



Public Health Association of BC

2020-2021 Annual Report

Presented at the Annual General Meeting
Thursday, December 9th, 2021
11:30am – 1:00pm

Online via Zoom

President's Report

The COVID-19 Pandemic has tested our communities and put Public Health at the centre stage like few times in history. From the early weeks of 2020 when Public Health professionals appraised the emerging evidenced and guided decision-makers and the public through difficult decisions and fearful times; to the end of 2021 when having a tool to end the pandemic in the form of a vaccine, Public Health professionals are back at the helm in addressing polarization in our communities with respect to vaccination mandates and public health orders. Staff, volunteers and the Board of the Public Health Association of BC, have been actively involved in the response to COVID-19. From maintaining the operations of our programs to support clients who needed the most to help navigate the so called "infodemic" of misinformation, PHABC worked alongside our colleagues in public health units across the Province to understand community concerns and bring well-informed advice to the public. As President of the Board of PHABC, I am truly honored to have experienced this historical time alongside the dedicated staff, volunteers, board members and our working committees. One of the biggest strengths of the association is the dedication and expertise of our members.

Program & Partnership Highlights

PHABC has been busy with year with community food development, with projects including the Indigenous Environmental Scan, Food Access in BC report, United Way Food Networks Consultation and community development, PHSA Food Security Gateway, Island Health Food Atlas, Northshore Neighbourhood House and Digging into the Farm to School Movement: Assessing the Environmental and Social Impacts of Connecting Learners and Growers through Food Literacy and Sustainable Local Food Procurement (SSHRC). As well, the Urban Foodlands report was presented to two provincial government ministries and received positive feedback and continued interest. The Farm to School BC program saw creation of two new regional hubs, Sunshine Coast and North Central BC, furthering their reach across the province. The F2SBC team conducted Learning from the Land – Indigenous Farm to School Toolkit, and continues to support teachers and students across the province with food literacy education. Can You Dig It! supported and brought awareness to accessibility by implementing the Community Garden Accessibility Toolkit, and provided stewardship for the City of Surrey Community Gardens. PHABC continues to support and source funding for the BC Chapter of the Coalition for Health School Food.

"Peaceful Homes: A Guide to the Prevention of Violence in the Home During and After Lockdowns" was created in partnership with the Canadian Municipal Network on Crime Prevention as a practical resource for decision-makers, municipal stakeholders, and organizations to better understand the increased risk of family violence during COVID-19, highlight the potential long-term effects of violence, and identify approaches and programs that can help prevent violence in homes. The Overdose Prevention & Response Essential Practices Knowledge Exchange Project led a 7-part webinar series and developed the OD PREP Learning Community.

With respect to our immunization work, Immunize BC helped bring to life the Vaccine Status Reporting System, Immunization Competencies Assessment Project and worked with Fraser Health on the Vaccine Confidence Project. I Boost Immunity (IBI) is a program supported by PHABC that allows users to educate themselves about immunizations and communicable diseases by doing “Booster quizzes”. For each quiz result that exceeds the average score, the user earns one vaccine. Since March 2018, IBI has earned 764,536 vaccines for children in support of UNICEF. Kids Boost Immunity (KBI), a similar program tailored for children in grades 4-12, is being used in schools across Canada with over 60 lessons in science/health and social studies. KBI features lessons that address vaccine misinformation through critical thinking, and has been very well-received by teachers and students alike for its engaging “game” format. We are proud of what our IBI and KBI teams have accomplished provincially, nationally, and internationally with these vaccine awareness initiatives.

PHABC would also like to acknowledge its key partners and allies for their continued support as we would not be able to do the work we do without them. Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH), in partnership with the PHABC, continued the Vision Zero Seed Grants in support of community driven road safety projects designed to reduce fatal and serious vehicle crashes. Bridge 4 Health in partnership with PHABC continued the Wellbeing at Work project, whose main focus is the physical & mental health of employees. We are a partner and the host agency of the Black Public Health Collective, and a member of the Canadian Public Health Association Provincial and territorial Public Health Network and act as the Secretariat to the BC Population Health Network. We are also members of the World Health Organization Vaccine Safety Net as a result of our work with Immunize BC and I Boost and Kids Boost Immunity, and our Executive Director, Shannon Turner, serves as Chair of the World Health Organization Vaccine Safety Network. PHABC was pleased to be the host agency for this year’s Health Officers Council of BC 154th Fall Conference which October of this year.

