

## Appendix E

### Key Learnings, Issues and Opportunities

This section is excerpted from a 2007 report by Professional Environmental Recreation Consultants Ltd. who was commissioned by BCRPA for the strategic planning process. This section provides insights into the results of discussions with a wide range of B.C. parks, recreation and culture stakeholders regarding key issues and opportunities.

#### Key Learnings from Stakeholders

- The focus on healthy lifestyle behaviours and healthy environments has accelerated exponentially over the last three years, resulting in a number of new provincial initiatives.
- The Vancouver-Whistler Olympics have provided added emphasis and opportunities for many healthy lifestyle strategies and community actions. A foundation of interest and effort drives this growth.
- There is a significant need to bring the leaders of major provincial initiatives, both government and non-government, together to share what they are doing and take a more coordinated approach. A number of stakeholders suggested a provincial forum or summit is needed in the near future.
- There are a number of strategies where there is significant potential for partnerships between major provincial stakeholders. There are also increased opportunities for regional and local partnerships between health, local governments, education, business and community organizations.
- There is confusion at the local level about many of these initiatives and how they fit together in terms of implementation. There appears to be some concern about overlap and lack of coordination.
- Some stakeholders identified that, while supportive of partnerships, they also realize that partnering takes time and that groups need to understand each other better as part of that process.
- The impact of the built environment and community design and walkability on health has become a significant public and stakeholder issue. Local government parks, recreation and culture departments may need to be a stronger leader and internal partner with planning and engineering on community design and amenities within each municipality.
- Infrastructure is a major issue to many stakeholders, both in terms of new infrastructure and the replacement or upgrading of aging facilities. There is also a clear and growing interest in trails, bikeways and other forms of active transportation.
- The development of indicators to measure impacts, outcomes and community conditions is a major priority to most stakeholders. A number of indicator and community mapping projects are underway or under consideration. There may be some potential duplication.
- Research is becoming a higher priority and universities and stakeholders are engaging in research to a greater degree. Universities have become a full partner in a number of strategies in research, evaluation and program development areas.
- A number of stakeholders identified the need for an overarching social marketing campaign to frame and support their messages. Any provincial campaign, however, should have elements that could support local awareness initiatives. Several stakeholders identified opportunities for cross-marketing.
- Social inequities and inclusion were a significant concern to most stakeholders. The most vulnerable populations were also considered to be among the most difficult to reach.
- Childhood obesity and inactivity is a “hot button” issue that stood out to many, particularly in terms of longer-term implications for health.
- Local governments generally, and their parks, recreation and culture departments specifically, are often asked to act as facilitators and service delivery agents at the local level for many of these healthy living initiatives. This has implications in terms of capacity.
- Community development education and practices were seen as vital to success, along with coordinated community planning.

## Issues and Opportunities

### 1. Leadership Recruitment and Development

The development of future leaders and staff is a concern, especially with regard to the number of new leaders needed to keep the parks, recreation and culture sector vibrant and relevant. As with many sectors, parks, recreation and culture may experience a labour shortage in the coming decade. Addressing this issue involves the recruitment of new leaders into the sector, their post-secondary development and ongoing support and mentorship as they enter the sector. The inclusion of identified “emerging” leaders in professional development and provincial initiatives will support the professional growth of these individuals.

Many long-standing leaders have recently retired or are in the process of doing so. There appear to be a number of qualified and capable successors in place but succession planning and development for these individuals, and those who will subsequently replace them, has been limited. The rapid pace of change in the sector also requires ongoing professional development in new areas.

**Opportunities:** Some post-secondary institutions have adjusted their curriculum to address emerging needs in recreation and parks and are committed to engaging the sector in the review process. The Alberta Recreation and Parks Association (ARPA) completed a labour market analysis that can serve as a model approach. The BCRPA is attempting to involve emerging leaders in provincial planning and initiatives.

The BCRPA is well positioned to provide ongoing professional development workshops and courses such as HIGH FIVE®. This training is carried out both directly and in conjunction with other provincial associations or post-secondary institutions. The association has played a strong role in defining competencies and standards and in analyzing future training needs for practitioners and volunteers.

### 2. Infrastructure Renewal and Development

B.C.'s existing parks, recreation and culture infrastructure, both indoors and outdoors, is aging. This was indicated in the BCRPA Facility Assessment Study.

In addition to renewal and upgrading, new facilities, parks and trails are needed. There is still uncertainty around what the full Federal/Provincial-Territorial (F/P-T) infrastructure programs will look like and whether or not a specific national strategy for parks, recreation and sport infrastructure will be developed. The current F/P-T infrastructure programs still have a \$2 million cap for any community project imposed by the Province. In addition, new projects and renovations have been severely impacted by high construction rates, which are increasing by 1½ - 2% every month.

