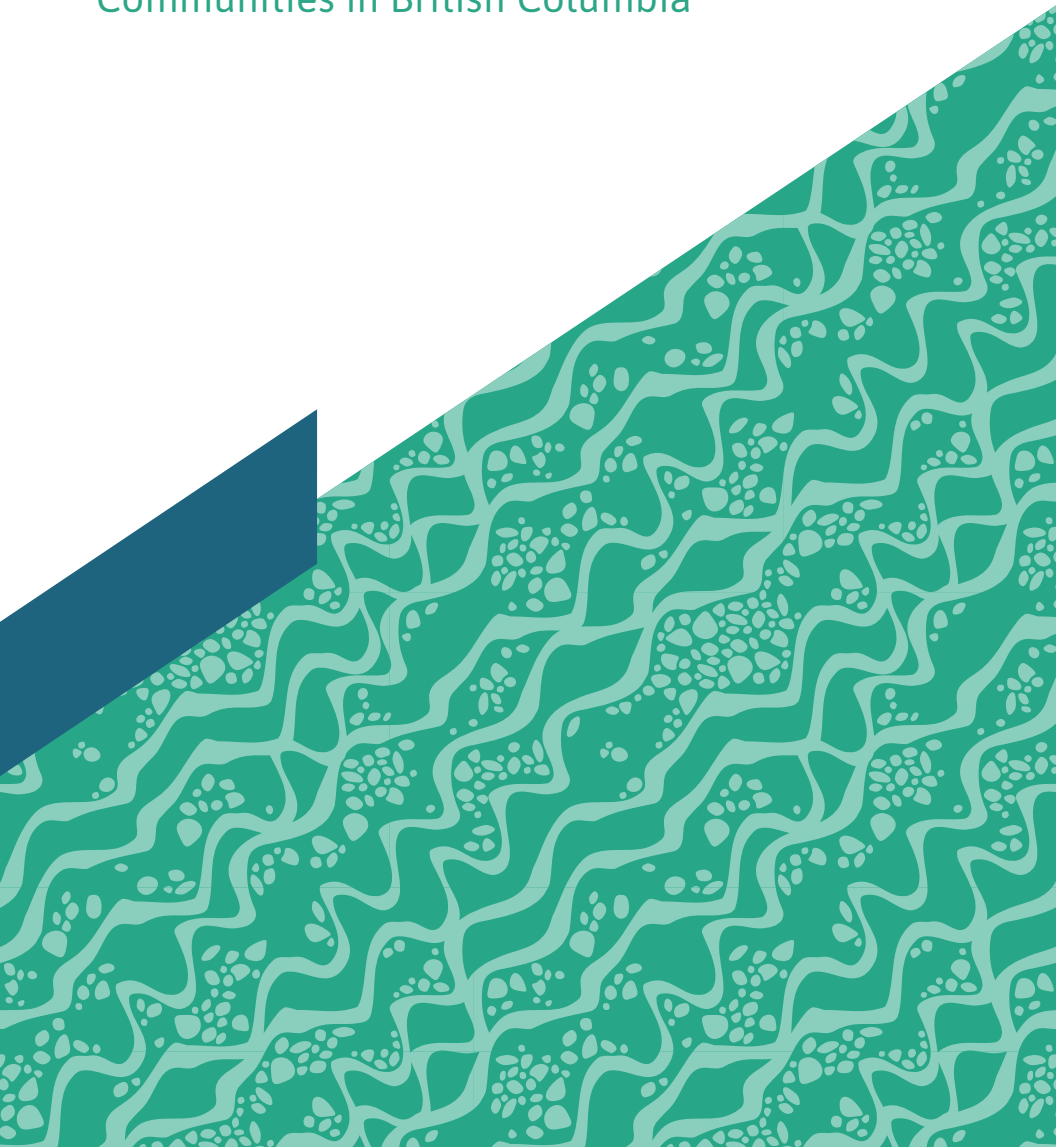


ACTIVE COASTAL COMMUNITIES

Sharing Success Stories of Small Coastal
Communities in British Columbia



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This document was produced by BC Healthy Communities Society, in partnership with the BC Alliance for Healthy Living and the Province of B.C.