Capacity Building Highlights

Our 12th Annual Summer Institute took place this June in partnership with Saskatchewan Public Health Association, the Yukon Community of Practice and the Public Health Agency of Canada, with the highly relevant think piece “Fake or Fact? Promoting Digital Health Literacy in an Era of New Media and Misinformation”. The institute explored the population health challenges related to the dissemination and diffusion of health misinformation and disinformation in the digital age.

The Gallery of Memories – COVID-19 Pandemic demonstrated the power of storytelling by providing a space for public health professionals to reflect and share their experiences throughout the pandemic. The gallery saw stories of arising food sourcing issues and solutions, life as a public health professional during a pandemic, and sharing of arts.

ChatterHigh, the high school student public health engagement project, expanded this year and now hosts over 100 questions on platform.

Advocacy Highlights

This has been an outstanding year for PHABC as an advocate for public and environmental health. Our year began with an online engagement to the BC public using PlaceSpeak to promote public health issues. Key positions discussed were childcare & cost of childcare, poverty of minimum wage, accessibility of housing and social supports for First Nations peoples, access to healthcare and increased access to virtual care.

A major victory for the environment was secured with our support for a Supreme Court Ruling on pollution pricing. The Intergenerational Climate Coalition and our key funding partner, Westcoast Environmental Law, won a Supreme Court ruling that pollution pricing is constitutional. PHABC was a coalition partner in pursuing this legal channel.

We also participated in a Banner Drop to support environmental stewardship with the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment. PHABC & Prevention of Violence Canada promoted a Federal Violence Prevention Petition calling for a federal office to address violence in Canada and actively support violence prevention. More details about our advocacy and research efforts this year are included in the PARC report.

Governance Highlights

One of the challenges of the COVID-19 Pandemic is the pressure it has created in health human resources. Organizations across Canada have struggle to recruit and retain talent as staff who have been fighting the pandemic opt for early retirement or leaves to address concerning levels of burnout in the sector. In an effort to better recognize the creative and dynamic talent that we have at PHABC, our association is now offering a generous health benefit packages to our employees. In addition, starting this year staff at PHABC will have an employer-supported program to invest for their future. We trust these investments in the compensation of our employees reflect the values of the organization in putting people first, as well as better reflects the valuable contributions that the non-profit sector makes to our Province. I am truly grateful for the leadership that our Executive Director, Shannon Turner demonstrated during this turbulent times. Shannon led the organization to face the challenge in a way that was deeply caring and supportive for her team. I would like to take the opportunity to also thank the outgoing members of our Board including Shannon Weightman, Chris Van Veen, Lara Frederick who have been instrumental in the development of our conferences, advocacy efforts, communications, and public engagement initiatives over the last few years. Special thanks to Roger Wheeler who in his position as Treasurer of PHABC not only kept us in solid financial footing, but also helped us secure charitable status for the organization. I would also like to welcome our four incoming Directors to the Board of PHABC; Gordon Cote, Lena Hozaima, Zahra Mamdani and Astou Thiam and our outgoing director-at-large, Heather Ouellette, who will be joining us on the Executive board as Secretary. These members will bring a wealth of experience and diverse perspectives

that can support PHABC to become an example of a vibrant, member-driven, sustainable organization in the future.

The COVID-19 Pandemic has reminded society of the critical importance that Public Health plays in our lives. As we move into this new phase, Public Health Leaders in PHABC will continue to be called upon to address the many challenges our Province is facing including the Opioid Overdose Emergency and the impacts of the pandemic in the determinants of health. I trust our staff, volunteers and partners are up for this challenge, and I look forward to working together towards our mission of promoting health, wellbeing and equity for all British Columbians through leadership in public health.