**Opportunities:** The Facility Assessment Study is solid research and has clarified the extent of the aging infrastructure issue. The F/P-T ministers responsible for sport, physical activity and recreation have made infrastructure their top issue, and B.C.'s Tourism, Sport and the Arts Ministry has confirmed infrastructure as a key priority.

The BCRPA has advocated for a strong national and provincial program through “Investing in Healthy Communities through Recreation Infrastructure.” The governments of Canada and B.C. recently signed the Municipal Rural Infrastructure Fund Agreement (MRIF) which commits the two governments to \$102 million for infrastructure projects. This is managed through the B.C. Ministry of Economic Development. There will be a further agreement developed for B.C.'s share of the additional \$2.2 billion of MRIF funding included in the 2006 federal budget. Advocacy to the Province and UBCM to remove the cap and apply the full one-third must take place in the near future.

### 3. Improved Strategic Partnerships and Coordination

There are a number of provincial strategies where there is significant potential for partnerships. There are also increased opportunities for delivering provincial initiatives through stronger regional and local partnerships between health, local

governments, education, business and community organizations. While not all provincial initiatives require strategic partnerships to be successful, there are clearly a number that the parks, recreation and culture sector can influence and support.

While many stakeholders are supportive of partnerships, they also know that partnering takes time and that groups need to understand each other better to work together. Clarifying roles and mandates needs to be built into the process, but often is not. For some organizations, there was still a lack of clarity and understanding of the breadth of the roles played by the parks, recreation and culture sector, especially in the local government sector.

The sheer volume of activity in the healthy living and healthy community areas has resulted in a lack of coordination and communication about what various agencies and organizations are doing. There is a need to bring the leaders of major provincial initiatives, both governmental and non-governmental, together to share what they are doing and take a more coordinated approach. A number of stakeholders suggested a provincial forum or summit. The lack of provincial coordination has resulted in confusion at the local level about how various initiatives fit together, potential overlaps, and impacts on community capacity in terms of implementation.

**Opportunities:** The ActNow BC initiative supports inter-ministry cooperation and integrated approaches by provincial organizations. For example, the Active Communities and Action Schools! BC initiatives work well together. Cooperative approaches are also reinforced by the B.C. Healthy Living Alliance. The mutual understanding of respective roles has been improved through partnership initiatives and umbrella organizations such as the BCHLA. Further communication about the role played by the parks, recreation and culture sector in local government and other settings will be supported by the credibility of the BCRPA.

ActNow BC, the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Tourism, Sport and the Arts, and the Ministry of Education appear to be well positioned to work along with provincial “umbrella” organizations to bring those responsible for provincial initiatives together, either in a major summit or a series of meetings. Besides information sharing, this coordination should support strategic partnerships and communications aimed at the local level. Those at the local level need a clear “map” of initiatives and how to access them.

#### 4. Positioning the Field

The parks, recreation and culture sector is ideally positioned with government and non-governmental partners and the BCRPA deserves a great deal of the credit. The positioning of the sector can be further strengthened, however, by further influencing policy decision-making at provincial and national levels.

**Opportunities:** The success of BCRPA’s Active Communities Initiative should be built upon in terms of the sector’s capacity to reach and impact the community level. The BCRPA is well positioned to influence provincial recreation, parks and culture policies. Similarly, the BCRPA can influence F/P-T physical activity initiatives, infrastructure programs and CPRA policies and program initiatives.

#### 5. Wellness and Healthy Living

The Province has set a target to increase by 20% the proportion of the population that is physically active enough to achieve health benefits by 2010. This translates into increasing physical activity levels from 58% (2003) to 69.6 % in 2010. This will be a significant challenge especially given the lack of a comprehensive social marketing program (see Issue 11) or recreation and sport infrastructure program (see Issue 3).

Of great concern are the levels of physical inactivity and increasing numbers of overweight and obese children and youth. There are serious concerns for the longer term impacts on the future health status and health care costs as this generation ages.

Approximately 1.2 million people in B.C. suffer from one or more chronic conditions. The estimated total annual cost of chronic diseases to the B.C. economy is \$3.8 billion. Many of these cases of chronic disease can be prevented by positive lifestyle behaviours such as living smoke free, healthy eating, healthy weights and physical activity. These same lifestyle factors also play a role in the management of chronic disease conditions. The parks, recreation and culture sector plays a strong role in physically active lifestyles but could play a stronger role in broader chronic disease prevention and management initiatives.

**Opportunities:** One of the Province's Five Great Goals is to "lead the way in North America in healthy living and physical fitness." To address this goal, ActNow BC and 2010 Legacies Now have supported two primary initiatives: Action Schools! BC and Active Communities. Active Communities has more than 100 registered communities and continues to grow. It is also developing an approach to workplace wellness. Action Schools! BC has programs in more than 1,392 elementary schools (Grades 4-7) and is expanding to other grade levels.

