



# SOOKE REGION COMMUNITIES HEALTH NETWORK QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

*To help support healthy lives in healthy communities through innovative, collaborative development and improvement of services for everyone.*

## **Latest SRCHN Activities**

### **SRCHN Board**

We had our Annual General Meeting June 16th, where two board members stepped down, namely Trudy Vermaas and Marlene Barry. Their past contributions were greatly appreciated. We would like to welcome three new Board members to the fold making a total of seven. The new members are Roy Brown (ret. psychologist), Mary Dunn (founding CHI member and ret. Public Health Nurse) and Hermione Jefferis (Vancouver Island AIDS). Much work has gone in the governance piece, rules of conduct and job descriptions for the executive positions.

### **Sooke Region Age-Friendly Committee**

This committee's "Age-Friendly Approach for Seniors" was presented at the Vancouver Island Health Forum in April in Parksville, where Community Health Networks like our own were present to share and learn.

The Sooke Region Resources yellow [HELP brochure](#) was updated and reprinted. We are looking into creating a regional Seniors Resources brochure as well, though the method and format is still being discussed.

We continue to partake in the discussions held by the Sooke Community Centre Committee, to include a place for youth, seniors, families and the arts respectively.



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## Latest SRCHN Activities

### **Sooke Region Volunteer Centre (SRVC)**

Marlene Barry, the creator and nurturer of our [Volunteer Centre](#), has stepped down as coordinator. Her community engagement has been lauded by all. Her replacement is Dawn Humphreys, who has a long track record within the non-profit sector and the political realm, as well as being a columnist for our local Sooke Mirror newspaper. Our Volunteer Centre is keeping its regular opening hours on Tues and Thurs from 12:30 - 4:30 pm at the Sooke Child, Youth and Family Centre on Wadams Way. The Sooke Region Resources website continues to expand with activities included by the regional non-profit societies.

In April, SRVC hosted its fifth annual Volunteer Fair at the Edward Milne Community School and participated in the Sooke Rotary Auction, and hosted an information booth at the Sooke Region Health Summit held in May. If you are curious, please visit the SRVC booth at the Canada Day celebration on the Sooke Flats.

### **CASA Community Garden**

SRCHN has included the [CASA Community Garden](#) under its umbrella. This gem is located behind the Sooke Child, Youth and Family Centre. It was established over 11 years ago and in is now in a state of disrepair. The wet climate has much to answer for! We have attained a capital grant from the District of Sooke for \$7,000.00 that will help in the repairs. Other grants are also being looked into, as well as the pro-bono services of professionals to restore the garden to its former glory. We are in the process of arranging a yearly plan where regular seasonally appropriate events and trainings can be provided in order to assist with nutritious local eating. Not to be forgotten, the garden provides a lovely refuge from the bustle of town. In the meantime, the volunteer team is planting away to provide food for those who pass through and perhaps even a tip or two on growing food. For the time being we meet Tuesday and Thursday afternoons, though it is open to all at all times. Come and get your hands dirty or let your thoughts linger for a while.



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## Latest SRCHN Activities

### **Sooke Region Health Summit 2016**

The Primary Health Care Services Working Group (PHCSWG), chaired by Sooke Mayor Maja Tait, hosted the **Sooke Region Health Summit** on May 28th. At least 60 community members attended. Key note speaker was Dr Richard Stanwick, Chief Medical Health Officer for Island Health, who enlightened us on different health issues that can be tackled through prevention at the community level. The public then rotated between four tables with the following topics: Medical services and infrastructures, Physical and social activities, Special populations, and Healthy food accessibility. The findings will be shared publicly and used to further define the PHCSWG strategy to improve the health situation regionally.

### **Getting our logo together**

We had a region-wide logo contest in April and a winning insignia was chosen. It will be adapted by a graphic designer so that it can be used in our daily activities. The winner will receive a gift certificate of \$40.00 from a local store of the winner's choice.

### **SRCHN Online Presence**

We have a website that is continually being uploaded with information about our activities, meetings and relevant events. [www.sookeregionchn.com](http://www.sookeregionchn.com)

We also have a **Facebook page**. Come and follow to view interesting health and wellbeing articles from serious sources, that may help to inform and stimulate discussion in our own region.



# SOOKE REGION COMMUNITIES HEALTH NETWORK QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

## Issue Awareness - Nutrition and Health Inequity (1)

We are all very familiar with the obesity increase, especially in North America. According to Dr. Richard Stanwick's talk at the last Sooke Region Health Summit, for the first time in history the younger generation will not outlive the previous generation due to poor food choices and lack of exercise. However, what is also becoming apparent is the lack of nutritious food consumed due to economic, physical, geographical and cultural obstacles one encounters in daily life. The following is not exhaustive, but does provide some indication of the challenges we are facing in pursuit of nutritious food.