With sincere gratitude,



SOLORZANO

Juan Solorzano

President, Public Health Association of BC

Governance Committee Report

Throughout 2021, the ongoing battle against the COVID-19 pandemic impacted regular meetings and initiatives of the Governance Committee, however, we are pleased to report on the following accomplishments for the year:

- We worked with the Finance and Executive Committees to implement a health benefits package for PHABC employees and an employer-supported savings program to invest in employees' futures. These investments reflect the value of the organization to put people first and make PHABC more competitive as a non-profit employer, helping us to recruit and retain a high calibre and committed workforce.
- We developed a new Board member nomination and application process, allowing public health professionals to apply to the Board without receiving nominations from two existing PHABC members. Instead, these candidates could request their applications be reviewed by a Nominations Committee to attain the necessary nominations. This new process greatly expanded our reach, and we are excited to welcome four new Directors to the Board because of this more equitable and inclusive application process.
- We supported welcoming and orientating four new Directors to the Board who will be starting their terms in the new year, including Gordon Cote, Lena Hozaima, Zahra Mamdani, and Astou Thiam. These new members bring a wealth of experience and diverse perspectives that will support PHABC to be a vibrant, member-driven, and sustainable organization.

The Governance Committee looks forward to working with and supporting PHABC Board members and employees in 2022!

Sincerely,

Shannon Weightman and Juan Gabriel Solorzano
Co-Chairs
Governance Committee

Finance Committee Report

Throughout the fiscal year ending September 30, 2021, the COVID-19 pandemic continued to occupy much of the province's public health infrastructure and professionals. Many of our Board of Directors members as well as our association members are still working tirelessly with the pandemic response. Despite this strain, PHABC has managed to maintain its net assets and continues to hold a comfortable operating reserve.

With the stress of the pandemic beginning to ease with increasing vaccination rates, PHABC began focusing on how to support its staff to be successful with their personal and economic health. This resulted in the implementation of a competitive Health & Dental Benefits package for staff members, and motivated the search for a group savings plan, which we anticipate will be approved in the following fiscal year. We are thrilled to be in a position to provide this support to our hard-working staff..

Overall, it is my pleasure to declare that PHABC continues to be a fiscally healthy, vibrant and relevant charitable organization. I am pleased to present a fully audited financial statement, conducted by Burns & Co Chartered Professional Accountants, to the membership at our Annual General Meeting on December 9th, 2021.

This is my final report as PHABC Treasurer and Chair of the Finance Committee. As such, I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to all at the organization whom have made this such a rewarding and enjoyable experience.

Sincerely,

Roger Wheeler, MSc, MBA, CPHR
Treasurer

Capacity Building Committee Report

Building and Supporting the Public Health Workforce for the Future

13th Annual Summer Institute 2021

“Fake or Fact? Promoting Digital Health Literacy in an Era of New Media and Misinformation” was the theme for the 2021 Summer Institute Program, offered via Zoom. Designed to address the ‘infodemic’ described by the director of the World Health organization (WHO) as a battle raging alongside the war against the COVID – 19 pandemic and which poses additional complications for Public Health’s important work in this time of global pandemic. The CBC convenes a Scientific Program committee to oversee the design and delivery of the Summer Institute to ensure the best and brightest minds build an engaging , evidence based exploration of contemporary, and often controversial, public health topics. These timely and relevant explorations have gained in popularity and have increased in scope and reach since the first one – held as a Summer School - offered 13 years ago.

The Scientific Program committee was led by: **Dr. Lorie Donelle**, associate professor at the Arthur Labatt Family School of Nursing at Western University, and **Dr. Simon Carroll**, adjunct professor in the Department of Sociology at the University of Victoria, and **Dr. Irv Rootman**, chair of the BC Health Literacy Network and BC representative for Health Promotion Canada served as honorable co-chair. Many volunteer hours were engaged in exploring the challenging issues faced by public health professionals in the unprecedented demand on their time and skills. As a result, the Institute was able to cover key ideas and promising practices for effective responses and proactive approaches to a longstanding enemy of public health – misinformation and self-interested promotion of harm. These included:

- Vaccine hesitancy & vaccine safety
- Climate change & environmental health
- Social & political movements
- Misinformation across time
- From advocacy to action – operationalizing social media
- Misinformation & marginalized communities
- Digital inequality & digital health literacy

Day 1 focused on an exploration of digital health literacy. Day 2 explored how to act against the tsunami of life-threatening misinformation. On both days, small groups on specific topics followed the presentations from expert panelists. This format allowed attendees to find a small group focused on their primary interests and learning needs. Whether the interest was a specific population group (e.g. youth, seniors) or specific topic areas (e.g. roles for PH professionals, tools for digital literacy) the small group process enabled concrete and effective discussions on

practical measures and implications for practice raised by this second “Information Critical” Public Health emergency. Participants were able to brainstorm problems and opportunities as practical and sustainable choices. Feedback suggested that this second online Institute was effective and useful and many kind expressions of gratitude were received, along with useful suggestions for furthering the reach and capacity for the institute. Particularly, the opportunity to connect with other Public Health professionals tackling similar challenges was an important feature of the Institute valued by participants.

