

SUNSHINE COAST'S

VitalSigns®

2009

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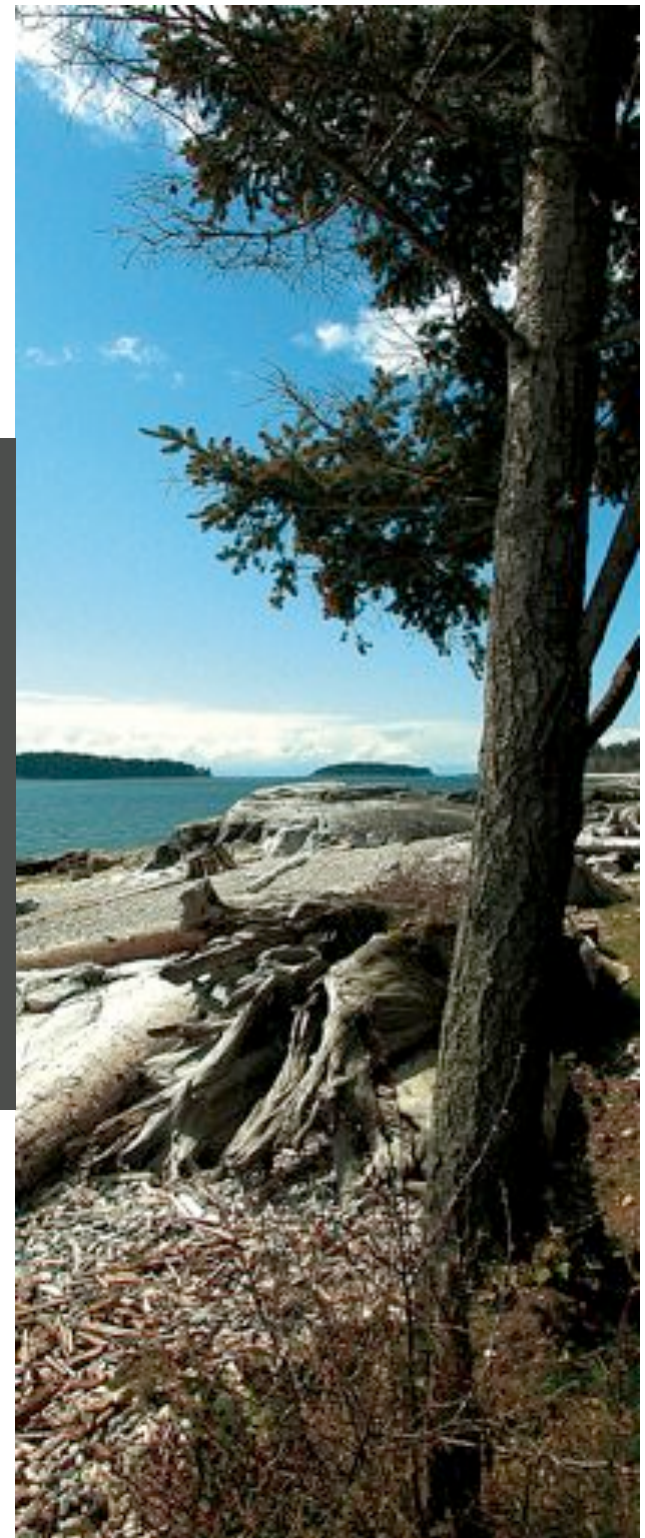
One snapshot of our community

X

Eleven key issues

X

Over one hundred citizen graders



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SUNSHINE COAST'S

VitalSigns® Methodology

This first Vital Signs report was inspired by the Community Report Card produced on the Sunshine Coast in 2004. The power of Vital Signs is that it not only reports on issues that are measurable, accountable and of interest to the community, but it also gives the community the opportunity to participate in decisions on issues that affect our quality of life and to celebrate our accomplishments.

Community Engagement

Goals






- To raise awareness of important issues in our community, encourage the community to get involved and to stimulate debate and actions to continue to improve our quality of life
- To build community capacity through shared knowledge for good decision-making.
- To build a platform for good decision-making in grant support and give direction for charitable donations on the Sunshine Coast.