### **Economic obstacles**

Ironically, food production is at an all time high, but it is the access to it that is limiting for many. If one wants to have healthy food choices, such as pesticide free greens, one has to pay more. Are the financially vulnerable doomed to make unhealthy choices not because of ignorance but rather because of cost? It should be noted that Scandinavia had luxury taxes on junk food to reduce such consumption. With international trade deals, this was no longer permitted due to large industry lobbying and the Scandinavians' previously slim waist bands increased accordingly. Video documentation of dumpster dives producing gala feasts demonstrate the waste of food due to company designated expiry dates that are perhaps premature. The need is known but waste continues nonetheless. Luckily large food retailers are gradually understanding that there are no liabilities involved if they donate their produce in a charitable manner. On the flip side, the Food Banks are becoming more frequented, but they are mostly limited to canned goods and other products with long shelf life.

### **Physical obstacles**

Physical access can be mobility to the food source, normally large grocery stores, which can be hindered through the inability to carry grocery bags for handicapped or seniors. It can also be physical through the inability to prepare raw produce. Peeling potatoes can be a real chore for someone with lack of strength in their limbs. Living alone can also lead to poorer eating habits, as one does not bother to cook just for one. A simpler and less nutritious meal is often dished up.



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## Issue Awareness - Nutrition and Health Inequity (2)

### Geographical Obstacles

Though grocery stores are an important contribution to the community, which the population relies on, the fact remains that the produce are most likely imported where labour and land are cheaper, and produced in a manner that makes them resilient during transport. So much so that the varieties of produce sold are minimal in comparison varieties that are tastier but would not endure the trek from farm to industrial plant to store to home. In areas where there are no grocery stores, the situation is even worse, as simple corner stores stock products with long shelf life, resulting in food deserts. North Americans who have been to Europe where daily local fresh food markets are part of the culture, will insist that the food tastes better, which leads to smaller portions due to the enriching taste experience in every bite and therefore leads to a slimmer and healthier body. Thankfully local farmer led food markets are increasing in number, but not always supported by community members or local institutions either because the produce is too expensive, irregular supply or government regulations restricts open distribution. In any case, our local food production is too low to feed a larger population that could get the prices down as the famers run small-scale farms on this island of ours. More food growers are needed.

### Cultural Obstacles

Due to our increasing urbanised trends, we have become more distant from the food source and have less appreciation for such experiences. Buying locally or even growing produce for one's own consumption is becoming more distant from one's reality for each generation. Pre-packaged foods, wrapped in cardboard with an equally card board taste, have been a blessing to working mothers since the 1970's. The lack of understanding of how to savour food that does not result in a form of gluttony is predominant in North American culture. In fact, it is proven that scientist have developed formulae to stimulate certain tastebuds on the tongue with just enough sugar and salt in fabricated food to make us eat more. It can be quite addictive. Since we do not get our taste buds tingling with store bought fresh produce, we seek this experience in processed foods with dismal results.



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## Issue Awareness - Nutrition and Health Inequity (3)

### **New Movement or Back to Basics?**

If we revisit the old World War 2 times where resourcefulness was encouraged, makeshift gardens popped up everywhere. Though we are not in a war situation per se, the need and possibility to provide fresh produce is very much present.

Our local farmers contribute to the farmers' market. Juice bars are opening, where one in Sooke actually accepts local fruits and vegetables. Sooke has a tradition for community gardens that teach about the origin and cultivation of food for young and old: Sunriver Gardens run by the Food CHI, T'Sou-ke First Nation's Ladybug Garden, Edward Milne Community School, Pacheedaht First Nation, SRCHN's own CASA Community Garden and most recently John Muir Elementary School.

There are so many ideas out there, reusing the old and adopting some new ones in the name of increasing fresh tasty local food accessibility. Large warehouses that previously stood on agricultural land are using their roofs as greenhouses or gardens and shared publicly. People are being encouraged to park their cars at home and use public transport so that the car parks can be turned into enormous gardens where one can stop by on the way home and get the freshest produce for dinner that evening. Containers are popping up on street corners where the bottom part contains live fish, while covered in a tray of growing vegetables. The fish refuse provides nutrients for the fish and vice versa in a self serving manner. Both fish and vegetables are meant for consumption. Co-operative farms are delivering fresh produce door-to-door. Online platforms are permitting consumers to pick their products from local farms and appreciating the seasonal variety. The FoodCHI is already an excellent resource and conduit for carrying on the conversation to find local solutions. Let's work together to explore practical solutions that would suit all populations of our region with regards to a healthy eating culture.

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