

**Self-Management Support Programs in BC
Aboriginal Communities
2008 - 2009**

Health Canada

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The objectives of this project were to:

1. Determine and provide the supports and incentives needed to get the newly trained leaders to deliver the program in their home communities.
2. Employ and train a First Nations Program Coordinator, who will develop expertise in all aspects in the chronic disease self-management program will be the primary contact and support person for the current First Nations Program Leaders.
3. Deliver the four-day leader-training workshops in four communities that express interest.
4. Deliver 4 half-day Self-Management Support training workshops to groups of aboriginal health care professionals (nurses, doctors, medical office assistants and Home Care nurses, CHR's).



A total of 58 people participated in a total of six Leader Training Workshops (five 4-day and one 3-day Leader-Training workshops). The workshops were held in the following urban and rural communities:

Community	Dates	# of participants
Vancouver	February 23, 25, March 2 & 3, 2009	12
Vancouver	March 13, 16, 19 & 23, 2009	13
Surrey	March 24, 25, April 7 & 8, 2009	9
Mt. Currie	March 30 to April 2, 2009	9
New Aiyansh	April 21, 22 & 23, 2009	4
Kitamaat Village	May 11 to 14, 2009	11
TOTAL	6 Leader Training Workshops	58 Participants

Focus group meetings were held immediately following the conclusion of the Leader-Training workshops.

GENERAL COMMENTS

- *This workshop gave me a sense of direction*
- *It gave me some stability*
- *It was fun*
- *I enjoyed it*
- *It was interesting*
- *We have been taught good things, now it is up to use to make use of them*
- *Now that I have more information, I can make better choices*
- *Now we have so much to give to others, we can finally pay it forward*
- *I want to thank whoever asked me to do this, and thank the group*
- *I was open-minded but had apprehension, because I was feeling protective of the group and wanted them to have a good experience. After listening, it seems everyone had a very positive experience. [Staff person, Vancouver Native Health Clinic]*
- *The program was well laid out.*

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Participants described their accomplishments at the conclusion of the training.

- *We can congratulate each other on our growth; here we are in a room learning something, and 2 or 3 years ago we were back alley heroin addicts.*
- *Just being here each day was an accomplishment*
- *This was a good review that reminded me of many things. It's okay to start at one minute of meditation when I was doing forty before. I managed to do four days here and still go home and make supper. I know I am recovering and will be able to lead*

again (Lynne Wahl – volunteer leader attending as a refresher).

- *My long term goal is to go back to work. I feel like I am gaining the energy and strength to go back to work after learning the things in this workshop.*
- *I knew the tools before, but now I know how to implement them.*
- *I learned to set boundaries.*

WORKSHOP CONTENT AND PROCESS

The workshop content includes several different strategies to use to help manage the challenges of living with chronic conditions.

Action Planning

Many participants commented on the value of the ‘action planning’ process to reach their goals. As reported by one participant, “*Setting a goal and the personal accountability that comes from doing it in a group was very good.*” The process of setting goals and developing weekly action plans to achieve those goals made one participant feel they had a *better focus* and their life didn’t “*feel so scattered*” now. As a result of the workshop, another participant had now set goals and *knew how to accomplish them*. Participants explained how they were going to utilize the ‘action planning’ strategy learned in the workshop.

- *My long term goal is to improve my health. I’ve been invited on the canoe journey with the young people and I want to do it. Breaking it down into smaller pieces increases my confidence that I can do it (Semiahmoo elder).*
- *I’m getting ready for the canoe journey this summer. I feel like I can eat better, and lose weight (Semiahmoo youth).*
- *I am going to continue my stretching and increase my walking. My goal is to attend the Elders’ Conference and participate in the cultural dancing.*
- *My long term goal is to go back to work. I feel like I am gaining the energy and strength to go back to work after learning the things in this workshop.*

Some participants reported using the action plans with their families.

- *My daughter and I have made an action plan chart we use at home. It’s great for helping us track our goals and accomplishments.*

Relaxation Techniques

A number of participants valued learning to use relaxation techniques.

- *It helped me with my emotional stress, I am more relaxed now*
- *I really liked the breathing and relaxation techniques, guided imagery and positive thinking. I can use these when trying to relax or when I’m feeling angry or frustrated. I would like to incorporate all of these into my life. They work to try to calm yourself down*

(Rita Price, Haisla elder in attendance).

