

### Sunshine Valley plans for a Healthy Future by Remembering its Past

September 2008



Residents of the Cascade Mountain community of Sunshine Valley and visitors to the area are treading a path to health by retracing historical trading routes.

Located east of Hope in the Fraser Valley Regional District near Manning Park, Sunshine Valley and its trails were once the gateway between the Sto:lo Nation's traditional territory and the Thompson Okanagan. Sunshine Valley was also the site of the historic road surveying at Dwendney Trail and Beaver Lake Lodge in the 1850's. The area's historic Trites Ranch was where A.B. Trites, an American prospector and entrepreneur, raised a prized herd of cattle that supplied the City of Vancouver in the early Twentieth Century. Today, citizens have come together through the local Active Communities group to re-build the area's trail system and recognize its history.

The community's BC150 homecoming reunion this summer helped raise awareness of its history and trails. A guided heritage walk and trail dedication took community members and visitors along the paths. The group of about 35 walked almost 8 kilometres, visiting historic sites like the Allison Pass sawmill and learning about the traditional significance of plants and berries to Aboriginals and early settlers.

*"I talked about plants and how pioneers would use different plants for living off the land,"* said Kate Zabell, who leads

Sunshine Valley's Active Community initiative. *"It was a commemorative walk because we have a lot of history that's been lost over the last 140 years. There were all these interesting pieces that were out on these trails that were key parts of British Columbia's history."*

Meanwhile, there was a full day of activities on the water, including free kayaking on Beaver Lake, with demonstrations by Aqua Venture Sales—a kayaking company and member of the Active Communities team. *"A lot of people had never done any activities around that body of water,"* Zabell noted.

That evening, the community gathered for a Japanese lantern ceremony. The Sacred Connections First Nation drummers and dancers were one of the performing acts at the event. More than 250 people attended the homecoming reunion, themed Honouring Our Past while Embracing Our Future. The Sunshine Valley Homecoming committee secured funding for the four-day festival through a Heritage Canada grant and a BC 150 grant.

Sunshine Valley already attracts active people to its outdoor recreation opportunities, both permanent and part-time residents and out-of-town visitors. But by resurrecting local history, the Active Communities group is reaching out to the inactive.

*"What was surprising to me was a lot of our elderly people who typically don't walk wanted to go for a walk,"* Zabell observed.

To create more opportunities to walk, the Active Communities group and its local partners are working on improving the trail system. By next summer, they expect to install a kiosk and signs pointing out

key historical points and commemorative markers, so people walking independently can acknowledge the area's cultural significance.

*"We try to encourage people that are here for recreational purposes too so that there is a common value around the trails,"* Zabell noted. A \$5,000 grant from the BC Recreation and Parks Association (BCRPA) through Active Communities is going towards the trail improvements to increase usage, education and safety.

Sunshine Valley's Active Communities group held public consultations earlier this year which identified trails as the key priority for the area. An active community plan was developed for the Sunshine Valley trail network enhancement project, thanks to \$2,000 in funding from the BCRPA. Sunshine Valley conducted a mail-out survey on physical activity and trail usage. All respondents reported they were interested in expanding the trail network for walking.

Also with the grant funds, two community consultation sessions were held in the spring to gather input for the plan – one with interested members of the public and the second with key stakeholder groups and individuals.

*"The Active Community plan gives us the foundation to move a lot of this work forward,"* said Active Community team member Donna McBride. *"It's easy to build partnerships when they see that there's already been the thoughtful process, this intentional piece of putting together what the community wants to do. It's really invaluable."*

New partnerships were formed through these sessions, including one with the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and the Arts

## Lower Mainland – Sunshine Valley

through its trails strategy. Discussions have begun for the Ministry to contribute funding for the trails, while the community would maintain them.

*“A year ago we didn’t have this plan, now we treat it as if it’s always been here,”* Zabell said. *“Everything that’s been on it has been completed to date. Putting it down on paper and then moving the discussions into the partner groups is facilitating the whole process in a very quick way.”*

BCRPA’s Active Communities Community Developer worked with the Sunshine Valley Active Community team and local stakeholders through the planning process.

*“Jess coming out was just tremendous because we had gotten to a place with the plan where we said, ‘now what?’”* Zabell recalled. *“That makes all the difference as we’re trying to get all this done on shoestring budgets and volunteers.”*

The committee plans to update the plan each year with new goals as it checks off its achievements.

The homecoming heritage walk on the B.C. Day long weekend was the most recent boost to the Active Communities group’s events to get people moving. Since 2005, group walks—Walk the Valley—have been taking place on Canada Day. Activities and walks have also been held on Move for Health Day (May 10).

*“Having a community walk together with family and grandchildren and different ages really made it fun and also gave them a sense of belonging to our community,”* Zabell observed.

People have also started walking independently or forming their own clubs or groups. Walkers are logging their steps with pedometers that Sunshine Valley received from the ActNow BC Activity Challenge.

After some local school staff caught wind of the program, Zabell brought some pedometers to staff and students within School District 78. Then a Aboriginal worker at C.E. Barry Intermediate School contacted Zabell for pedometers to help motivate students participating in the Honour Your Health 6-week running challenge. Students said the pedometers helped them to set goals and achieve them.

*“People are catching on to it in ways I didn’t expect,”* Zabell said.

To tie Active Communities in with the local Spirit of BC Committee (which Zabell also chairs), active events were held during Spirit of BC Week celebrations in February. Families were out ice skating, playing broom hockey, snow golfing, and snowshoe racing at Cedar Lake.

*“We try to build some synergy around what exists in the community and bring them together so we don’t have any duplication of certain activities,”* Zabell said.

What keeps Zabell going as a champion of the Active Communities movement in Sunshine Valley is seeing the connections made through programs, events and meetings. After organized walks, groups have been planning to meet again, building community strength. Zabell notes the capacity building from these connections is what will keep this initiative going in the years ahead.

*“If you can figure out ways to make it fun so that people can get together and get to know each other, it just carries on.”*



## Sunshine Valley Highlights

- Hosted a BC150 Homecoming Reunion with activities including a commemorative trail walk
- Raising awareness of local history through trail system
- Developing & upgrading trail network
- Conducted a physical activity and trail usage survey of residents
- Held community consultation sessions to develop its Active Community plan
- Formed partnerships with governments, organizations, schools, individuals and businesses
- Hosted active events for Spirit of BC Week, Move for Health Day and Canada Day
- Honour Your Health challenge at C.E. Barry Intermediate School
- Received grants from BCRPA through Active Communities (\$5,000 for trails project, \$2,000 for Active Community plan, \$300 for Spirit of BC Week active events); Honour Your Health (\$1,000) to C.E. Barry school for activity challenge; ActNow BC pedometers through Activity Challenge; 2010 Legacies Now (\$2,000); BC 150 Secretariat (\$10,000); Heritage Canada (\$5,200)

## Sunshine Valley Info

- Population:** 167 full-time residents (2006 Industry Canada), plus part-time residents
- Located in Electoral Area ‘B’ of the Fraser Valley Regional District on Highway #3
  - Year-round recreation destination
  - Nearby community centre, pool facility, tennis courts
  - Majority of population is over age 45

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