Thank you to the communities who so generously shared their coastal stories and experiences, and to Island Health, Northern Health and Vancouver Coastal Health who contributed to the development of this document.

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A vertical photograph of a dirt road winding through a dense forest of tall evergreen trees. The road is on the left side of the frame, and the trees are on the right. The lighting is bright, suggesting a sunny day. The text is overlaid on a white rectangular background in the center of the image.

WHAT YOU WILL FIND IN THIS DOCUMENT

**An introduction to B.C.
coastal communities.**

**Physical activity opportunities
and barriers in small coastal
communities in B.C.**

**Promising practices for
physical activity in small
coastal communities
in B.C.**

**A selection of tools
and resources.**

**Funding opportunities
to explore.**

INTRODUCTION

Savvy communities in B.C. are using creativity and innovation to improve the ways their residents access places, programs and services that support physical activity and well-being. This document highlights 10 small coastal communities, showing how they create opportunities for all people to be active.

Defining a Small Coastal Community

ON THE COAST

British Columbia's saltwater coastline zigzags through the Pacific Ocean for more than 25,000 kilometers.¹ More than 72 per cent of the population—that's more than 3.35 million people in the province—live in a coastal community, defined as one that has a border on a shoreline.^{2,3}

SMALL POPULATIONS

Statistics Canada classifies an area as rural if it has fewer than 1,000 people and a density of less than 400 people per square kilometer. It also recognizes small communities, calling them "small population centres," which include locales with a population of between 1,000 and 29,999, with a density of 400 or more people per square kilometer.⁴

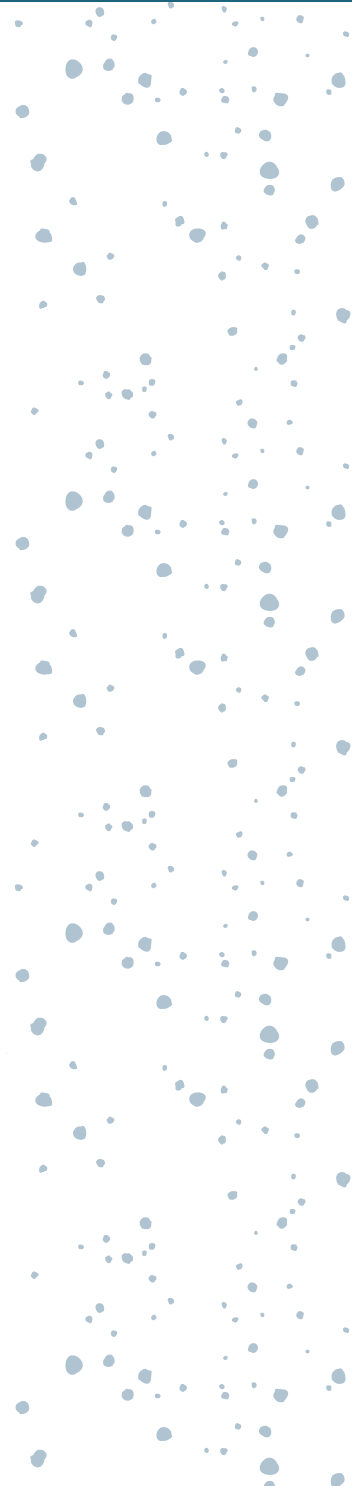
Physical Activity in Small Coastal Communities

The Government of Canada reported that people living in communities with a population of less than 10,000 face more barriers to accessing physical activity than those living in larger centres.⁵ Parents in particular noted their children experienced difficulties participating in programs and activities designed to boost fitness, an issue that deserves careful consideration given research showing physical activity supports social development, educational outcomes and physical and mental well-being.⁶ Further, physical activity increases productivity in the workplace and decreases demands on health and social services.^{7,8}

