



ACHSC COMMUNIQUÉ – FEBRUARY 2009

1. 2008 - A Year in Review

As we enter a new year, predictably, we reflect on the past year. It is apparent in this reflection that it has been a very good year for the Alberta Coalition for Healthy School Communities and school health in Alberta.

At this time last year, we were receiving confirmation of funding from the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) that allowed us to host the successful symposium “The Time is Now: Taking Action on School Health”. This led to a new partnership with the Alberta School Board Association (ASBA), who agreed to co-sponsor the symposium. In addition, the Alberta Teachers Association (ATA) sponsored a nutrition break and sent two observers. The symposium targeted decision makers in education and health. Decision makers from education came in unprecedented numbers, making the symposium an unqualified success!

In April, PHAC delighted us by indicating that our funding would be renewed for 2009. The ACHSC work plan, approved by PHAC, identified three objectives for the coming year:

- 1) Travel the province and stimulate the development of regional school health teams.
- 2) Address the disadvantage of aboriginal health.
- 3) Host a symposium in 2009.

In May and June respectively, the ATA and ASBA, at their annual general meetings, approved identical resolutions asking the government to create a task force on health and learning. In June, ACHSC delivered workshops at the ASBA AGM and the Canadian School Board national conference in Regina.

Over the summer, a task force was created to address aboriginal health and discussions occurred to plan the regional meetings. A commitment was made to have a minimum of two ACHSC Board members attend every regional meeting. The province was divided on the basis of the nine health regions. In the case of Northern Lights, because of the vastness of the region, a decision was made to hold two meetings, one in High Level and the other in Fort McMurray.

Discussions were held with the College of Alberta School Superintendents (CASS), ASBA, the ATA and the Alberta School Council Association (ASCA) informing them of the work to establish regional school health action teams. All were very supportive. Having the major players in education come together to support a school health initiative suggests enormous potential for future collaboration. In the case of ASBA, they agreed to send a zone rep to each meeting ensuring that every school board in the province would be informed of outcomes.

In September, Dr. Claire LeBlanc, an ACHSC Board Member, presented to all the Alberta Medical Officers of Health, in Calgary, on the ACHSC plan to develop regional school health teams.

On September 19, an ACHSC Board meeting was held. Participation included Board members and guests connected via videoconferencing at the following sites: Edmonton, Grande Prairie, Lethbridge, Red Deer and Calgary. Highlights of this meeting included confirmation of three new members to the Board, Dr. Claire Leblanc, Marilyn Bergstra, a trustee with Edmonton Catholic Schools and Joann Lloyd, a trustee with Elk Island Catholic Schools; a review of our Terms of Reference with recommendations coming to our next Board meeting on January 29, 2009 and reports and discussion on all parts of our 2009 work plan.

In September and October, meetings were held with Dr. Raj Sherman, parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health and Wellness and Dr. Louis Francescutti, president-elect of the Alberta Public Health Association, to inform them of our work. ACHSC was asked to nominate an individual to serve on an Alberta Education external advisory committee created to review all health and wellness programs in Alberta schools (K-12 Physical Education curriculum, Daily Physical Activity (DPA), Career and Life Management (CALM) etc.). Dave Colburn will be the ACHSC representative.

In October, Dr. Claire LeBlanc and Bill Gordon, ACHSC Treasurer and project co-ordinator for the regional meetings, began the road show with a visit to the Northern Lights health region. To date, eight of the nine health regions have held their meetings. The remaining meeting will be completed by the end of February. It has been an interesting journey and we have gathered much data. A full report will be delivered at our spring symposium.

Partnerships and activity across the province are creating an irresistible momentum in the world of school health.

A very good year indeed!

2. Upcoming ACHSC Symposium in March

This year's ACHSC Symposium will center on the theme "School Communities Catch Health". Plans are almost complete for this symposium, scheduled for the Nisku Inn, near the Edmonton International Airport, on March 23-24. Once again, the Alberta School Board Association has agreed to co-sponsor our event. Registration will open in early February. Check the web site for more details (achsc.org). We hope that you can join us at "The Time is Now: School Communities Catch Health"!

3. ACHSC Board Position Opening

We have mixed emotions announcing that the current ACHSC Co-Chair for Health, Pam Boyson, is expecting her first baby in early May. While we are extremely excited for Pam, her contributions to ACHSC and school health in Alberta will be missed.

Currently, ACHSC is accepting expressions of interest from those individuals who would like to fill the position of Co-Chair from the health sector. The position is voluntary for a two-year, renewable term. Those who are interested can contact Dave Colburn (davecolb@yahoo.com) or Pam Boyson (Pamela.Boyson@ech.ab.ca).