

Splats'in First Nation Children Getting Active Every School Day

July 2008



Children from the Splats'in (Spallumcheen) First Nation are learning the importance of being active every day and are setting the pace for a healthy, active community.

The Shihiya School, located just outside Enderby on Spallumcheen Band lands, provides education to 22 students, ranging from age 4 to Grade 6. Each school day the children participate in a physical activity—either at the playground or paved basketball court outside its doors, inside the classroom, at a nearby school gym, or at recreation facilities.

"It's what we're doing as a group," said Head Teacher Reidun Kopp, who leads the Splats'in Active Communities initiative. *"We're going skating, we're going swimming—we all need to participate.*

And we talk about the health benefits and why we need to do it."

The group participates in the six-week Honour Your Health Challenge each year at the local pool or ice arena. The Honour Your Health Challenge is a province-wide, community-based health initiative, funded by ActNow BC in partnership with Sport-Med BC, mobilizing individuals and communities to live active, healthy and strong lifestyles, free from tobacco misuse.

Kopp registered the Splats'in First Nation as an Active Community through the BC Recreation and Parks Association in 2006. The school is also a registered Active School through ActionSchools! BC. The aim is to encourage children to make better choices and choose healthier lifestyles.

"We thought if we could start with the kids, maybe they could also help to influence their parents about choosing to do different activities," Kopp said.

To get the ball rolling, Splats'in was awarded a \$5,000 Active Communities grant from the BC Recreation and Parks Association (BCRPA) in 2007 to develop and implement an Active Community plan. The funds created initiatives and opportunities for community members to increase their activity levels.

To get a sense of the community's needs, members of the community were engaged in developing the Active Community plan. The planning process first identified the concerns and trends within the community before addressing how to meet nutrition, health and activity needs. The idea for Olympic-themed programs came out of the planning process, including having walk challenges, passport programs and cooking programs. The plan identified the children of the Shihiya School as the leaders of most of the activities.

"It is our belief that utilizing the energy, playfulness and excitement of the children will be beneficial in drawing other community members to participate in the many activity and challenge opportunities that will be provided," the plan reads.

The BCRPA grant has also assisted in getting active programs going, both through the school and in the community. The funds went toward hosting activity and nutrition workshops and purchasing healthy cookbooks, pedometers, water bottles and bike helmets.

Okanagan – Splats'in First Nation

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- Reidun Kopp

An activity coordinator came onboard through the school and organized skating, bowling, walking, running and hiking opportunities for people of all ages. The grant funds assisted with transportation costs to and from the activities. In addition, the activity coordinator hosted the free Activity and Nutrition workshops for adults. The workshops offered the opportunity to experience different activities, such as yoga, in a supportive environment and to learn about the connection between healthy eating and physical health and well-being.

The school received an additional grant from DASH BC (Directorate of Agencies for School Health) to run a 10-session program focusing on basic prevention strategies for caregivers of school-aged children. Participants received education and information about dietary needs, nutritional facts, and ideas for healthy, low-cost snacks and meals.

To get people active for Move for Health Day this May, the Splats'in Nation received a \$300 grant from BCRPA. A community dinner and dance for the children and their families was held, where Shakewood Annie Entertainments got the group moving through an interactive dance. The event brought out nearly 100 people from the

community, including the 22 students and 17 of their families.

"We were able to have an hour private lesson with our students, so they did all kinds of dances, like the Macarena, and all kinds of stuff with them," Kopp said. At the dance, families received pedometers and water bottles with the Active Communities Splats'in First Nation customized logo on them to encourage them to get out walking in the community.

Splats'in has existing initiatives and local partnerships that assist with reinforcing the benefits of active living. Splats'in has partnered with Interior Health for tobacco reduction programs and a Diabetes clinic, with the RCMP for bicycle safety, with the Shuswap Family Resource Centre for alcohol and other drug prevention information and activities, and with Aboriginal Health for Honour Your Health Challenge activities, self-esteem building and assertiveness training.

By creating opportunities for participation and introducing children and adults to activities within the community, the Splats'in Active Communities initiative is achieving its goal of increasing physical activity levels and building a healthier community.

Splats'in First Nation Highlights

- Shihya School participates in Honour Your Health Challenge
- Hosted activity and nutrition workshops in community
- Held an interactive community dance on Move for Health Day
- Developed an Active Community plan
- Partnered with RCMP to offer a bike rodeo for children
- Received grants from BCRPA (\$5,000 and \$300), Honour Your Health Challenge, and DASH BC (Directorate of Agencies for School Health)
- Registered with Action Schools! BC

Splats'in First Nation Info

Population: 704 registered Band members, approx. 300 on-reserve

- Southernmost tribe of the Shuswap Nation
- Band-owned Shihya School located 4 kilometres south of Enderby

www.spallumcheen.org,
www.aboriginalcanada.gc.ca