BENEFITS

Because of their **proximity to nature**, residents of small coastal communities are likely to have a **strong connection with the natural environment** and respond positively to opportunities to incorporate time outside with physical activity.⁹ Rural landscapes provide **ample opportunities for people to boost their health outdoors**, something the small communities featured in this document capitalized on.¹⁰

Furthermore, **community relationships are strong** in small and rural locales, which sometimes have a lower cost of living.¹¹ The 10 regions in this document recommend working in partnership with neighbouring communities, schools, organizations, volunteers, businesses and municipal bodies to improve programs and services.



BARRIERS

Living in small coastal communities also presents a number of challenges. With a small tax base, **fewer funds** exist for resources to improve levels of physical activity through community programming and to build infrastructure conducive to physical activity.¹² The communities in this document cite lack of funding as a barrier for the following issues: building appropriate facilities, developing and delivering programs and services, and improving transportation infrastructure, including paths and trails.

Weather and geography are two more barriers noted by the communities in this document. Coastal B.C.'s rain and strong wind deter participants from outdoor activities in inclement weather. Traveling to indoor locales is no easier; for some rural residents, the closest community in which to participate in indoor, organized activities requires a ferry ride, which is not only cost-prohibitive, it requires more time, planning and resources for residents.

Transportation can also be a barrier for those who don't need to travel by ferry; many people in small coastal communities live quite far from a service centre, and cannot attend more formal recreational activities if they don't have access to a vehicle. Bus service is also limited, if available at all, and is often cost prohibitive because of being offered by private companies. Many coastal residents take to hitchhiking to make their way around.

