



Priorities for Action: SCOPE Abbotsford

Sustainable Childhood Obesity Prevention through Community Engagement



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INTRODUCING SCOPE

On May 26, 2010, community leaders in Abbotsford took part in a planning workshop to develop **collective priorities for action to prevent childhood obesity**. The SCOPE project—Sustainable Childhood Obesity Prevention through community Engagement—led the event with Healthy Abbotsford. SCOPE is funded by Child Health BC.

Healthy Abbotsford is a partnership between the City of Abbotsford, the University of the Fraser Valley, Fraser Health, the Abbotsford School District, and the Abbotsford News. Healthy Abbotsford is now partnering with SCOPE as well to prevent childhood obesity in the community.

About SCOPE

SCOPE stands for:

Sustainable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Achieve long-term change and long lasting impact ▪ Lead to a cultural shift and change in social norms
Childhood Obesity Prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Protect the health of future generations ▪ Support children to achieve healthy weights ▪ Support children to maintain healthy weights ▪ Prevent chronic disease
through community Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Include the community’s “voice” ▪ Ensure the effort is community led and focused on community priorities ▪ Engage collective community action

SCOPE VISION

A future where children **eat healthy** and are **physically active**, supported by a **healthy community environment**

SCOPE MISSION

To bring people together from all sectors of BC communities to make the **healthy choice the easy choice** for children

SCOPE VALUES

- Collaboration
- Equal partnerships
- Building on existing strengths and resources
- Collective local action
- Sustainability

SCOPE OBJECTIVES

- Develop and maintain effective community partnerships resulting in collaboration and collective action
- Work with the community to identify successful programs and areas of need, and define priorities for local action
- Implement sustainable and effective local action to build upon existing successes and address areas of need
- Help community members measure the impact of their efforts over time

Successful Models for Community Action

Community-based models around the world have shown that collective action at the community level has been the only successful method for reducing obesity. Three community led programs have been able to reduce rates of obesity:

- The EPODE project in France
- Healthy Living Cambridge Kids (HLCK)
- Shape Up Somerville (SUS)

While not yet evaluated, the Obama administration's Let's Move campaign is based on these successful models.

Community engagement is crucial to foster partnerships and action across sectors, in a circular process, with measurement and evaluation at every stage:



PROFILING THE ABBOTSFORD COMMUNITY

SCOPE is partnering with Abbotsford because the community has:

- A diverse population in terms of ethnicity and socioeconomic status, with children who may be vulnerable for overweight and obesity, including:
 - 26% of people who identify as a visible minority
 - 3% who identify as Aboriginal living on reserve
- Many children and youth: 20% of the population is children 0-14 years old
- Existing community partnerships and strengths to build on

Snapshot of Youth Health

Abbotsford currently does not have childhood specific health data, but one national survey¹ reported findings for youth in the Fraser east area:

- **Physical activity:** 74% of youth were not sufficiently active
- **Healthy eating:** 23% of youth were overweight or obese
- **Screen time:** Children aged 12-19 years old spent 9.2 hours a week in front of a computer, TV or video games

Additional national data² on children's health shows:

- Only 12% of kids meet Canadian physical activity guidelines requiring at least 90 minutes of physical activity per day
- Youth average six hours of screen time per weekday, more than seven hours on weekends, and now start watching TV at five months old (compared to four years old in 1971)
- Less than one-third of youth use active transportation (walking, cycling, rolling)
- In 2004, 27% of boys and 25% of girls were overweight or obese
- By 2009, 30% of boys and 25% of girls were overweight or obese

Community Assets in Abbotsford

SCOPE also gathered information on community assets in Abbotsford in four categories—economics, land and physical assets, institutions, and associations—to:

- Describe existing programs, policies and services that promote the health of children and youth

¹ Canadian Community Health Survey, 2005/2007

² Active Healthy Kids Canada Report Card, 2010; Health Reports, 2006; Canadian Health Measures Survey, 2007-2009

Calculating obesity and overweight

Body Mass Index (BMI) is a number calculated from a child's weight (kg) and height (meters) [$BMI = \text{weight} \div (\text{height})^2$]. The number is plotted onto a growth chart for gender and age to get a BMI percentile, which shows how that child's BMI compares to children of the same age and gender. Weight status categories for children and teens are based on BMI percentiles:

- **Underweight** – BMI less than 5th percentile
- **Healthy weight** – BMI 5th to 85th percentile
- **Overweight** – BMI 85th to 95th percentile
- **Obese** – BMI greater than 95th percentile

- Learn from the success of community-based childhood obesity prevention programs in other parts of the world
- Identify new priorities for action that will expand upon existing efforts to create healthier environments and prevent childhood obesity in Abbotsford

A report with highlights of this Abbotsford community asset profile is posted on the SCOPE website at www.childhood-obesity-prevention.org.