The Summer Institute’s videos, discussions and presentations for 2021 can be accessed at <https://phabc.org/presentation/public-health-summer-institute-2021/>

The think piece – the informative invitation support overview of the topic penned by experts familiar with the controversies - and its current controversies can be found at:

<https://phabc.org/presentation/public-health-summer-institute-2021/>

2021 Annual Conference postponed

The 2020 PHABC annual conference was designed to build on the resources and knowledge gathered at Summer Institute and an Evidence Review provided by Dr Trevor Hancock, However, due to the uncertainty of the waves of COVID 19 Pandemic, the Fall Conference for 2020 was deferred for the 2021 conference. However, recognizing that the heavy workload and burdens facing Public Health professionals has not eased, the decision was made to post pone the 2021conference until 2022. The decision to postpone the conference was approved by the PHABC Board. The discussions continue around possibilities of scheduling the conference earlier in the year rather than in the fall. There are also interesting discussions on how we can continue to support learning and connections for public health professionals in the province in the face of the conference postponement. Stay tuned.

Building the Public Health Work Force for the Future: ChatterHigh

Background

As reported last year, the Public Health Association of BC (PHABC) works with ChatterHigh, a BC based organization, to make available a Public Health career platform for students on their internet site. PHABC created this online learning resource as a fun, engaging, informative opportunity which guides middle and high school students, parents and teachers through higher education and career options in the Public Health field. In the case of PHABC, this is of course related to increasing BC students, parents and teacher awareness of career opportunities in the Public Health field. Phase I of this resource was launched in January 2020 with a recognition that Phase II would address the need for French translation of the resource starting in the 2020-21 school year. For more information on the ChatterHigh platform please visit the attached hyperlink: <https://chatterhigh.com/en/general/about>

We are now able to report on Phase 2, with the news that we have recommended to the PHABC board, that ChatterHigh become a part of regular scheduled programming of PHABC rather than a CBC project activity.

Context

Challenges facing Public Health in the two years of the pandemic have brought a heightened interest in the mind of the public at large. Understanding of, and interest in, public careers is at a high and has developed a new appreciation of Public Health's important role in the health and well being of populations in the modern era. The Role of PHABC and ChatterHigh in promoting public health careers among middle and high school students in BC can take advantage of this new interest and contribute to a more effective uptake in recruitment for the public health work force.

In 2019, the PHABC CBC with the support of Shannon Turner, the Executive Director, searched and investigated mechanisms for presenting the diversity of public health to students in middle and high schools across BC. This work resulted in an ongoing partnership with Chatterhigh, a BC web-based organization and made available an online Public Health career platform for use in BC schools. In essence, students receive a daily quiz question, with a web link to research the answers. The centrepiece of this work is the online tool: **"Building the Public Health Workforce for the Future"**

"We believe students select careers and higher education programs based on what they know. If it's not between their nose and their phone it doesn't exist."

ChatterHigh students receive a fun, mobile, daily, 10 minute, 10 question, edu-game in the form of a quiz that allows them to research and explore thousands of higher education and career options. "

<https://chatterhigh.com/en/general/about>

The foundation of the online learning tool was the high-quality content for the quiz questions created with the help of PHABC members from different Students learn about Public Health career options by conducting the online research to answer questions. In the first year, 50 questions were created. The success of PHABC's quiz questions led to an invitation to expand the number of questions to 100, and the offer to include a "banner". Creation of the quiz questions had also been identified as an educational opportunity. That is, considering the issues raised by questions on issues students themselves may have questions of their own about but nowhere to take them, enables students to pursue knowledge and access to services for themselves. The banner would enable us to highlight important other sources for students struggling with sensitive yet important issues such as where to access mental health, or drug use information for friends. (Note: the information in this report has been drawn from the evaluation for 2020-2021. A more in-depth evaluation combining the two years of operation is underway.) Overall, the project has been successfully increasing BC students', parents' and teachers' awareness of career opportunities in the Public Health field and support the building of the public health workforce of the future. (See Figure 1 below)