Process

- The areas of interest were selected by agreement with other Community Foundations across Canada also producing a Vital Signs report.
- A study group was created for each of the areas of interest made up of six to ten community members with expertise in the respective areas. These groups suggested a number of sub-issues which they thought were important to the community. These sub-issues were then presented to researchers to determine if data was available in order to produce indicators.
- Indicators that were measurable and accountable were presented to the Vital Signs management team made up of Foundation Board members. With the help of some of the study group members, this team selected four to six indicators for each issue that would make up this report.
- The general public and selected community groups were then invited to grade the selected indicators.

Citizen Graders

Over 100 Sunshine Coast residents completed the online survey, grading the 46 indicators contained in this report. Analysis of the survey data was conducted using generally accepted statistical techniques in order to summarize the data and produce a median grade for each indicator.

	Very good: stay the course
	Good: but some improvements needed
	Progress is being made
	Of concern: needs attention
	In dire need of corrective action

Research

Data from national sources was researched and reported by the Centre for the Study of Living Standards in Ottawa.

Data from national, provincial and local Sunshine Coast sources was researched and reported by the Social Planning and Research Council of BC.

A small amount of local Sunshine Coast data was researched and reported by the Foundation Vital Signs management teams.

Expanded indicator data tables, complete with data sources, are available on our web site, www.sccfoundation.com. Click on the "Sunshine Coast's Vital Signs" button to access the detailed report.





2009 Report Highlights

Learning

Class sizes and graduation rates indicate our school system is healthy, and high rates of library use suggest lifelong learning is a priority for many on the Sunshine Coast.

Getting Started

With our aging population, improved support and services for immigrants, young adults and parents of young children are vital for the Coast's future.

Environment

Sunshine Coast residents are doing a great job of reducing, re-using and recycling solid waste, but we are still consuming far too much water and our watersheds remain vulnerable.

Health & Wellness

Mental health has improved dramatically, with deaths due to suicide and alcohol declining steadily. By contrast, deaths from treatable diseases are increasing.

Housing

Affordable housing is a huge problem. In 2006 45.7% of renters and 38.7% of mortgage holders spent more than 30% of their household income on housing. And the Coast's high proportion of seasonal homes creates a different set of political and social challenges.

Arts & Culture

The Arts and Culture sector is alive and well on the Coast, employing hundreds of paid workers and thousands of volunteers while providing the public with a rich variety of festivals, events and performances. One problem area to be addressed is the potential for burn-out among volunteers.

Gap Between Rich & Poor

Our large seniors' population is relatively well off, but many young adults on the Coast are struggling to get by.

Safety

The Coast is a safe place to live, with low rates of serious crime, vehicle theft and fatal road accidents. But we are not immune to societal problems, as shown by our high rates of drug and property crimes among youth and increasing calls for help from abused women.

Economic Health

The world's economic problems have hit many Sunshine Coast employers hard this year, and new economic opportunities to replace those lost jobs are few. It's not yet clear how well the Coast's large numbers of pensioners and self-employed people will weather this economic storm.

Belonging & Leadership

Coast residents are involved in their community, showing strong commitment to volunteerism, charitable donation, political engagement and seniors' care.

Getting Around

Sunshine Coast travelers are heavily dependent on individual vehicles, missing opportunities for increased use of transit, bicycles, and other alternatives. The rising cost of ferries and the lack of air transport create barriers to off-Coast travel and trade.

The SCCF is happy to present Vital Signs for the first time this year.

We are one of 16 Community Foundations in Canada presenting Vital Signs this year and one of the smallest.

Vital Signs is a snapshot of our community that presents our challenges and celebrates our accomplishments. We hope this report will stimulate the Sunshine Coast community to make the Coast the best it can be.

Our mission is "To contribute to the quality of life on the Sunshine Coast by building endowments, making strategic grants and inspiring community leadership." It is our hope that this Vital Signs report will help in our mission to inspire community leadership. As a Foundation, we hope that this report will also help us to make appropriate and strategic granting decisions and that it will better inform our donors about funding opportunities.

An important goal of this report is to provide accurate, measurable data. We discovered some challenges on the path to this goal. We found that there is a need for more local statistics in a variety of areas. Because our population is smaller than most of the other communities publishing a Vital Signs report, we often found ourselves lumped in with larger geographic regions, and extracting the data for just the Sunshine Coast was difficult. The most recent Statistics Canada census was in 2006, and therefore some of the data is unavoidably dated. Despite these difficulties, we were able to compile a solid foundation of facts on which we can build in future reports.