The BCRPA is also playing a key role in a number of Active Aging initiatives. The premier recently assigned a Minister of State for ActNow BC to bring an even stronger focus to healthy living.

The BCHLA has brought together the chronic disease prevention organizations with organizations such as UBCM and the BCRPA and has produced "The Winning Legacy" to address the four risk factors. The Province has provided \$25.2 million toward this end. A number of the chronic disease organizations operate preventative and disease management programs with which the parks, recreation and culture sector could support and partner.

## 6. Sport Participation Levels

Participation levels in a number of sports have fallen over the last five to ten years. The principal reasons appear to be changing demographics (a decline in the youth population), youth physical inactivity levels and a shift from organized to more individual activities. Sport BC is working to reverse this trend with a greater focus on participation and enhancing the sport experience.

The parks, recreation and culture sector needs to be a partner in this process and to bridge the gap between sport and community recreation.

**Opportunities:** Sport, nationally and provincially, has largely adopted the Long-Term Athlete Development (now the Canadian Sport for Life) model. This inclusive approach to sport participation and athlete development includes seven stages. While the parks, recreation and culture sector plays a strong role in supporting each of the stages, it can play a more direct role in the first two stages (Active Start and FUNdamentals) as well as the last one (Active for Life).

## 7. Public Communications

While there is a strong commitment to supporting healthy living, the provincial government has embarked on a limited social marketing campaign through ActNow. A number of stakeholders identified the need for an overarching provincial social marketing campaign to frame and support their messages. Any provincial campaign, however, should have elements that could support and connect to local awareness initiatives. Several stakeholders identified opportunities for cross-marketing.

**Opportunities:** ActNow BC and the BCHLA have the collective capacity and interest to develop an overarching social marketing campaign around physical activity, healthy eating, healthy weight and living smoke free. The overarching campaign can support other communication messages as well as local campaigns that build on community resources.

## 8. Community Capacity and Community Development

A common concern of many stakeholders is the need to build greater community capacity at the local level. This includes creating community planning forums to identify how to build community capacity and social capital. It also involves

supporting the community development approach at the local level and increasing community development skills.

**Opportunities:** The UBCM Community Health Promotion Fund supports the creation of healthy community conditions. The BC Healthy Communities Initiative supports planning forums at the local level. A number of organizations such as SPARC BC have developed community development workshops. The parks, recreation and culture sector is well positioned to support and/or facilitate community capacity building efforts; many departments already use a community development approach.

## 9. Community Design and Open Space

The impact of the built environment and community design and walkability on health has become a significant public and stakeholder issue. Local government parks, recreation and culture departments may need to be a stronger leader in this area as it relates to community open space and connectivity. This means being an effective internal partner with planning and engineering on community design and amenities such as greenways and bikeways within those communities.

**Opportunities:** The UBC Centre on Sustainability and Smart Growth BC have conducted research on the impact of the built environment on physical activity levels and overall health. UBCM and the Planning Institute of B.C. held a series of community planning workshops to improve on community design. The BCRPA is well positioned to influence the parks, recreation and culture sector to play a stronger advocacy and planning role.

## 10. Natural Environment Preservation and Management

This is both a provincial and a local issue. There is a concern that many sensitive natural environments are not being well preserved or protected and that the enforcement of environmental regulations has been negatively affected by position cuts. At the local level, the 5% parkland dedication level is barely adequate to achieve recreational open space, let alone sensitive natural areas. There is also a need for better management of natural areas at the local level by parks, recreation and culture departments.

**Opportunities:** The Province's Five Great Goals include a commitment for B.C. to "lead the world in sustainable environmental management with the best air and water quality." Public commitment to clean air and water and environmental preservation remains high. A number of local governments have developed natural area management plans that can serve as a model.

## 11. Gaps in Social Inclusion and Accessibility

At the Provincial Recreation Summit and during several stakeholder interviews, a number of concerns were expressed regarding the impacts of social and economic inequities on making lifestyle choices and accessing opportunities. Families living in impoverished situations face a number of barriers and existing services are often difficult to access because of cost, transportation, lack of awareness and other factors. While the overall economic conditions in communities are complex and difficult to address, the parks, recreation and culture sector can better ensure that services and amenities are broadly accessible and distributed. Programs, services and physical accessibility to facilities have improved considerably for persons with a disability but further work is required.

**Opportunities:** Parks, recreation and culture departments have generally developed programs and policies to reduce barriers to participation. The Everybody Gets to Play program further focuses on the development of accessible opportunities to low income families and their children. SPARC BC has developed a social inclusion workshop that has an active living component. The sector has also made a strong commitment to ensuring access for persons with a disability.