The Shape up Somerville and Healthy Living Cambridge Kids programs demonstrate how communities can mobilize together to create change. Both programs had six essential elements for success, and SCOPE examined what Abbotsford is doing in each of these areas:

- A **common guideline** that all sectors follow – HLCK established a 5-2-1 guideline: five or more fruits and vegetables a day, two hours or less of screen time, and one hour of physical activity. SUS was guided by the slogan, Eat Smart, Play Hard. Although Abbotsford has not adopted one common guideline for the entire community, several leading organizations in the Healthy Abbotsford partnership have developed the guideline: “*Eat well. Be active. Live tobacco free.*” Having one common guideline could ensure the whole community supports the same message for healthy living.
- **School policies and initiatives** – Schools provide a captive audience of children and youth, so many HLCK and SUS efforts focus here. In Abbotsford, many schools follow provincial initiatives to promote physical activity and health eating, such as the:
 - Mandatory daily physical activity for students
 - School Fruit and Vegetable Nutritional Program in elementary, middle and secondary schools
 - Action Schools! BC in many Abbotsford schools
 - Guidelines for healthier food and beverages in schools
- **Before and after school programming** – In Abbotsford, community associations, schools, recreation facilities like pools and arenas, school sports teams and clubs, after school care facilities, and businesses offer a variety of recreational and sporting activities outside of school hours. Additional information on grassroots programs, as well as gaps, would help identify priorities for action in this area.
- **Family outreach** – This was a big component of the success for HLCK and SUS, with family newsletters, events, and an annual health report card documenting heights, weights and body mass index of children. In Abbotsford, many organizations offer family events that are focused on health, such as the Diversity Health Fair hosted by Abbotsford Community Services. However, more information is needed on family outreach services and gaps.
- **Community initiatives** – Organizations in Abbotsford provide a range of community initiatives focused on healthy eating and physical activity, and many involve a spectrum of partners. For example, the city and schools run activity programs for children, the Heart and Stroke Foundation has a Health Check program for eating well in restaurants, and Healthy Abbotsford organized a Fall Activity Challenge.
- **Community support** – Abbotsford has engaged multiple stakeholders—including the City, schools, health providers, media, the university, community and family services, childcare, recreation, youth, and churches—to address child and youth health issues in the community. However, these partnerships sometimes operate in silos. SCOPE Abbotsford aims to facilitate a broad community support network to strengthen collective action.

IDENTIFYING STRENGTHS AND GAPS

At the planning session, Abbotsford community leaders identified strengths that SCOPE and Healthy Abbotsford could build on and gaps to address in the community.

Strengths to build on

Participants identified the following **strengths as priorities** that SCOPE can build on in the community:

- City council has committed to making Abbotsford a child and youth friendly community by signing a Child Friendly Statement of Intention—endorsed by the school district and community—which affects decision making, policy development and land use guidelines.
- The local Canadian Diabetes Association (CDA) branch runs a support group for children with type 1 diabetes, events, and a speakers' bureau that can offer presentations on healthy living and education on diabetes prevention.
- Abbotsford's Food For Thought food security project:
 - Pilots a youth engagement strategy with youth groups within and outside of school.
 - Plans to develop community kitchens to diversify opportunities for youth to come together and cook meals; the project is working with multicultural groups to engage whole families and attract people to community kitchen events.
- Religious institutions such as churches and temples do a lot of programming with youth (e.g., sports, camps).
- A partnership between Abbotsford and the University of the Fraser Valley (UFV) created the Neighbourhood Connects program, which determines the needs of communities through children in elementary schools, and takes action to address these needs (e.g., the Community Fitness Fun Fair).
- New Beginnings, a partnership between Abbotsford Community Services and the school district, is engaging vulnerable families, using childcare centers as a place to support families to:
 - Achieve academic progress towards high school completion
 - Educate parents on good nutrition and healthy, active lifestyles
- Abbotsford has a strong sport and faith-based volunteer core willing to come together to help the community for a common cause.
- The city and school district have established a good working relationship among politicians and senior staff, which creates an opportunity for SCOPE to garner community support.
- The BC Agriculture in the Classroom Foundation supports the provincial School Fruit and Vegetable Nutritional Program and is linked to community gardens.
- Abbotsford has lots of open green space where people can get outdoors into the natural environment, without signing up to use facilities, so use of these spaces should be maximized.
- The community offers opportunities for youth/student involvement in the:
 - Parks, Recreation and Culture Board
 - Abbotsford Youth Commission
 - Child and youth friendly partnership in schools
 - Youth programs and drop-in center