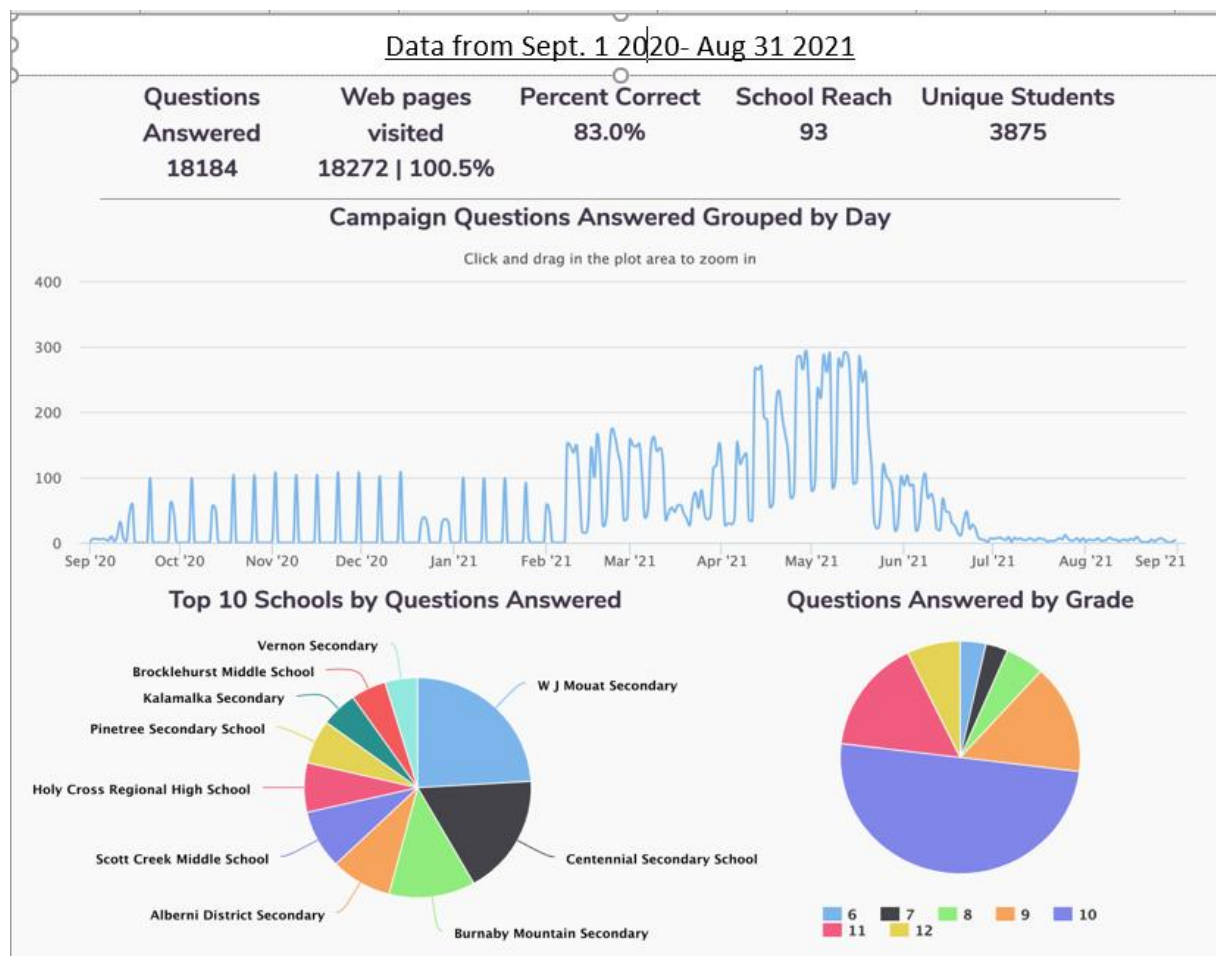


Figure 1: Summary data of Public Health's Chatterhigh Activities Sept. 2020-August 2021

While the numbers are impressive, what is striking is that a pandemic shattered normal routines for students and their schools not long after the campaign was launched. Thus, the numbers, including the continuation of use after schools were sent into lockdown, is a testament to the match between the tool, the audience and untapped pool of interest in high schoolers. The majority of students using the tool are from grade 10, which is when the BC Career education curriculum begins to build on early career education with **Pursuing Preferred Career-Life Development**. <https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/curriculum/career-education/core/introduction>

From: CBC Annual Report to the Board, 2020.