## 12. Demographic Shifts and Diversity

Ageing baby boomers and declining birth rates are impacting recreation, culture and parks services. B.C. is also becoming increasingly diverse from an ethno-cultural perspective, especially in urban communities. Departments need to react to ensure that all in the community feel welcome, can access services and find relevant experiences.

Opportunities: More communities are reviewing their demographic profiles and shifts in their planning and are accessing data available through Statistics Canada and BC Stats. In terms of ethno-cultural inclusion, communities such as Surrey have developed models for policies, programs and marketing.

### 13. Rural Communities

Leaders from many small rural communities outlined the issues they face in attracting and retaining staff, having a limited budget, developing comprehensive services and obtaining planning expertise. For example, smaller communities that wish to develop a community trails plan seldom have anyone on local government staff who can carry that out, or the funding to accomplish it through outside consultants.

Opportunities: The Active Communities Initiative has reached out to communities in all regions in its workshop series and has a grant program that has assisted rural communities to plan. UBCM has recognized the needs of communities of all sizes and regions in its Community Health Promotion Fund.

### 14. First Nations Wellness and Opportunities

Chronic disease rates for conditions such as diabetes are higher for aboriginal peoples. First Nation communities, both near-urban and remote, face a number of social and accessibility issues. These communities vary widely in terms of community resources such as recreation leadership and programs. The number and quality of indoor and outdoor recreation facilities also varied widely and an infrastructure inventory does not exist.

Opportunities: The Aboriginal Sport and Recreation Association (ASRA) has made a number of positive strides with First Nations individuals and communities. It has partnered with the BCRPA to create an aboriginal supplement for HIGH FIVE® facilitators; other partnerships are being discussed. The Tourism, Sport and the Arts Ministry is also working on a number of initiatives, many of which are focused on youth leadership development.

### 15. 2010 Olympics and Paralympics

The Province has made a commitment to spreading the impact and benefits of the 2010 Olympics and Paralympics throughout B.C. and is using 2010 Legacies Now as a primary vehicle to achieve this objective. The Province has also made a strong commitment to healthy living through ActNow BC and other initiatives. The concern has been expressed that support for healthy living may diminish after the Games; the challenge is to ensure that this does not occur.

Opportunities: 2010 Legacies Now has attempted to ensure that supported legacies are long term. The impact of the Active Communities and other healthy living initiatives show great early promise. These impacts need to be measured and communicated on an ongoing basis. The BCHLA has a great deal of credibility with government, largely due to its emphasis on partnership approaches.

### 16. Indicators and Research Needs

Measuring the impacts of various provincial initiatives is essential. There are a number of indicator projects underway. These include the initial Health Indicators and Community Profiles by the Provincial Health Services Authority (PHSA) and the Atlas of Wellness mapping project by the University of Victoria. A comprehensive set of indicators at the provincial level does not have a commitment. There may be duplication or critical areas left unmeasured if an overall look at measurement needs does not occur. The previously mentioned target (Issue 8) for physical activity levels relies on the Canadian Community Health Survey which does not provide sub-regional or community results because of sample size.

There are clear needs for further research on effective interventions and other topics. Research is becoming a higher priority, especially in terms of measuring outcomes, yet there are no consistent approaches to building in evaluation. The connection between researchers and practitioners needs to be strengthened.

Opportunities: The PHSA Community Profiles could be expanded to a provincial level with adequate funding. It includes the

use of the International Physical Activity Questionnaire (IPAQ) to measure physical activity levels. IPAQ is also used by Active Communities to assist communities in doing local measures. The community mapping project will assist communities in overall measures of health and inclusion.

The Canadian Parks and Recreation Association recently developed a Canadian Research Agenda and Framework. It can serve as a resource and model for a B.C. recreation research agenda. Universities and stakeholders are engaging to a greater degree as universities have become a full partner in a number of strategies in the research, evaluation and program development areas. Examples include the involvement of UBC with Action Schools! BC and the University of Victoria's involvement with the BCMA/BCRPA Pedometer Pilot Project.

### 17. Sustainability and Continuing Contributions

Some concerns were expressed regarding the fiscal sustainability of the parks, recreation and culture sector, with the costs of replacing aging indoor and outdoor infrastructure being cited as a particular issue. Managing rising expectations without additional resources will be a challenge in the coming decade. There was also a concern that the economic impacts of parks, recreation and culture services and related tourism at the local level were not fully understood and appreciated.

Opportunities: The Ministry of Tourism, Sport and the Arts is considering an economic indicators project. The BCRPA needs to be a full participant in this project along with UBCM. The B.C. economy is in excellent shape and the contributions made by our sector to the economic mix needs to be understood.