- Abbotsford has an opportunity to lever potential business partners as sponsors in school/community physical activities and healthy eating.

Gaps to address

Abbotsford community leaders also identified the following **gaps as priorities** to focus on addressing:

- SCOPE and Healthy Abbotsford need to identify church and temple leaders to partner with and engage in the SCOPE project.
- Specific data is needed for Abbotsford on rates and risk for obesity in children and youth in the community to support targeted interventions.
- The community’s trail system is continuously growing, but more opportunities are needed for people to integrate active transportation like walking and cycling to work/school into everyday life.
- An online database of resources is needed to centralize information on events, programs, services, etc.
- Food security is an issue for many, especially young mothers, who cannot afford to eat enough healthy foods because of low incomes, although they get a lot of physical activity by walking.
- The child and youth friendly strategy has not connected with the First Nations community.
- A concern was raised about how much funding will be available to prioritize issues:
 - Child Health BC has provided funding for SCOPE to conduct community engagement and develop an Abbotsford-specific action plan for childhood obesity prevention. There is also funding for implementing the action plan; however, additional funding will be sought once the community identifies priorities for action.
 - SCOPE and Healthy Abbotsford are working with the community to identify priorities for action that build on existing strengths.
 - The goal is for SCOPE pilot projects in Prince George and Abbotsford to provide proof of concept and demonstrate success, which will encourage future funding from various sources.
 - SCOPE will help to translate provincial obesity reduction recommendations into action at the community level.

PRIORITIES FOR TAKING ACTION

Abbotsford community leaders reviewed existing activities and groups in the community that address childhood obesity and health. This discussion was used to:

- Identify opportunities for collaboration, synergy and action that capitalize on community strengths and help address areas of need
- Prioritize these opportunities

Participants listed the following priorities for taking action:

Communicate to raise awareness

- Develop a common guideline so all programs and services can mobilize behind the same messaging:
 - Translate messages into different languages to reach various cultural groups in the community, considering the impact of translation before deciding on the final message
 - Focus on what can be accomplished by working together

- Review varying perceptions of what constitutes community and success to develop a common language
- Launch/continue to build the SCOPE website to share information online:
 - Build a central, online list of resources available in the community with web links
 - Engage youth/community input with social marketing such as a blog/Facebook/Twitter
 - Use the website to raise awareness that overweight/obesity can lead to disease/death to provoke a sense of responsibility and drive for preventive action
 - Announce SCOPE/Healthy Abbotsford events online
 - Post the Abbotsford community asset profile/HLCK and SUS resource information online
- Involve target audiences in co-creating strategies, programs and outreach materials:
 - Offer meaningful engagement opportunities (short and longer term)
 - Reach out to families, young people, Aboriginal organizations, multicultural communities, etc.

Expand partnerships and collaboration to engage the community

- Initiate cross-sector/service/program affiliations to share learning and resources:
 - Have UFV nursing students give talks on healthy living in schools
 - Have the CDA speakers bureau present on healthy living in childcare centers
 - Broaden Parks and Recreation and Abbotsford Community Services partnerships to reach more immigrant and Métis families
 - Expand the successful, intergenerational, father-child swimming program in the South Asian community to different recreational settings, seasons, groups
 - Expand the Parks and Recreation Service Credit Program to make programs more affordable
 - Expand community services diversity health fairs/workshops with nutritionists who teach healthy eating
 - Link Abbotsford Heat with Healthy Abbotsford and the Early Childhood Committee to develop a “Team Fit” program (similar to the Colorado Avalanche NHL team program), where players give talks on healthy, active living to students and other groups in the community
 - Promote active transportation through collaboration among schools and the municipality
 - Cross-link organizations to each other’s websites
- Build partnerships with the business sector to help get the message out:
 - Encourage corporate responsibility in messaging to promote physical activity and healthy eating
 - Seek local business sector sponsorship (link with TRADEX, the Visitor’s Centre, etc., on promotional activities)
 - Offer outreach in community locations/businesses where people shop (such as partnering with Walmart or 7-Eleven)

