



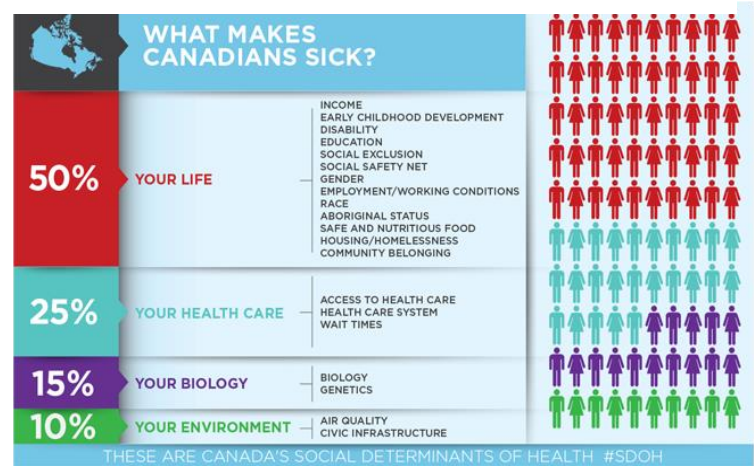
Backgrounder

Community Health Networks

To achieve good health, people need more than good health care: they also need adequate income, employment, education, social connections and healthy places to live. These social determinants of health are complex influences, and are the most important factors affecting health. **Individuals, local communities and health care providers share a common interest in supporting an overall healthier population. By working together, all citizens can enjoy better health.**

The return on investment in upstream prevention of illness is substantial. For example, BC's annual economic burden attributable to excess weight, physical inactivity, and tobacco smoking is \$5.6 billion, of which \$1.8 billion is due to direct health care costs. According to the Provincial Health Services Authority, if British Columbia reduced the prevalence of each of these three risk factors by 1% each year until 2036, there would be a cumulative \$15 billion reduction in the economic burden, including \$4.9 billion in direct health care costs and another 10 billion in cost savings in other sectors.

The Social Determinants of Health:



CHN Snapshot

CHNs are multi-stakeholder, geographically-based groups which vary in size and include:

- First Nations, local governments, educational institutions, provincial ministries, Divisions of Family Practices, non-profit organizations, business sector representatives, and interested citizens.

While each CHN has distinct priorities based on local issues, all CHNs:

- Take action on shared social determinants of health priorities. These are distinct from the delivery of health services.
- Are governed by Terms of Reference or comparable guiding documents.
- Align with Island Health's Community Health and Care model by fostering positive community relationships.

As part of its mandate to support an overall healthier population; Island Health provides leadership as well as limited financial and in-kind support to **Community Health Networks (CHNs)**. These are forums where multiple community partners come together to better understand community health issues and jointly create plans to address them.

Island Health's Role in CHNs

Currently, Island Health provides shared leadership and some limited funding supports to six CHNs and two developing CHNs. Funding is held by local government entities which provide administration and contract coordinators. CHNs have proven successful in leveraging additional human resources and financial commitments from local government and other partners. This shared leadership affords a strong backbone for sustained impact on the health status of our communities. Healthy communities are in everyone's interest and Island Health is committed to working with communities, CHNs and other partners to co-create healthier communities that support healthy Islanders.

CHN Results

Improvements in the social determinants of health and related cost savings are challenging to measure—especially in the short term. To date, CHNs are demonstrating a range of results, including:

- **The Mount Waddington CHN (est. 2006)** has resulted in the creation of a new regional transit service which addresses previously significant barriers to accessing health care, employment and other social supports for vulnerable populations.
- **Our Cowichan CHN (est. 2009)** was selected to receive training and support from The BC Healthy Communities Society to adopt a Collective Impact approach – a leading edge methodology for resolving complex social issues that has proven effective in a variety of communities.
- **The Alberni-Clayoquot CHN (est. 2011)** is working to address transportation challenges in the region, and has successfully leveraged \$35,000 through local government, community businesses, and other organizations to buy a van for the West Coast Wheels for Wellness (W4W) pilot program.
- **The Oceanside CHN (est. 2014)** is focusing on child hunger in the region – engaging the school district, students and other partners to understand the problem in order to develop effective interventions.
- **Sooke CHN (est. 2015)** has adopted a struggling community garden. Under CHN management, the site infrastructure and volunteer base have been revived and the garden now provides fresh healthy produce to the Food Bank.
- **The Strathcona CHN (est. 2015)** is still in its formative stages and has already attracted more than 150 representatives spanning health, social services, education, local government and all three First Nations cultural families to participate in setting joint priorities, including transportation, housing and food security.

