

# British Columbia Ministry of Health Patients as Partners Initiative

## Stories of Engagement

### Mount Waddington Health Network

**Subject:** Improving the health of Mount Waddington residents

**Interview Date:** March 30, 2017

**Health Authority:** Island Health

**Service Area:** Rural and remote health-care services

**Topic:** The Health Network as a mechanism for communities to have a voice on health issues



#### What was the issue?

The Regional District of Mount Waddington covers the coastal area of northern Vancouver

Island and the adjoining parts of mainland British Columbia. The municipalities in the district are Port McNeill, Port Hardy, the village of Port Alice and the village of Alert Bay. With only 4.4 people per square kilometre, the region is relatively unpopulated. The distances, access to health and transportation have been some of the main challenges for the health of people living in the area.

In November 2005, Island Health (previously known as Vancouver Island health Authority) led a strategic plan community consultation process to improve the health of communities in the Mt. Waddington

#### Fast Facts

- **Spectrum:** Consult
- **Number of Stakeholders:** More than 300
- **Type of Stakeholders:** Residents in local communities, families, patients, caregivers, municipal officials, health-care providers and health-care staff.
- **Families Involved:** Yes
- **Ministry Priority:** Rural and remote health-care services
- **Health Outcomes:** Improved patient experience of care, better access to health care, improved provider experience of service provision, improved health of population in Mount Waddington communities, lower numbers of emergency department visits and lower numbers of substance abuse accidents.

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Regional District. It resulted in the establishment of the Mount Waddington Health Network in 2006 – a community-driven network that gives people a voice and a mechanism to further district health projects.

#### What was the engagement?

The initial consultation process resulted in a community vote in favour of a Mount Waddington Transit system. Transit began service in July 2008 with a grant from Island Health. Since then, the Health Network has accomplished a number of projects, all founded on the input received from the community.

The Health Network is a collaborative effort. Municipal leaders, health-care providers, health administrators and patient partners plan and implement the work, while the community input drives the priorities. The Health Network organizes four community forums annually for all residents in every community (Port Alice, Port McNeill, Port Hardy, Alert Bay, Sointula and the four reserves). The forums help the network find out the most pressing concerns and establish priorities. Since its inception in 2006, the Health Network has achieved a number of significant outcomes in the areas of mental health and substance use, seniors/elders health, housing and homelessness, and youth leadership. For example, a partnership with the Salvation Army provided training and skills upgrades to workers of the Extreme Weather Centre who work with the homeless members of the community that go to the centre. New pads and blankets were also supplied along with a pay increase for the centre workers. Also, one of the most recent accomplishments has been the new health and wellness centre in Port Hardy.

#### What was the outcome?

Island Health has measured and evaluated the outcomes of the Mount Waddington Health Network, and found that the community is healthier. The transit system has helped patients get to their health appointments and has been used more widely by the community.

The initiatives in the areas of housing, mental health and substance use have resulted in fewer emergency department visits, arrests for substance abuse and number of deaths. Improvements have been seen in all areas of the Triple Aim strategy.

The Health Network takes a grassroots approach by reaching out to community members and groups at lunches, organizing consultation events, and shaping their community health planning and strategies around the input received directly from the community. This work results in projects that are of most value to the community – whether it is an extreme weather project, a

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Salvation Army project or a brand new medical centre. Community members are directly consulted in all of the decisions. With sustainable funding since 2006, the Health Network has been a success and has achieved a number of positive outcomes on behalf of its community over the past 10 years. It serves as a great example of decision-making founded on community consultation to other communities in rural and remote settings.

#### How can you get involved with health-care engagements?

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