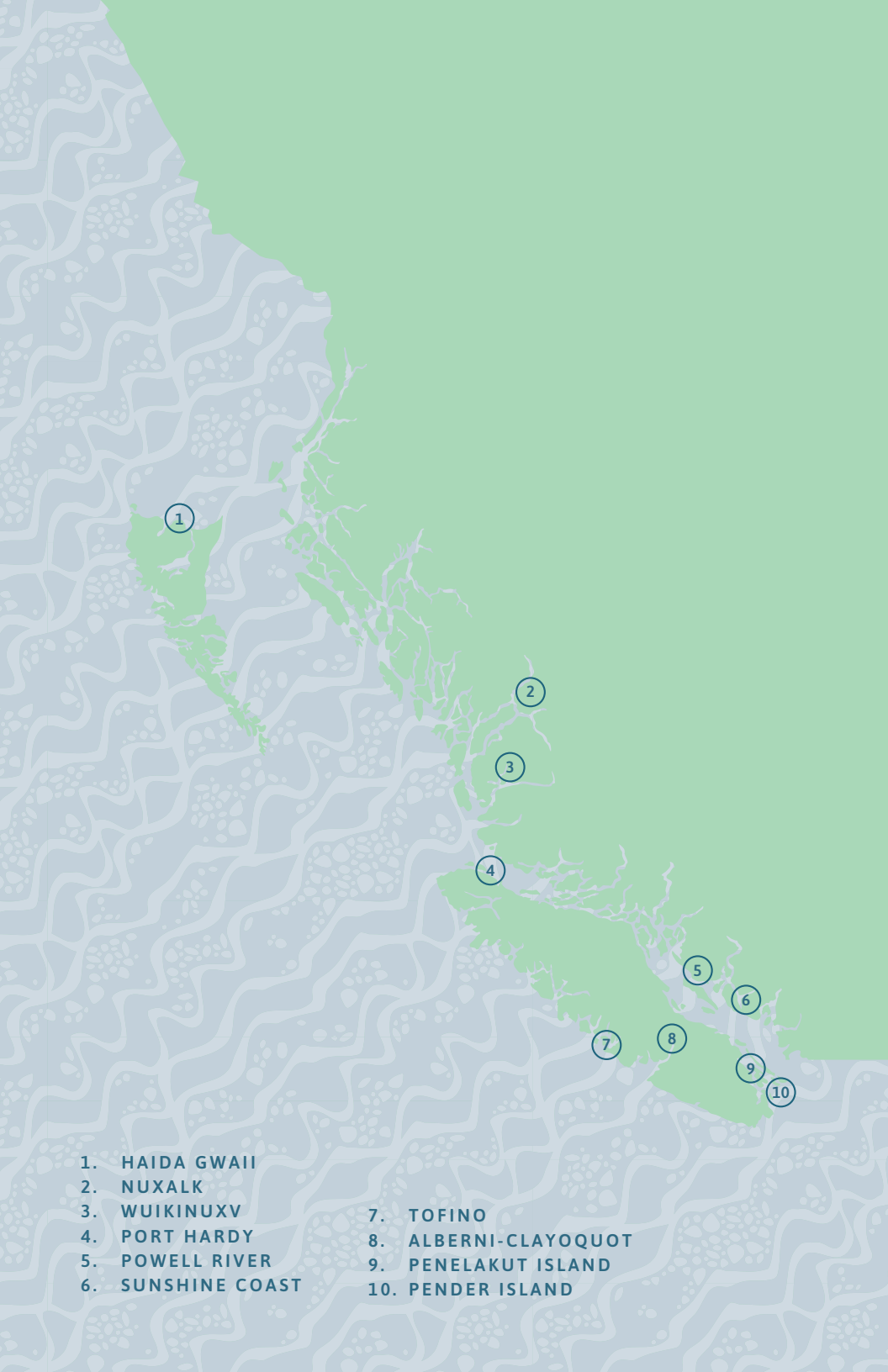
THE COMMUNITIES

The following examples explore promising practices from small coastal communities in B.C. who have improved access to physical activity in their communities.

These examples are provided to share ideas, spark innovation and inspire other coastal communities to undertake similar projects.

The map on the next page shows where these small coastal communities are located.





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- 1. HAIDA GWAI
- 2. NUXALK
- 3. WUIKINUXV
- 4. PORT HARDY
- 5. POWELL RIVER
- 6. SUNSHINE COAST

- 7. TOFINO
- 8. ALBERNI-CLAYOQUOT
- 9. PENELAKUT ISLAND
- 10. PENDER ISLAND

Pender Island Disc Golf

In rain, snow or sunshine, people of all ages gather at the Golf Island Disc Park to play a round of 27 holes. Disc golf—a sport that is a cross between golf and frisbee—has become Pender Island’s unofficial sport ever since a group of friends mapped out a course in 1980. The Capital Regional District and the Pender Islands Parks and Recreation Commission granted permission to the volunteer-run Pender Disc Golf Club to set up a course on 15 acres of rocky, wooded terrain designated as parkland, which the club maintains as part of the agreement. Access to the site is free; players only need to purchase or rent the discs, a flat, thin version of a frisbee. The sport is low impact and accessible to anyone who can walk the course. Every May, the club hosts a disc golf tournament that attracts more than 275 people, making Pender a destination to play this emerging international sport.

WHAT MADE IT HAPPEN

LOCAL CHAMPIONS, PARTNERSHIPS AND A LOW-COST ACTIVITY.

Wuikinuxv Summer Camp

For six weeks during the summer, youth from Wuikinuxv Territory participated in the camp of a lifetime. They boarded a chartered boat and travelled the coast of Wuikinuxv’s 7,200-kilometer territory, north of the Queen Charlotte Strait on the shores of Rivers Inlet and Owikeno Lake, with the glaciated peaks of the Pacific Coast Range Mountains in the distance. The campers stopped frequently for activities: traditional medicine walks, fishing, crabbing, dancing, swimming and picking berries, activities that were augmented with education about mental health, bullying, leadership and youth sexuality. A grant from Vancouver Coastal Health and the Province of British Columbia made the camp possible in 2018; Wuikinuxv Territory hopes to secure funding to offer the camp annually and continue to make life-changing impacts on the lives of kids and teens as they discover the benefits of an active lifestyle and reconnect with their ancestral lands.

