

The Active Communities grant also went toward purchasing swimming pool passes for youth. The passes last from May until September.

Active Seabird has been putting on a Health Series for employees twice a month with various themes such as the importance of eating breakfast, recognizing emotional eating, and getting active by walking.

GET OUTSIDE CHALLENGE

In May, the community came out in force to the Seabird Island 38th Annual First Nations Festival, which featured canoeing, soccer and floor hockey. This year’s weekend event brought out about 66 teams for the children’s, youth, men’s and

Seabird Island Highlights

- Training for the Seabird Island Nutrition Run and Walk and the Vancouver Sun Run
- Cycling, blading, riding and skating in the Active on Wheels event
- Professional development for teachers through Everybody Gets to Play and HIGH FIVE workshops
- Successfully securing a \$5,000 grant through BCRPA’s Active Communities
- Offering free swimming pool passes to youths
- Forming walking and running groups
- Providing active education to the community through Health Series
- Motivating the community with its Get Outside Challenge
- Supporting elders to get active
- Working with neighbouring First Nation communities on active initiatives

Seabird Island Info

- **Population:** 535 living on-reserve (2001 Census)
- **Region:** Lower Mainland
- **About Seabird Island:** The Seabird Island Band is a member of the Sto:lo First Nation, located 5 km north of Agassiz bordering the Fraser River. The Seabird community has a health centre, school and recreation centre.

(Sources: www.stolonation.bc.ca, www.aboriginalcanada.gc.ca)

Seabird Island Sets the Pace for First Nations, cont...

ladies' soccer tournament. There were also about 20 floor hockey teams. As well, there were fourteen 11-person canoes out for the First Nations Traditional War Canoe Races.

The following month, Active Seabird's first Get Outside Challenge kicked off.

"We're asking everybody to keep a calendar of how many times they get active outside of their home, whether it be walking with their kids after dinner or cycling or if they're going outside and gardening rather than watching TV," McNeil said. Everyone turns in their calendars for a chance to win one of the top three prizes each month in June, July and August. The grand prize is Hell's Gate Air-tram passes and lunch.

"There are a lot more people out and about," Khounviseth said. *"Now you have more people walking."*

National Aboriginal Day on June 21, 2007 featured an Aboriginals in Action event in Seabird. The celebration included Active Seabird booths promoting the Summer-Active™ campaign and group walks.

Also in June, a summer walking/running club started up, with one-hour walks from the Band office four nights a week. Participants can walk, jog or run a variety of routes ranging in length.

"Parents bring their children and they either run or walk with them as well," McNeil said. *"We even have an elder that goes out. A lot of them are feeling really, really good. A lot of them say, 'I used to be so tired and now I have energy, I can actually get around my house in the morning and get my kids off to school.'"*

ACTIVE ELDERERS

A group of about five elders have been coming out to the fitness centre to work out twice a week and some have taken up running. They have also been going on active outings with Recreation staff, such as going to a water aerobics class, walking around a dairy farm, or going to a walking trail.



"They get to walk with other people and talk about things that are going on day-to-day, so it really helps them get out of depression," McNeil said. *"Some of them have been saying too that because they are getting out of the house rather than being stuck at home, they are really feeling good about themselves overall because they're not so tired. They can really feel a difference."*

The elder in his 70's who ran the 15 K had been diagnosed with diabetes a few years earlier.

"When he got diagnosed he started looking after his health more, so he followed a lot of the suggestions we gave him—active living, watching what he ate," Khounviseth recalled. *"He's lost a lot of weight. He keeps telling me, 'I'm shrinking away.' It's just phenomenal because he started running. He's the one that goes and picks everyone up to go to the gym. His blood sugar is way down. It's just great."*

MOVING FORWARD

Khounviseth has noticed people starting to take control of their health when they are diagnosed with diabetes.

"I think the people that are diagnosed are more aware," she said. *"There are more and more of them coming and asking, 'What do I need to do?' so that's great."*

One of the biggest barriers for people in the community to get active is transportation, McNeil noted. Because the events happen in the community core, people living outside the core might not attend. And to go for hikes for the Get Outside Challenge, they would need to leave the community. Active Seabird is looking for funding for a school bus to transport people on certain days and times.

McNeil and Khounviseth also want to conduct a survey of physical activity levels to gather statistics to illustrate Active Seabird's successes.

Seabird provides health services to surrounding First Nations through Health Canada, meaning its active programs and events are extending to those communities. McNeil and Khounviseth have invited these other communities, including the Skwah First Nation, to participate. They are also looking at how to implement the initiatives within the Skwah community.

By successfully reaching out to Seabird youth, adults and elders, and those of neighbouring communities, the Active Seabird initiative has demonstrated how a local project can truly spread its wings.

