As many of you know, we are in the process of re-visioning and re-naming CPHFRI. The think tank featured to the right was one step in this process. This will likely be the final “CPHFRI” newsletter as we hope to have a new logo and name by the time the next newsletter comes out!

For more information about the BC PHSSR Think Tank or anything CPHFRI related, please contact Heather Wilson Strosher, CPHFRI Coordinator at hlwilson@uvic.ca.

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**Advancing Public Health Systems Research in BC: Renewing the Agenda**

On February 12-14, 2014, CPHFRI team members were joined by other public health researchers, practitioners and policymakers representing multiple universities, the BC Ministry of Health, and six of the health authorities. A total of 45 participants engaged in a productive dialogue and debate about public health systems and services research (PHSSR) priorities for BC. The objectives of the think tank were to: a) celebrate the successful launch of a PHSSR agenda in British Columbia that began in 2007; b) develop consensus on a PHSSR agenda for BC for the next 5 years; c) start a process to revision and rename CPHFRI; and d) expand the network of PHSSR researchers and supporters.

The think tank began with a reception on the evening of February 12th. First, the new First Nations Health Authority (FNHA) was warmly welcomed and Michelle DrGroot, Executive Director, Policy, Planning, and Strategic Services, FNHA presented an enlightening overview of the new health authority. Next, Marjorie MacDonald and Trevor Hancock provided a history of CPHFRI and our successes. The evening ended with a presentation from Diane Fingoood, President and CEO of the Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research (MSFHR). The morning of February 13th began with a presentation from Trevor Hancock and Marjorie MacDonald on the challenges encountered in the first five years of developing CPHFRI’s program of research. The keynote speaker, Glen Mays from the University of Kentucky College of Public Health, was next welcomed to present on the status of PHSSR in the United States and lessons for BC. He gave an inspiring talk about the work being done south of the border that we believe can inform our new directions in BC. His presentation is available here: http://works.bepress.com/glen_mays/131/

Dr. Nancy Edwards, Scientific Director, CIHR Institute of Population and Public Health and David Buckridge, Board Member, CIHR Institute of Health Services and Policy Research presented on the strategic directions of each institute and the implications for the emerging PHSSR agenda in BC. Then in a “fishbowl exercise”, participants self identified as researchers or knowledge users, and each group took turns sharing their perspective on research priorities. The researchers and knowledge users shared many of the same research interests. We were encouraged by this finding which replicated our initial think tank in 2007. This means that research projects can be designed to incorporate the concerns of both groups ensuring policy and practice relevance, as well as researcher engagement. The first day concluded with working groups identifying top PHSSR priorities.

To position our BC research priorities in a broader context, the second day of the think tank began with a discussion of a national PHSSR agenda, an Ontario agenda and the emerging research priorities based on the proceedings of day one. Next, Arlene Paton, Assistant Deputy Minister, Population and Public Health, BC Ministry of Health, provided reflections on CPHFRI’s work from a provincial perspective. Based on the discussions of the two days, a draft research framework was developed with the Population and Public Health System at its core; six cross-cutting themes which are relevant to all research projects - equity, methods, partnerships, KTE, outcomes, and complexity; and the following eight research priority areas: PH Workforce, PH Organization, PH Decision Making, Data and Information Systems for PH, Intersectoral/Multisectoral Collaboration, PH Economics, Population Health Interventions, and PH Ethics. Our public health information systems experts were not able to participate in the think tank, so this list does not include a priority related to this.

We will work with our absent colleagues to refine some priorities to bring back to the team at an upcoming webinar so we can be sure not to leave this important aspect of PHSSR out of our agenda.

Future plans include holding a webinar with think tank participants to validate the emerging research framework and plans to move the agenda forward. The final report from the Think Tank will be posted on our website soon, along with future updates.
Announcements

♦ Congratulations to the Public Health Association of British Columbia (PHABC) on their Diamond Jubilee Anniversary - for 60 years PHABC has been providing leadership and advocacy to promote and protect the public’s health in British Columbia! As part of the PHABC annual conference in November, public health professionals were nominated for variety of awards. Mary Hill received the Phyllis M. Baird Memorial Award for Public Health Nursing and was recognized for her outstanding contribution to public health nursing. Mary is a PhD student in the School of Nursing at UVic and is actively engaged in CPHFRI. We would like to congratulate her on receiving this prestigious award! Ted Bruce, another CPHFRI team member (featured on page 5), received the President’s Award that recognizes individuals for their outstanding commitment to addressing issues which improve individual and community health. In particular, his advocacy work on poverty reduction has been an inspiration for many of us in the province. Congratulations Ted!