WHAT MADE IT HAPPEN

COMMUNITY COMMITMENT AND SUPPORT FROM THE PROVINCE OF BRITISH COLUMBIA.

Port Hardy Running, Walking & Everyday Activities

For eight years, the Aboriginal RunWalk Program has inspired walkers and runners from Port Hardy to participate in 5K or 10K events. With support from the Ministry of Children and Family Development and the Gwa'sala-Nakwaxda'xw Nation, participants, many of whom face barriers to participation, work with a trained leader and gradually increase their stamina—and their resilience to run in rainy weather—over 13 weeks of training. The free program, developed by the Indigenous Sport, Physical Activity and Recreation Council (ISPARC), is delivered year-round by North Island Building Blocks, a local organization with a focus on strengthening families and providing opportunities to learn about healthy living. Another of Building Blocks' successful programs is FitNation, also developed by ISPARC. FitNation enhances people's fitness with simple, fun and safe activities that can be done anytime, anywhere—even behind a desk. Participants learn 70 movements that can be easily implemented into their daily routine.

WHAT MADE IT HAPPEN

PROVINCIAL PARTNERSHIPS AND
COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP.

Nuxalk Children's Programming

In the Nuxalk language, "Tl'mstaliwatimutilh" means "to be living a full Nuxalk experience," which the Nuxalk people of Bella Coola believe can be achieved by increasing health of mind, body and spirit. The community is focused on offering opportunities for children who face the greatest barriers to help them achieve the state of "Tl'mstaliwatimutilh." Without a gym facility on Nuxalk Nation or playground equipment that meets safety standards, the local school allows community groups to use its gym free of charge for children's programming. Success By 6 is one such group, running a drop-in program for infants and children, aged 0 to 12 years who face barriers to participation. Programming for the 20 to 60 children is led by teens in grades 10 and 11; as the younger ones improve their physical literacy, the teens develop leadership skills. Next, Success By 6, Nuxalk Nation and partners in the community aim to fundraise to build a recreation space where people of all ages can gather to be active in a safe space and work towards Tl'mstaliwatimutilh.

WHAT MADE IT HAPPEN

A SHARED-USE AGREEMENT, YOUTH
LEADERSHIP AND COMMUNITY
COMMITMENT.