As described in the Methodology section, the process of producing this report was profoundly collaborative. It involved more than 50 volunteers, all local experts in their respective fields, and many hours of thoughtful discussion. The Foundation is an all-volunteer organization and we thank our board and community volunteers for their skills and expertise in the work that we do. We also thank the many community members who helped us decide what to include in this report. Together we can "Build a Better Community for Tomorrow. Today."



Peter W. Bogardus, Q.C., Board Chair Don Basham, Vital Signs Manager



Learning

Graduation rates are high on the Sunshine Coast, with a consistent 95 to 100 per cent of eligible Grade 12 students graduating, including aboriginal and special needs students.



High school non-completion

As of 2006, 18.2% of the Sunshine Coast population had not completed high school, which is better than both the provincial average (19.9%) and the national average (23.8%). Graduation rates are very high for all categories of students. Of the Grade 12 students eligible to graduate in 2008, 95% did graduate. The graduation rate was 95% for aboriginal students and 100 per cent for special needs students.



Class sizes

Although maximum class sizes are set by law in BC, choices by the local school district do influence average class size. In 2009, average elementary class sizes on the Sunshine Coast were below the provincial averages: 17.2 students for kindergarten, 20.3 for grades 1-3, and 24.9 for grades 4-7. However, grades 8-12 had an average class size of 25.7, higher than the provincial average of 24.4.



Composite Learning Index

Each year the Canadian Council on Learning calculates the Composite Learning Index (CLI) for 4700 communities. The CLI combines 24 different learning-related statistics into a single score. The Sunshine Coast consistently scores below the provincial average CLI, largely because of long travel times to educational and cultural facilities. In 2009 the Sunshine Coast received its lowest CLI score since 2006 and scored below the national average for the first time.



Library use

2007, the Gibsons library's circulation rate was 18.4 books per capita, while the Sechelt library's rate was 12.4. Both libraries' rates were higher than the provincial rate of 11.4.



How the Foundation is helping...

The Foundations endowments include the Iris Loewen Endowment in support of the Sechelt Public Library. This fund was created to honour retired librarian Iris Loewen. In 2006, the Foundation funded a Nature Awareness Program at Halfmoon Bay Community School and a Garbage Free Lunch Program in School District #46.

How you can help...

- Sign up for a class
- Get a library card and use it



Getting Started

The future of our region relies on our children and youth. Newcomers are also integral to our region's future. However, there is a relative lack of support and services for immigrants, young adults and parents of young children.



Migration

The Sunshine Coast has grown at a relatively constant rate since 2004, with 303 to 530 people per year moving here. The source of these newcomers has also been consistent: about half moved from elsewhere in B.C., about a third came from other Canadian provinces, and the rest immigrated from other countries.



Youth unemployment

As noted in the "Gap Between Rich and Poor" section of this report, lack of work is a concern for young adults (ages 19-24) on the Sunshine Coast. In September 2008, 4.8% of all the Coast's young adults, and 1.3% of all "employable" young adults, were collecting income assistance. In addition, 2.7% of young adults were collecting unemployment insurance. All these numbers are higher than the provincial figures for young adults.



Child care availability

In July 2009, there were 252 full time child care spaces on the Sunshine Coast, 200 for children aged 3-5 and 52 for children younger than three. Lack of child care space for infants and toddlers under 3 is an ongoing concern. Another 118 spaces were available in out of school care programs, but there is currently no out of school care program in Pender Harbour.



Immigrants

In 2006, 17.4% of the population of the Sunshine Coast was composed of immigrants. By contrast, 27.5% of the population of B.C. were immigrants, concentrated in the Lower Mainland. Aside from an English as a Second Language program, there are few services available on the coast for immigrants.