♦ Marjorie MacDonald, one of the CPHFRI leads and the President of the Public Health Association of BC, in collaboration with Michael Barnes, ED of PHABC, John Millar, VP of PHABC, and Irv Rootman, past board member, were successful in an application to CIHR to support next year’s PHABC conference. The application submitted by PHABC was ranked #3 out of 143 applications! The CIHR funding will support a public event at the next PHABC conference in fall of 2014 to hold a deliberative dialogue between the public health and business communities to promote learning on both sides by engaging in a respectful conversation about our shared goals and our major areas of difference in order to move forward on a common agenda for shared prosperity and improved equity in health.

♦ Jeremy Riishede (ELPH Administrative and Research Assistant) was accepted into the Population Health Data Certificate program offered by Population Data BC, and received CIHR funding from the Institute of Population and Public Health (IPPH Professional Advancement Awards – skills update). Jeremy continues to work with ELPH while pursuing this program and we wish him all the best!

♦ Congratulations to Dr. Wanda Martin on recently completing her PhD! Wanda has been involved with CPHFRI since our inception in 2007. Her PhD work focused on easing the tensions between food security and food safety. She has accepted a faculty position in the School of Nursing at the University of Saskatchewan. We wish her all the best as she moves into this new position in a new province and look forward to future collaborations!

In October, Marjorie MacDonald (Trevor 2) and Bernie Pauly (Trevor 3) helped Trevor Hancock (Trevor 1) celebrate his 65th birthday. Now people want to know - who is who? A prize is offered for the first right answer.

Happy Belated Birthday Trevor 1!
ELPH Project Update

Equity Lens in Public Health is a 5-year (2011-2016) program of research funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR). ELPH's overall purpose is to study, explore, and foster learning about the use of a health equity lens during a period of complex system change in public health. The project is based in British Columbia, with knowledge users in six of BC's health authorities, the Ministry of Health, and PHABC, the National Collaborating Centre for Determinants of Health, the Public Health Agency of Canada and Public Health Ontario. The program of research is made up of four studies, each focused on a different aspect of health equity in public health. This year, we are nearing completion of our first round of interviews to gain insight into the extent to which health equity is a priority in BC, and have recently completed data collection for concept mapping in our health equity tools study. Preliminary findings from both studies will be presented at the ELPH team meeting in May. Thanks to everyone who participated in the concept mapping data collection! We published an inventory of health equity tools (available on our website: www.uvic.ca/elph), and a "highly accessed" paper in BMC Public Health describing our study protocol. It is available online at: http://www.biomedcentral.com/1471-2458/13/550.

We presented ELPH research at conferences, including at Northern Research Days in Prince George and the PHABC Conference in Burnaby. We would like to thank all the students who applied for our internships this year and our participating health authority partners. Congratulations to Amanda Ng, Cheryl Prescott, Erin Cusack and Peter Greenwell who are all starting their internships. Congratulations to Phuc Dang who was the recipient of the ELPH doctoral fellowship.

Get involved: Are you a BC policy analyst, manager or front-line staff member whose work includes mental health promotion, prevention of mental disorders or preventing the harms of substance use? We would like to interview you for our study on health equity as a priority. We will ask open-ended questions about your experiences at work. For more information, or to schedule an interview, please contact Corrine Lowen at calowen@uvic.ca

We are also accepting applications for a graduate fellowship in Aboriginal health and health equity. To be eligible, the candidate must be a master's student at UVic working towards a graduate degree related to public health with a clear commitment and focus on health equity and Aboriginal health.

For more information on the graduate fellowship or the ELPH project in general, please contact Kathleen Perkin, ELPH Project Manager.

RePHS Project Update

RePHS (Renewal of Public Health Systems) is a five-year project examining the implementation of public health renewal processes across BC and Ontario. Using a complexity lens, researchers from both provinces are addressing two primary questions: (1) What factors/contexts influence or affect the implementation of these policy interventions? and (2) What have been the impacts/effects of these policy interventions on: staff, the organization, the populations served, other organizations, and communities? Furthermore, the concepts of equity, health human resources, and the relationship between public health and primary care are being examined throughout. The research is taking place in all 6 health authorities in BC and 6 representative health units in Ontario.