Out of the 90 school districts in the province, 34 are enrolled in the Chatterhigh platform. (See figure 2 below)

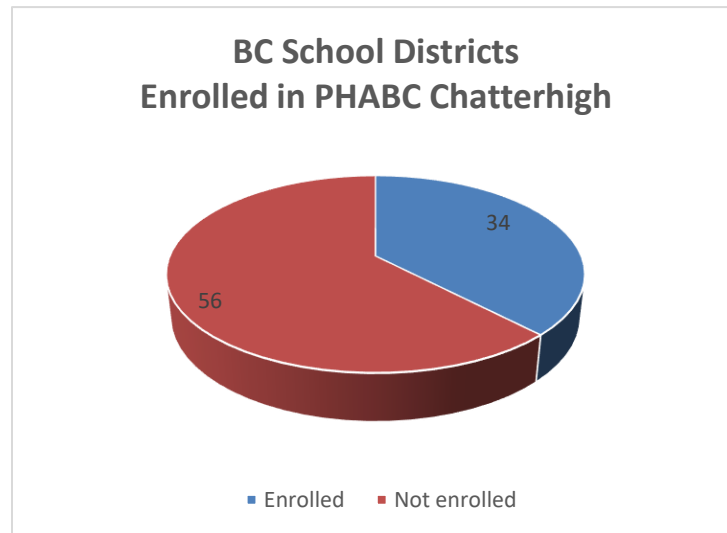


Figure 2: Number of BC School Districts involved with Chatterhigh

However, the school districts engaged in career awareness work are spread across the province (see Figure 3 below)

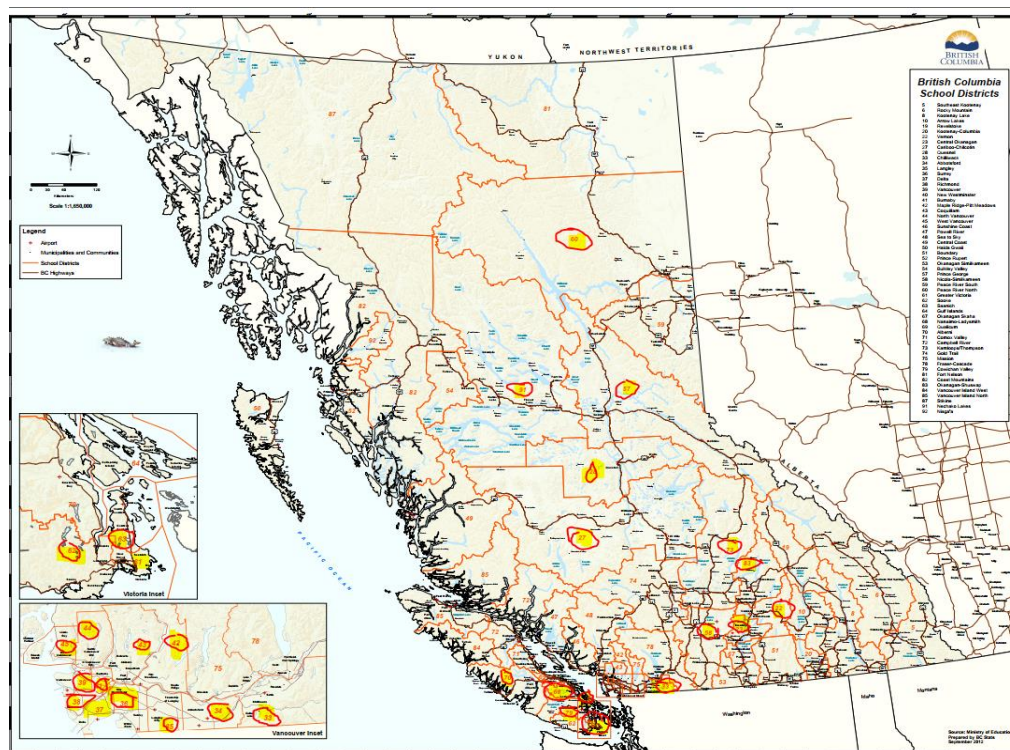


Figure 3: Provincial map of School districts. Chatterhigh sites circled in red and highlighted.