Develop policies to encourage healthy living

- Engage political leaders and decision makers to develop policies and activities that support healthy living:
 - Connect with the mayor and council, the school district, Parks, Recreation and Culture, and health care leaders

Employ an evidence-based approach to inform action

- Gather data to define the extent of overweight/obesity in Abbotsford:
 - Identify which groups are getting the message and which are not
 - Determine which groups are at highest risk and need to be targeted
 - Recognize and respond to the context and barriers of different groups
- Identify and measure key health indicators so the community can recognize programs that achieve progress or are successful (e.g., physical activity, nutrition, smoking cessation, sleep hygiene), which can lead to greater interest and endorsement
- Examine how the evidence-based Livable Cities model has achieved success elsewhere (www.livablecities.org):
 - Review the relationship between obesity, activity and community features
 - Assess how the built environment can/could support physical activity (walking, cycling, etc.) and accessibility to healthy eating and active lifestyles
 - Promote eating healthy, local food which, in turn, supports the local economy
 - Engage non-traditional partners such as the RCMP on ways to ensure walking and cycling to school are safe

Educate to foster empowerment and responsibility

- Encourage individual/community integration of healthy lifestyle changes into everyday lives:
 - Provide education and materials on healthy eating and physical activity (such as food preparation for students, especially in high school)
 - Raise awareness of food production (farms, community kitchens, gardens)
 - Educate parents on the impact lifestyle choices have on their kids

Evaluate the impact of interventions

- Establish, track, monitor and evaluate impact and outcomes (expected and unexpected):
 - Determine the best strategies to reach target audiences
 - Determine whether interventions actually reach target groups
 - Assess whether education is effective in creating behaviour change

Other opportunities

Additional opportunities that were identified, but not prioritized, included:

- Develop materials that link families to health services following hospital care
- Build stronger partnerships between hospitals, public health and community programs
 - Build obesity prevention strategies in hospitals in pre/post natal care and pediatrics
- Build relationships with schools to expand Bike to Work week to include Bike to School
- Provide awards for programs that partner and collaborate
- Involve physicians in getting the message out
- Offer incentives to harder to reach populations to encourage participation (childcare, education, suitable locations, translation)

APPENDIX

Abbotsford Meeting Evaluation

The table below summarizes the feedback that Abbotsford community leaders provided on the SCOPE planning session:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Total number of surveys: 10 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 90% of participants agreed (4) or strongly agreed (5) that the meeting was a good use of their time. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 50% answered YES to all four parts in question four, asking if the meeting will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improve capacity to address prevention of childhood obesity - Increase awareness and knowledge of programs, services, organizations and individuals who are currently working to prevent childhood obesity in the community - Result in the use of my or my organization's expertise and resources to contribute to preventing childhood obesity in the community - Enhance my ability to make a bigger difference in the prevention of childhood obesity 	
<p><i>What people liked about the meeting:</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Discussion allowed for input from everyone ▪ Liked the presentations and use of videos ▪ Good representation from across sectors, which allowed a unique opportunity to meet new people and network
<p><i>Suggestions for improvement:</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Beverages (water or coffee) needed at the beginning ▪ More diverse participation ▪ Improved room environment (e.g., temperature and lighting) ▪ More concrete action items ▪ Build the connection between childhood chronic illness and adult chronic illness
<p><i>Who are the groups that are hard to reach?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Aboriginal communities ▪ Non-English speaking individuals ▪ Immigrants ▪ Individuals with low socioeconomic status ▪ Youth between the ages of 14 and 29 years ▪ People with limited access to transportation/Internet/media sources ▪ Individuals/families who are already very busy and feel stretched/pressed for time