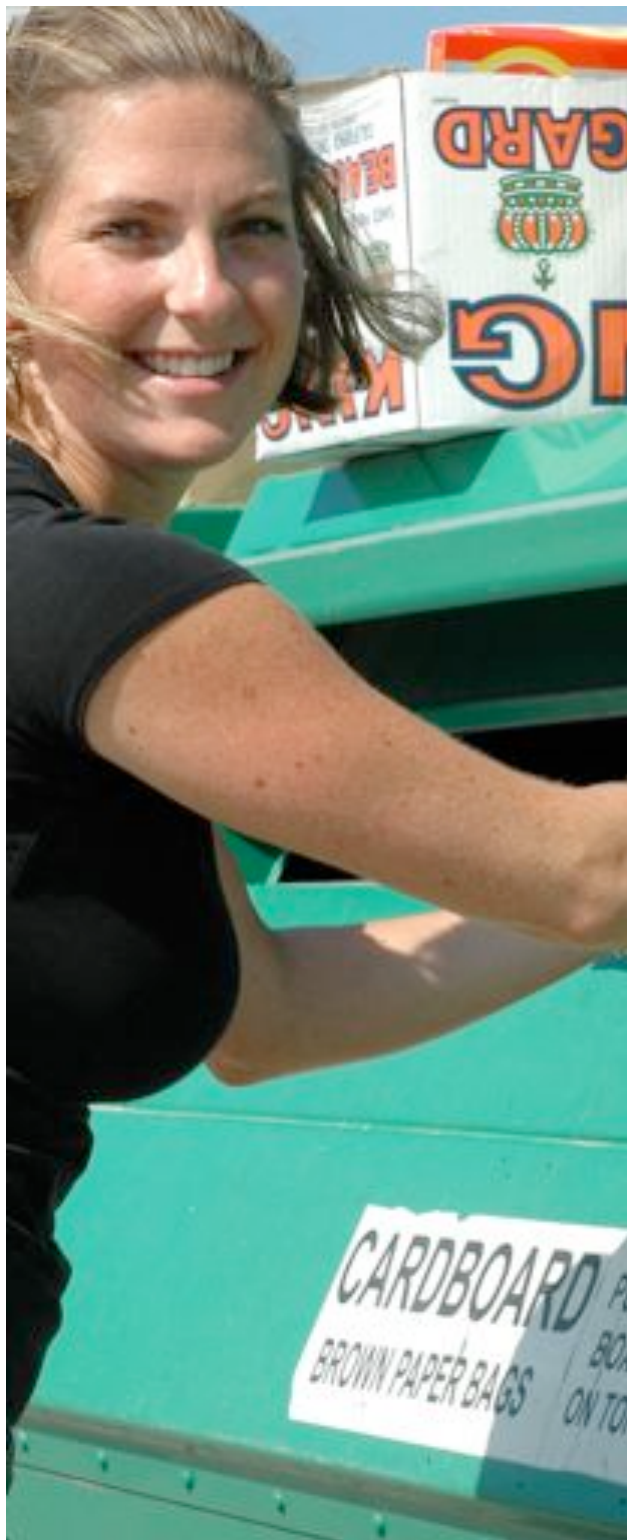
How you can help...

- Support and mentor immigrants and young adults
- Honour other cultures
- Chat with someone who wants to practice speaking English

How the Foundation is helping...

The Foundation has provided grants to the Gibsons Parent and Tot program for the three years (2007-09) from the Jean and Arthur Clarke Endowment. Funding has also gone to Roberts Creek Child Care for playground updates and sports equipment. In 2007 a grant went to Junior Achievement for educational materials.





Environment

Water supply is the top environmental issue on the Sunshine Coast, with water consumption rising steadily despite conservation efforts. More data on this issue is needed.



Water quality

Domestic water quality is very good for the majority of Sunshine Coast households. However, control of water sources and maintenance of water quality are major ongoing concerns. For some rural areas served by wells, water quality is a bigger problem and in July 2009, six small rural areas were subject to a boil water advisory.



Water conservation

Water consumption per capita on the Sunshine Coast is higher than provincial and federal averages even during the winter low season, and significantly higher during summer. During the summer of 2008, water use was 682 litres per person per day, 22 litres higher than the summer of 2007. Water conservation initiatives include the Sunshine Coast Regional District's low-flow toilet exchange program, rainwater recovery systems promoted by the Sunshine Coast Conservation Association, and water metering in Gibsons.



Recycling

In 2008, about 25% of the waste on the Sunshine Coast was diverted from landfills, slightly higher than the Canadian average of 22%. This number does not include home composting and private recycling companies. Per capita waste levels have dropped 47% since 1990.