Chatterhigh reports that our platform of questions has the highest engagement rate with students, and the highest percentage of correct answers.

Ongoing CBC work with Chatterhigh

- This past year we have designed an RFP for a student research assistant to compile the data from the 2 years of operation into a final report. We recently hired a newly graduated student working in Williams Lake to complete this work. Currently we are supporting the student in her data formatting and analysis.
- We have designed and submitted an additional 40 questions in response to the invitation to expand the number of questions in the questions bank.
- We have drafted and submitted a report to the board recommending Chatterhigh contract become a regular programming arm of PHABC.

Sincerely,

Maureen Rowan and Dr. Theresa Healy
Co-Chairs
Capacity Building Committee

Policy, Advocacy & Research Committee Report

The PARC committee met three times in 2021 – February, April, and September. In addition to these formal meetings, a number of ad hoc work was done via email with tight turnaround times.

We began the year with a presentation from Gord Tulloch about his book “The Trampoline Effect: Redesigning our Social Safety Nets”. He suggests a number of smaller strategies enabling organizations to seek new directions and ideas, the most intriguing and relevant being designing roles that activate community capacity and building bridges for people. This is work that PHABC and our partners engage in regularly.

We reviewed a petition advocating for federal violence prevention. One of the key points in the presentation informed of a 30% escalation in violence since the start of the pandemic. The petition asked to organize a federal response to violence prevention. . Subsequently, PHABC and POVC promoted the petition, gained 1,000 signatures in a 2-week period, to be read out in the House of Commons. Unfortunately, this was put on hold due to the Federal Election.

The Regional Food Hub Collective presented a letter calling for immediate federal and provincial government support to increase food security. Despite increased funding, funding is not getting to smaller organizations so PHABC has a partnership with Lower Mainland United Way to work toward a regional food hub model. The PARC committee heartily endorsed this work.

In April we heard from Aaren Topley about the Food Access Survey that collected data from 168 food access organizations across BC. Findings included underfunding, rural/remote vs urban issues and regional differences. Recommendations from the survey are consistent with PHABC Farm to School goals of multi-year funding, standardized data collection and prioritization of local food procurement in the food bank mandate. Further it was recommended to develop rural, remote and indigenous strategies.

One of the tight-turnaround email decisions was to support Richard Han’s request of \$150 funding for a donation to Oceanwise to support delivery of aquaponics kits to BC teachers and classrooms. These kits teach about nutrient cycling and growing aquaponics food, important information in food literacy and security.

PARC received a request from the Canadian Association of Physician Assistants requesting PHABC support for adding Physician Assistants (PAs) to the BC health care system. This has been tabled a couple of times as a subcommittee has been seeking more information before proceeding. One of the biggest questions is what would a PA role be in public health. Stay tuned for an update.

We reviewed an Earth Day Healthy Recovery petition asking to tackle the health crises of COVID-19 and climate change simultaneously in G20 economic recovery spending, particularly to

strengthen Bill C-12, eliminate fossil fuel subsidies and pass C-230 “Act Respecting the Development of National Strategy to Redress Environmental Racism”.

Continuing advocacy for Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act had to be tabled due to the federal election. However, PARC & PHABC endorsed our support of a TMX Banner Drop protesting the TMX pipeline expansion, in partnership with Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment (CAPE).

PARC reviewed and endorsed a letter to BC government re: confronting the climate emergency. A few PARC members formed a sub-group to focus on environmental advocacy issues and determine the most appropriate ones to bring to PARC for action. These members have significant expertise to bring to the table.

PHABC has been asked to sign the Sao Paulo Declaration on Planetary Health, which focuses on the necessary shift in how we live on earth, across all sectors, in our personal and professional lives. As this work is consistent with other advocacy work related to climate change, the PARC committee endorsed this ask.

And, last but certainly not least, the PARC committee has formed a small working group to review, identify and flag edits for the PHABC Policy Handbook. This is important work for our organization that needs regular updating and keen eyes to ensure we remain consistent with previous iterations of policies.

It has been my honor to co-chair the PARC committee with Chris Van Veen and to participate in the incredible health advocacy work we have had opportunities to do.

Sincerely,

Heather Ouellette & Chris Van Veen
Co-Chairs
Policy, Advocacy & Research Committee