The final year of the project will be filled with data collection, analysis, and dissemination. Since the last CPHFRI newsletter in June 2013 we held a paper-writing workshop in BC. During this meeting we identified 11 priority papers. At this time the majority of these papers are underway. More recently we have started preparations for the final phase of data collection. We have once again started conducting interviews with front-line staff, managers, and directors in BC and Ontario regarding our 3 cross-cutting themes: equity, public health/primary care collaboration, and health human resources. We are also beginning to conduct a concept mapping exercise on successful implementation.

We are happy to report that we have had two papers recently published:


To receive more information on RePHS please contact Diane Allan, RePHS Project Coordinator (dallan@uvic.ca).
The annual Public Health Association of British Columbia (PHABC) Conference took place November 4 and 5, 2013 in Burnaby, BC where researchers, policy makers, decision makers, practitioners and students passionate about public health congregated to converse and share ideas.

The focus of this two day session was reflected in the title, “Health in all policies: Taking intersectoral action for equitable & sustainable health.”

Building on the Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion action area of ‘building healthy public policy’, conference presentations focused on factors beyond the healthcare system in impacting the health of individuals, families, and populations. Conference attendees were left thinking about how to break down boundaries between sectors, as well as challenged to better understand coordination and governance around intersectoral action. In this way, we can strive to work more collaboratively and effectively, albeit differently, together.

Conference speakers addressed ways in which we in public health can work across sectors, for instance across governmental, nongovernmental and private sectors, with the aim of reducing health inequities and promoting health of all people. They showcased their intersectoral efforts that focused on one of four main themes: mental health promotion, early child development, corporate/private sector, and health built environments. This research forum offered an enriching experience as plenary presentations stimulated thinking, oral and rapid fire presentations allowed for networking around common interests along with learning new skills and strategies, and world café and workshops provided an intimate setting for dialogue and personal reflection.

In addition to conference presentations, PHABC hosted three special events. First, PHABC turned the big 6-0 and to honor those who have contributed to the organization and public health across BC for many years, the organizers held an anniversary event to reflect back on this journey. Next, in accordance with the focus of the conference largely around public health policy, the Ministry of Health hosted an inaugural session to officially release the BC Guiding Framework for Public Health, Promote, Protect, Prevent: Our Health Begins Here – BC’s Guiding Framework for Public Health. Lastly, a community event celebrating the life and legacy of Clyde Hertzman (pictured left) was held with Raffi Cavoukian to continue on Clyde’s efforts investing in children.

A public event to commemorate Clyde Hertzman and his work in early childhood development formed part of the PHABC conference. Clyde Hertzman was the recipient of the 60th Anniversary Award of Merit for Significant Contribution to Public Health.
Recent CPHFRI Publications, Resources and Grant Applications

- Recent CPHFRI publications include:

- Several working groups have been formed and multiple other publications are underway. We are also continuing to work on an overall KTE plan for CPHFRI (which will continue to evolve as CPHFRI is re-named and the new five year agenda unfolds).

- The one year CIHR Knowledge Synthesis project on Complexity Science / Complex Adaptive Systems has completed. Several resources were developed out of the project: a) a resource book which includes a list of tools with references; and b) a one-page outline of *Complexity Science in Brief*; and c) a model of *Complexity Narratives in Public Health*.

- In October, we submitted an application to CIHR for a Knowledge Synthesis grant entitled, *Implementation and Knowledge-to-Action Research in Public Health: A Realist Synthesis*. Marjorie MacDonald and Bernie Pauly are the Principal Applicants and Arlene Paton from the BC Ministry of Health is the Principal Knowledge User. The anticipated notification date is March 11, 2014 so we will update you in the next newsletter as to whether it is funded!

Feature Knowledge User: Ted Bruce

In November at the annual PHABC conference, Ted Bruce was awarded the President’s Award for his contributions to public health in the province. Ted is immediate past president of PHABC after having served four years as president. In his work, Ted recently retired from his position as Executive Director of Population Health in Vancouver Coastal Health; in this role he was able to strategically bring the discussion of health inequities to the forefront of the organization. His leadership has been instrumental for rethinking how can health authorities become active partners in addressing the broader determinants of health. He has transformed the way VCH interacts with our local government and community partners. Ted is firm believer of approaching this work with an equity lens and a focus on capacity building. Inside an organization that is used to addressing community health problems through clinical services, Ted has been able to reframe the conversation and has led innovative strategies aimed to address the root causes of poor health. Ted’s credibility among senior executive leaders comes from his ability to successfully assess and interpret complex environments, as well as his capacity to deliver concrete results. To his team, Ted is not only a well respected and entrusted leader, he is also a thoughtful and caring mentor. The influence of Ted’s work has grown beyond the walls of the health authority. Through his work with researchers, academics and students, Ted has been able to influence the field of Public Health not only at the practitioner level, but has also contributed to reframing the research agenda. Ted has been at the forefront of practice-informed research in Population Health.