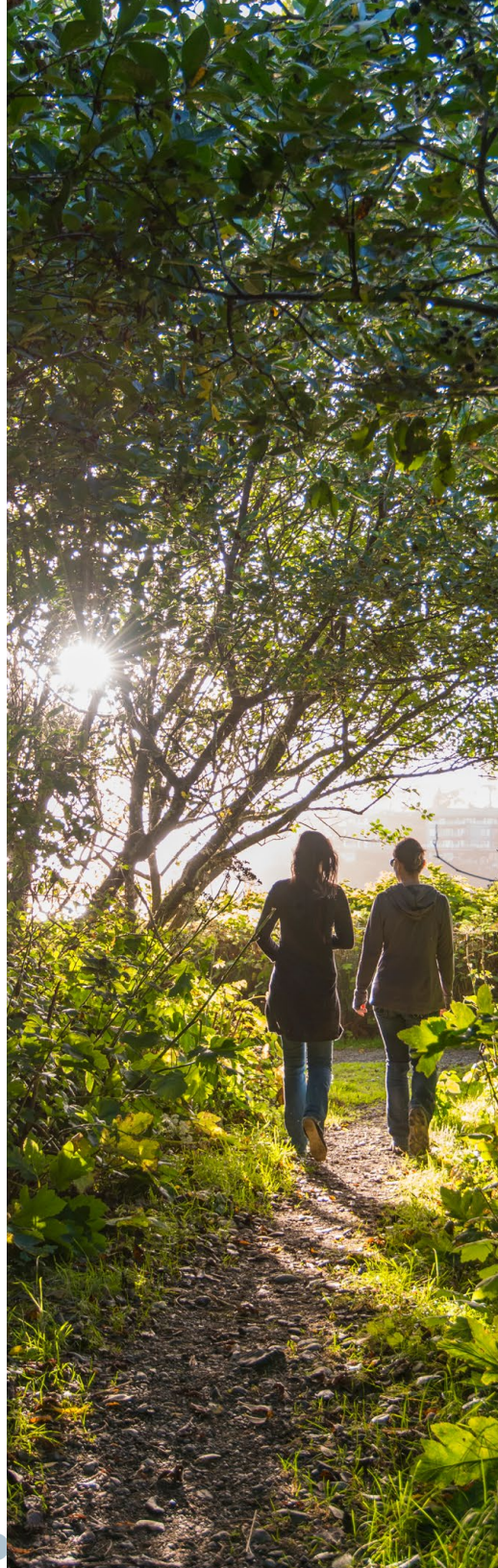


Powell River Improved Signage

With its ocean views and coastal forests, Powell River appealed to its residents' connection with nature to encourage active living. Already, the community embraces biking, hiking and walking, but to boost participation rates, the City of Powell River made a small change with big impact: it updated signage at trails and parks. With a focus on free activities, the new signs encourage people of all ages to explore local parks, try outdoor fitness areas and travel the town's network of trails. Many locales feature updated maps and provide a small, credit-card-sized version for people to bring on walks, an addition that has led to increased and safer usage. The City also sought a new outdoor recreation activity to further develop residents' relationship with the landscape and attract a different audience: Powell River's disc golf courses were born. Underused areas of two parks were transformed into nine-hole disc golf courses with terrain that suits players of all ages and abilities—and even their dogs.

WHAT MADE IT HAPPEN

LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMITMENT
AND A SMALL INFRASTRUCTURE
IMPROVEMENT.





Tofino Increased Access to Recreation

Tofino's rainy climate, high cost of living, limited facilities and lack of transportation are all barriers for the local population in accessing recreation programming. The Tofino Recreation Commission and the District of Tofino are taking small steps forward in bridging some of these gaps. The Tofino Recreation Commission fundraises throughout the year to cover the cost of kids programming for any families who struggle with meeting these costs. Last year 37 children were able to participate in programs that they otherwise wouldn't have access to due to financial strain. A weekly shuttle was added from the outlying communities of Esowista and Ty-Histanis for the Youth Night in an effort to increase the attendance of youth who live outside the downtown core. The District of Tofino has applied for funding to build a new municipal gymnasium to meet the demands of a growing community. Currently, recreation groups struggle to get access to the town's limited facilities; a new gymnasium would provide a space to host larger athletics events, including sports that require a bigger footprint—soccer, volleyball or basketball—and make indoor league-play more attractive during the rainy season. Tofino also has its eye on expanding its outdoor recreation assets, including the Multi-Use Path, which winds its way for six kilometres along the Pacific Rim Highway and attracts cyclists, walkers, runners and skate boarders.

WHAT MADE IT HAPPEN

**PARTNERSHIPS AND
LOCAL GOVERNMENT LEADERSHIP.**

Penelakut Island Mountain Bike Trails

Penelakut Island in the Gulf Islands wanted to invest in a recreational amenity that would encourage youth to be active in nature while developing confidence. Working with Penelakut Tribe, the community found inspiration in its expanse of under-developed land and decided to build mountain bike trails, adding them to the island's network of paths for walking, hiking and cycling. To spark youth's interest in the sport, Penelakut Tribe empowered teens to build the trails, which itself was a feat of physical fitness and a tool for leadership development. Elders from the community visited construction sites to share information with youth about the land they were working on. Today, youth participate in mountain biking programming in which they learn proper riding techniques and safety. Parents and siblings often bring their bikes along, too. After two years in operation, the new sport is growing in popularity; the trails are meeting the community's objective, to give youth a resource that inspires healthy living and a connection to the land on Penelakut.