- *I am going to try guided imagery to deal with migraines and other distractions instead of turning the lights off and going to bed.*

Problem Solving

Another strategy valued by participants was problem solving.

- *Now I can see pitfalls and drawbacks, and use problem-solving*
- *The problem-solving steps were very good. When I was feeling stressed, I made a list of what I could do about it.*
- *The brainstorming was phenomenal, the intelligence in this group is an untapped resource*

Group Process

Several participants commented positively on the group process used in the training.

- *I learned what the group can accomplish and where I fit in*
- *I liked the interactions*
- *I learned from the feedback I got*
- *I learned from others*
- *It gave me an opportunity to work with others*
- *It feels like family*
- *We got to know each other on a personal level*
- *We have a sense of togetherness*

It re-established my personal views and connection to a larger group

Participants noted their comfort with the process.

- *It was not as complex as I thought it would be*
- *I could sit here and be myself*
- *I felt nervous doing the practice teaching, but my feelings were validated. We need to share with each other.*

The Book

The book was identified as a helpful resource by a several participants.

- *The book was excellent*
- *I liked the books and the comments everyone gave*
- *I learned more about my condition from the book, things I never knew*
- *You can start anywhere reading the book, it's something you can just pick up*
- *The book is easy to read*
- *Questions I had were answered in the book*
- *The book fills in the gaps from the Leader Manual*

Participants recognized that not everyone could use a book and that an alternative format, such as a CD or tape, should be made available for those unable to read and write. Having access to the information in the book was seen as important, since, as one participant stated, *"the book builds confidence, identification and membership."* The suggestion was made to put a copy of the book on CD or tape in the community library to ensure that all community members would have access to the information.

PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

When asked what was needed to successfully implement the program in the community, a number of suggestions were provided. Promotion was the most frequently cited factor for success. Promotion needed to be *"people friendly"* and *"relaxed"*. The various ideas proposed included: *professional networking; approaching existing groups; posters and pamphlets with pictures of people in the workshops and using a grade 5 level with basic words, big letters, colours and plain text; sign-up sheets; gaining support from professional medical staff through meetings; meeting with supportive staff; doing talks (as an introduction); word of mouth; using the word 'condition' rather than 'disease'; preparing how to react to negatives (those who say "it will never work"); asking participants to become leaders; and for leaders to have a full understanding of the program.*

An essential component of the workshop was having confident leaders. A number of participants in the leader training expressed their fear of speaking in front of a group. Various ideas were brainstormed on how to address this problem, and included having *the program coordinator be a co-leader, providing a list of other leaders, and doing a practice 6-session workshop where newly trained leaders could take turns leading.*

Incentives

All focus groups felt that it was important to provide incentives for participation in the six-session workshops. A variety of suggestions were generated, including: *gift certificates, certificates of completion for workshop participants, socks for diabetes participants, pedometers, reminders to continue with the program, special pens for elders (with the name of the program and a bit bigger for people with arthritis); notebook for taking notes with dates and action plan forms; highlighters with a pen on one side; pen with post-it flags; bookmarks; mug with logo; a bag with the logo that could be used for the book; and door prizes each week.* Offering food as part of the workshop was suggested by a number of respondents as an effective way to increase the number of participants.

- *Provide healthy snacks, coffee, tea and fruit*
- *a Harvest box/Good Food box for each participant (\$12/month)*
- *Healthy food samples*
- *Provide more food*
- *Provide lunches*
- *Schedule workshop with a group meal – do workshop before lunch*

Financial incentives were also addressed. One participant asked, “*Would people come if they were not getting paid to attend?*” Two participants suggested providing a per diem or stipend for program participation.

Funding

A few participants brought up the importance of funding to implement the program. One person suggested holding a 50/50 draw at the leader gathering to fundraise for the program. Funds could be used for incentives, transportation and room rental and to compensate leaders.

Transportation

Two participants cited lack of transportation as a barrier to participation, so the suggestion was made to provide bus tickets or some form of transportation for participants.

SUGGESTIONS TO IMPROVE THE PROGRAM

A suggestion made was to increase the six-sessions to 12 sessions with shorter time each session. A further suggestion was to take the first five minutes to do a prayer or smudge and check-in with all participants. During this check in time, open the door for people to share. Another suggestion was to add a seventh session where a healthcare professional could come to speak and answer questions and inform the group about services. Instead of going home and reading the book, one person suggested including exercise bands and having the leaders demonstrate exercises to the group in order for participants to have a practical experience.

