

Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows Groups Team up to Promote Active Living

May 2008

When Tracy Miyashita set out to build on the progress of Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows' Active Communities initiative, she reached out to engage key community organizations in what was then a mainly Parks and Leisure-driven project.

Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows Parks and Leisure Services restructured its department last year to create this new Active Living Coordinator position.

"For us as a department and for other communities that I've heard of, we're doing things off the sides of our desks," Miyashita said. "We're trying to run all these programs and yet we want to respond to grants that come in or start initiatives. So finally we've actually put some dedicated resources into that and created a position just to focus on Active Communities."

Miyashita took on this role and extended the planning and on-the-ground work of getting people active to represent a cross-section of community groups. Invitations went out, and more than 25 healthy living stakeholders contributed their thoughts at a community networking session in February.

"I invited anybody in the community who was in the business of getting people active," Miyashita said. "It was really exciting to get all those different types of people in the same room, when in essence we're doing the same thing."

Filling the room were reps from the Ridge Meadows Baseball Association, soccer club, outdoor club, paddling club, e City Bootcamp, Running Room, Fraser Health, Canadian Cancer Society, Katzie First Nation, School District 42, Action Schools!, and Parks and Leisure.



"It was easy to get people to attend; they were very interested and excited to be involved," she noted. "We found a lot of them just have a heart for working with the community. Ultimately, people were there because they really want to see activity levels increase."

During the roundtable session, they shared strengths and challenges of their existing programs. Then they brainstormed ways to work together to make a greater impact in the community.

Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows residents have the balance of being close to a major urban centre, while enjoying the rural feel of their backyard. A 2005 Ipsos Reid survey for Parks and Leisure Services found 45% of Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows adults were meeting or exceeding Health Canada's recommendation to exercise 30 minutes or more, 4 or more times a week. Three-quarters (77%) of Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows school-age children (under

18) were meeting or exceeding this recommendation.

Although many in the community are already quite active, the need for coordinating and promoting sport and recreation organizations' activities was raised at the networking session. A key focus of the network's efforts will be to promote the benefits of physical activity to the inactive, in particular among the growing aging population.

"Reaching the inactive is a challenge that everybody was talking about," Miyashita noted. "The community is not aware of what is available. You'll drive through the community and see a ball tournament going on, there might be a run that some group is doing or a bike race down the road, and nobody knows what each other is doing, and yet we know our community is quite active doing all these things."

Lower Mainland – Maple Ridge/Pitt Meadows

So the organizations at the networking session thought of developing an active events calendar to raise awareness of the different tournaments, races and other activities happening around town. The calendar will be printed and distributed in the community, in partnership with the tourism sector.

The networking session also looked at how to link their activities together, using the neighbourhood parks. One idea was to get parents out of their seats at children's soccer or baseball games by offering a boot camp or fitness class at the same time. As well, Action! Schools and the School District have been setting up orienteering courses in the park during ball games.

Out of this broader networking session, an Active Communities team formed to put the strategies into action. After meeting to do more planning and visioning, the core team set out on their first big project together – Move for Health Day on May 10. The free events got people out to four parks for a boot camp, trail hike, family walk, orienteering, and the opening of the Youth Action Skate Park. A \$300 grant from the BC Recreation and Parks Association through Active Communities helped fund the Move for Health Day events.

The network of groups also advised on the creation of Parks and Leisure Services' Outdoor Recreation Trails & Events guide.

The partner groups plan to deliver consistent messaging to the public about the benefits of physical activity.

"It's really important to involve community partners. That's truly one of the most important tips or advice I could give other communities starting out."

- Tracy Miyashita

Maple Ridge/ Pitt Meadows Highlights

- Developed a Get Started kit for walkers
- Organizes walking events
- Produced a Walk Maple Ridge & Pitt Meadows brochure and 2 Outdoor Recreation Trails & Events guide
- Hosted an Active Community networking and visioning session
- Organizes an annual 5 km Doggie Dash walk
- Participating in Fort St. John's Walk to Whistler challenge at www.walktowhistler.com
- Hosted a variety of Move for Health day events May 10
- Awarded \$35,000 grants from UBCM, Spirit Square grants from BC Government, Measuring Up grant from 2010 Legacies Now, pedometers from ActNow BC Activity Challenge, \$300 grants from BCRPA for Spirit of BC Week events and Move for Health Day events
- 23 registered Action Schools! in School District 42

Lower Mainland – Maple Ridge/Pitt Meadows

Maple Ridge/ Pitt Meadows Info



Population: Maple Ridge 73,280; Pitt Meadows 16, 673 (BC Stats, 2005)

- Shared Parks & Leisure Services
- Leisure centre, family recreation centre, golf courses, ice rinks, curling rink, youth centre, lawn bowling, seniors' centre, sports fields
- 66 parks, including Golden Ears Provincial Park
- Over 160 km of walking, cycling, hiking and equestrian trails
- Main industries: agriculture, fisheries, forestry
- Home to the Katzie and Kwantlen First Nations

www.mapleridge.ca,
www.pittmeadows.bc.ca,
www.hellobc.com

The team is branding their initiative with the Active Communities logo customized with the Maple Ridge & Pitt Meadows name, provided by BCRPA.

"We're starting to use that logo on everything we produce," Miyashita noted. "It will be interesting to evaluate in a year—do people know what Active Communities is, have they heard about it?"

The team will report back on their progress to the wider group, which will get together for more networking sessions. Miyashita noted the cost of putting on the networking session was about \$20 (mainly for refreshments), and recommends this community development approach for other Active Communities getting started.

With the community-driven Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows Active Communities initiative successfully off the ground, Miyashita will now be moving on to work with the Katzie First Nation as its Community Services Coordinator. The main Active Communities contact with Parks and Leisure will be Health and Wellness Manager Lex Tierney in Maple Ridge. Miyashita plans to stay on the Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows Active Communities team, representing Katzie, to continue building on the partnerships developed.

"It's really important to involve community partners," Miyashita noted. "That's truly one of the most important tips or advice I could give other communities starting out."