Ted has outstanding leadership skills in Public and Population Health together with extraordinary ability in partnership and network development as shown in his involvement in Health Officers Council, PHABC, PARC, BCPHN, Poverty Reduction Coalition, BCHLA. Ted truly walks the talk on intersectoral collaboration with his vast network of partnerships outside the health sector, but also within. Ted is an advisory committee member for CIHR’s Institute of Population and Public Health, bringing a knowledge user perspective to the work of that agency. He has been an active member of the CPHFRI, and remains on the REPHS and ELPH research projects.

We wish Ted all the best in his retirement!
Feature Graduate Student: Phúc Dang

I obtained my Bachelor of Public Health (Honours) degree from Brock University in June 2011 and throughout my undergraduate studies, I was eager to obtain research and practical experiences. Therefore, I was a research assistant on several projects pertaining to patient safety culture, tobacco smoking cessation, and physical activity in relation to childhood obesity and developmental coordination disorder. I gained invaluable research skills from these research assistantships which piqued my interest in health research.

I was keen to understand how public health programs and services were delivered in a public health unit therefore, I complemented my studies with practical experiences from Niagara Regional Public Health (NRPH). I completed an internship at NRPH in 2010 where I applied theoretical concepts I gained from various public health courses to the needs assessment project entitled “Hard to Serve in the Niagara Region” where the focus was on understanding health equity and the delivery of public health services in the Niagara region. During my time at the NRPH’s epidemiology unit, I analyzed, compiled and wrote evaluation reports for various health promotion programs. I was involved in the development and implementation of road safety promotional strategies as a NRPH Road Safety Advisor. These practical experiences were wonderful and a value add to my education however, I continued to have a strong interest in public health systems and services research at that time. Therefore, I decided to enroll in the Master of Arts in Applied Health Sciences (Community Health) program at Brock University in September 2011.

My Master’s thesis project was a collaboration between Brock University, Health Nexus and the Fall Prevention Network Niagara committee and was focused on understanding the referral linkages that exist among falls prevention agencies in a region of southern Ontario using network analysis theory. This project bridges the understanding of referrals using network analysis theory together with a qualitative focus to learn about the contextual aspects of falls prevention referral pathways. This particular experience solidified my desire to pursue public health systems and services research at the doctoral level therefore, I applied to University of Victoria’s PhD in Social Dimensions of Health program to work with Dr. Marjorie MacDonald and Dr. Bernie Pauly.

I just completed my first semester at University of Victoria and had the opportunity to attend the ELPH Whole Team Meeting in October 2013, the PHABC conference and the Networks Leadership Symposium. These research opportunities are examples of the strong training environment that CPHFRI offers to their students and I am grateful to be a recipient of them. I have received such a warm welcome from everyone on the CPHFRI team and I look forward to engaging in RePHS and ELPH projects in the coming months.

Feature Researcher: Joan Wharf Higgins

I am a Professor in the School of Exercise Science, Physical & Health Education where I have held a Canada Research Chair in Health & Society for the past 10 years (2004-2014). This year, I was very surprised and humbled to be named 1 of the 20 Most Influential Women in Sport in 2013 by the Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women in Sport (http://www.caaws.ca/grants-and-recognition/most-influential-women-list/).

I have been a member of the CPHRI, RePHS and ELPH research teams since their inception. In our 2008 CIHR Intervention grant, we explored the implementation of the Healthy Living core function in two health authorities.* The issue of evidence became prominent, igniting an interest to further explore how public health staff interpret, use, adapt and collect evidence in the CPHFRI and RePHS projects. Some of my more recent areas of research include community-based projects on healthy living and critical media health literacy among youth, food literacy, the influence of interpretive signage on park use, and how community physical activity events (e.g., fun runs) influence health behaviours and motivations of event participants.