Concerning the leader training, a variety of suggestions were put forth to include more time on the following activities:

- *Emphasizing “difficult” role play*
- *Giving advice about how to handle difficult people*
- *Doing role plays*

The participants also wanted refreshers and a newsletter.

EXPERIENCE DELIVERING THE SIX-SESSION WORKSHOP

From a CDSMP leader on his first six-session workshop:

The sessions are going very well, the participants are doing good. They say that they know a lot more than they did before they started the program.

What do I know that helped is that the group is very important in terms of keeping each other to do their action plan. As an alcohol and drug counselor I have had my clients that have attended this workshop lessen their time or sessions with me because of what

they have learned. The program has given the clients hope and understanding what they are going through and what they are feeling inside and what they need to do for themselves. The symptom circle was one that everyone was looking at and trying to understand their own feelings and this gave them a tool to help themselves. Almost everyone was willing to do the exercise because the program taught them that it is important for their welling being/health. Healthy eating and breathing was also very significant in helping them to see that both was affecting their wellbeing and way living.

I give the workshop on a 1 to 10 scale, 1 meaning not good, 10 excellent; 9 out of 10

After leading this session I am encouraged to do more to help those that are willing to do the program. This is an opportunity to help those and myself to live a healthy life with chronic conditions.

From a staff member who took part in a Leader Training Workshop:

I believe the Living a Healthy Life with Chronic Disease program builds the capacity of individual's living with chronic disease to become proactive, collaborative partners with their health care team. The program models that each person is in the driver's seat of their life and builds confidence and strength in the participant's ability to live well regardless of the health challenge they face. Therefore placing the control back where it belongs...with the person not the health care professional. The program accomplishes these outcomes while respecting the values and beliefs of our Indigenous people.

I took the training last year through Sto:lo Nation Health Services. I found the information to be both useful to me in my work life and my home life. I also thought that the learning we as a group were able to share with each other was very valuable to ourselves and our communities. I have now become an advocate for living a healthy life, proper diet and taking care of myself. I may not always follow what I've learned but I'm more conscious Of what I am doing and how it affects my body. I'm proud to share I have had fewer long term illnesses this year. It's a big deal for me because for the last five or six years I've been sick for weeks on end and barely able to function both at work and at home. I no longer feel tired all the time, and if I do feel exhausted, I pay attention to what I've been doing that day or that week to cause this situation. This self checking helps me to make changes and to get back to what my goals are in order to stay strong and healthy. I still have a long way to go but I think that I'm slowly developing skills that will help me not only manage my illness, but hopefully to eliminate any further injuries or complications resulting from them. I appreciated the opportunity to interact with other Aboriginal community members who are managing their own illnesses. I felt supported and accepted by this group and enjoyed working with them. Even though it's been over a year since we had the training I still feel connected with many of the other participants and I feel honored to have walked through their lives with them. I am grateful for the stories they shared and their willingness to participate in the process. I think taking this

course has made me become more empathic to those who are in pain, more open to listening to patients and family members and more conscious of how illness affects those around me.

ACTIVITIES FOR PROMOTION OF THE PROGRAM

The Aboriginal Liaison staff person was involved in a number of different activities to build awareness of the program and recruit participants and leaders alike.

Date	Activity	Description
Sept. 24/08	Letter to Steven Point, Governor General of BC	Requested meeting with the GG to inform him about the CDSMP and ask his help in promoting the program among First Nations communities. He replied with interest but was unable in his position to endorse a specific program.
Oct 8/08	Kla-how-eya Health Fair, Surrey	Information table set up at health fair at the Friendship Centre in Surrey. Sign-up sheet to recruit interested parties. Contacts made with Fraser Health Aboriginal Health staff and Kla-how-eya staff.
Oct 21 & 22/08	Fraser East Aboriginal Health Improvement Circle meeting – Chehalis	This circle comprises of First Nations community members and health professionals from the Fraser East area. Contacts made resulted in scheduling two Leader Trainings: Lu'ma Leader Training in February 2009 and Fraser East Leader Training in 2009.
Nov 25/08	Fraser South Aboriginal Health Improvement Circle meeting – North Surrey Recreation Centre	This circle comprises of First Nations community members and health professionals from the Fraser South area. Contacts made resulted in Fraser South Leader Training in March 2009, including Katzie and Semiahmoo First Nations.
Dec 2/08	Healthy Living Alliance meeting – Lunch with Dr. David Butler-Jones	