WHAT MADE IT HAPPEN

COMMUNITY CHAMPIONS AND
GOVERNMENT LEADERSHIP.

Sunshine Coast Trail Expansions

Past lakes, harbours and a secret cove, the Suncoaster Trail winds through forest canopies, rocky inclines and rural communities for 37 kilometers, from Pender Harbour to Halfmoon Bay on the Sunshine Coast. A popular corridor for both recreation and transportation, this portion of the trail opened in 2010. Phase two is still in development. It is championed by Sunshine Coast Regional District and Vancouver Coastal Health, who recognize the positive impacts the trail has on the health and fitness of the community. Phase 2 will see the trail expanded from Halfmoon Bay through Sechelt to Langdale, an extension of more than 70 kilometers. Currently, a rough path exists on the route and is used by hikers and mountain bikers; once upgraded, it will also serve commuters and walkers. The improvements will also lower the gradient of the terrain in certain portions of the trail, making it a more attractive option for people seeking a lower-intensity workout.

WHAT MADE IT HAPPEN

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND HEALTH
AUTHORITY PARTNERSHIP.

Alberni-Clayoquot Transportation Assets Map

Going from point A to point B isn't always straightforward, especially in the Alberni-Clayoquot Region, whose broad geographic area encompasses three municipalities, ten Nuu-Chah-Nulth Nations and six electoral areas. The Alberni Clayoquot Health Network (ACHN) saw an opportunity: if residents could travel around the region in a timely fashion, they would have more leisure time as well as economic and social opportunities. Working with Island Health and community partners, the ACHN created the Transportation Assets Map, a customized Google map that identifies the transportation options available between communities—car, bus, boat, cycling, walking—in addition to the cost of each option, the time commitment, and links to more information, like schedules for private bus companies. The map has brought some of the region's transportation challenges to the forefront, bringing community and transportation partners, such as BC Transit, to the table to help reduce the gaps. BC Transit is now undertaking a feasibility study to expand service to the west coast. More bus routes would translate into more opportunities for physical activity; people would walk to and from bus stops, and have affordable access to recreational opportunities, not to mention educational and economic opportunities, throughout the region.

WHAT MADE IT HAPPEN
HEALTH NETWORK LEADERSHIP, PARTNERSHIPS
AND NEEDS ASSESSMENT.



Haida Gwaii Tow Hill and Blow Hole Boardwalk Trail

Tow Hill, or Taaw in the Haida language, is a distinctive landmark on Haida Gwaii. It is a basalt outcrop that towers above North Beach in Naikoon Park, and is a special place for the Haida with its ancient village sites and cultural history. BC Parks worked collaboratively with the Haida Nation, Old Massett Village Council, North Coast Regional District, Employment and Social Development Canada, Rick Hansen Foundation, Spinal Cord Injury BC, Kingsbury Foundation, and Langara Fishing Lodge to improve the Tow Hill & Blow Hole boardwalk trail. The loop trail is 2.2 km long with the Blow Hole section being universally accessible with no steps and numerous benches. The universal access trail section is 1 km long from the parking lot to the base of Tow Hill. The locally salvaged and milled cedar boardwalk, lookout platforms, interpretive signage, and majestic views make this the most well-used trail on Haida Gwaii by both tourists and locals alike. It is a great example of how beneficial partnerships can be in developing opportunities for promoting physical activity for all visitors. BC Parks and the Haida Nation co-manage a network of protected areas on Haida Gwaii, demonstrating their mutually respectful relationship and shared desire to promote Haida Gwaii's cultural and recreational treasures.

WHAT MADE IT HAPPEN:
**LOCAL, PROVINCIAL AND NATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS
AND RESPECTFUL RELATIONSHIPS.**



TOOLS AND RESOURCES

[Active Communities Action Guide.](#)

BC Healthy Communities.

[BC Climate Action Toolkit.](#)

Green Communities Committee and the Fraser Basin Council.

[BC Community Health Data.](#)

BC Centre for Disease Control.

[Connecting Canadians with Nature. An Investment in the Well-Being of our Citizens.](#)

Parks Canada Agency on behalf of the Canadian Parks Council.

[Healthy Built Environment Linkages Toolkit.](#)

BC Centre for Disease Control.

[Healthy Rural Communities Tool Kit: A Guide for Rural Municipalities.](#)

Public Health Ontario.

[Improving Travel Options in Small and Rural Communities.](#)

Transport Canada.

[Ocean Watch: B.C. Coast Edition.](#)

Ocean Wise Conservation Association.

[Shared Use Playbook.](#)

ChangeLab Solutions.

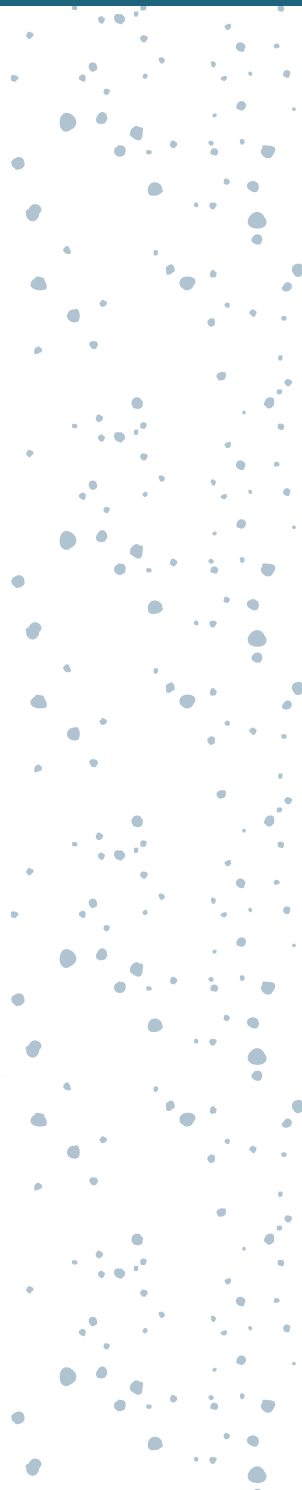
[Small Town and Rural Design Guide: Facilities for Walking and Biking.](#)

Alta Planning and Design.

[Transportation Demand Management \(TDM\):](#)

[A Small and Mid-Size Communities Toolkit.](#)

Fraser Basin Council.



FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

- [BikeBC Program.](#)
Province of BC.
- [BC Rural Dividend Program.](#)
Province of BC.
- [Gas Tax Program.](#)
Union of BC
Municipalities.
- [Local Government Program Services.](#)
Union of BC
Municipalities.
- [Federation of Canadian Municipalities.](#)
- [Infrastructure Canada.](#)
- [Natural Resources Canada.](#)
- [CivicInfo BC Grants Database.](#)
- [PlanH.](#)



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- ⁶ Public Health Agency of Canada (2018). *Let's get moving: A common vision for increasing physical activity and reducing sedentary living in Canada*. www.canada.ca/content/dam/phac-aspc/documents/services/publications/healthy-living/lets-get-moving/pub-eng.pdf
- ⁷ Goodin, H. (2015). *Evidence snapshot: Promoting physical activity at the local government level*. Wellington, NZ: Agencies for Nutrition Action. ana.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Final-Snapshot.pdf
- ⁸ Sallis, J.F., Spoon, C., Cavill, N., Engelberg, J.K., Gebel, K., Parker, M.,...Ding, D. (2015). Co-benefits of designing communities for active living: An exploration of literature. *International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition & Physical Activity*, 12(30). ijbnpa.biomedcentral.com/track/pdf/10.1186/s12966-015-0188-2
- ⁹ BC Centre for Disease Control (2018). *Healthy Built Environment Linkages Toolkit V2.0*. www.bccdc.ca/pop-public-health/Documents/HBE_linkages_toolkit_2018.pdf
- ¹⁰ See Reference 3.
- ¹¹ See Reference 9.
- ¹² See Reference 5.