Greenhouse gas emissions

Climate change represents the most significant environmental challenge of the 21st century. In 2007, about 70% of the Sunshine Coast's greenhouse gas emissions came from on-road transportation, 16% from buildings and 14% from solid waste. Sechelt, Gibsons and the Sunshine Coast Regional District have signed on to the BC Climate Action Plan to lower greenhouse gas emissions.



How the Foundation is helping...

In 2006, the Foundation funded a Sunshine Coast Water Summit that brought together scientists, stakeholders, government agencies and local elected officials to explore issues pertaining to potable water on the Coast and to create a set of actions items to address the issues.

How you can help...

- Recycle
- Buy a rain barrel
- Drive less



Health & Wellness

Chronic diseases such as diabetes, high blood pressure, kidney disease, lung disease, heart failure, and mental illness are rising as the Canadian population ages. Regular physical activity is a key prevention strategy for these diseases.



Birth weight

The incidence of low weight births on the Sunshine Coast dropped 40% between 2002 and 2006. Our rate (26.26 per 1,000 births) is far lower than the provincial average (54.74 per 1,000).



Life expectancy

Life expectancy at birth is an indicator of overall health for all age groups. In 2006, the Sunshine Coast's average life expectancy was 81.1 years, slightly higher than the provincial average.



Suicide and alcohol deaths

Death rates are measured by the standardized mortality ratio, which compares the Sunshine Coast to the province as a whole. The Sunshine Coast's standardized mortality

ratio for suicide has declined steadily since 2002, and in 2006 our suicide rate was only slightly higher than the B.C. average. The rate of deaths due to alcohol on the Sunshine Coast dropped 15.5% from 2002 to 2006, and is considerably lower than the provincial average.



Deaths due to treatable disease

The death rate from medically treatable diseases such as tuberculosis, bacterial infections, hypertension, pneumonia, and bronchitis is significantly higher on the Sunshine Coast than the provincial average, and it is on the rise. The standardized mortality ratio for treatable diseases increased from 1.11 in 2002 to 1.17 in 2006.



How you can help...

- Use our new recreation facilities
- Quit smoking
- Nourish your spirit

How the Foundation is helping...

The Foundation donated to the 'Back the Cat' project in 2006 and on two occasions, provided funds in support of projects for the Arrowhead Centre Society. Also in 2009 the Foundation granted to the Child and Youth Suicide Prevention Committee.



Housing

Housing is increasingly unaffordable on the Sunshine Coast, both for renters and for mortgage-holders.

Households spending more than 30% of income on housing

Housing is considered unaffordable if a household spends 30% or more of its income on housing. On the Sunshine Coast in 2006, 45.7% of rental households and 38.7% of homeowners with mortgages spent beyond the 30% benchmark. These numbers are higher than both the provincial and federal averages.

Cost of renting vs. owning

On the Sunshine Coast it is cheaper to own a home than to rent, while the opposite is true for Canada and for BC as a whole. In 2006, the median cost of a rented dwelling on the Coast was \$735/month, while the median cost for a homeowner was \$646/month.

Dwelling type

On the Sunshine Coast, a very high proportion of housing units are single detached housing (81.2%). This figure is much higher than both the provincial level (49.2%) and the national level (55.3%). This low housing density has implications for sustainability, affordability and health.

Subsidized housing

In March 2009, there were 390 households on the Sunshine Coast living in subsidized units or receiving rent subsidies. Of these, 66% were senior households and the rest were low income families, special needs and the homeless. At the same time, 22 households were on the BC Housing Registry wait list for subsidized units.

Seasonal dwellings

25% of the dwellings on the Sunshine Coast are seasonal dwellings, much higher than the provincial average of 9%. During the summer the population increases by about 8,000 people. This large seasonal population affects planning and community engagement for development, recreation, transportation and water use.

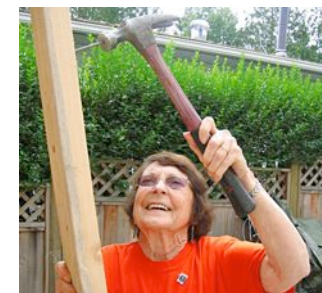


How the Foundation is helping...

In 2004, the Foundation funded a community forum to explore issues around affordable housing and again in 2008 funded a follow-up forum to help move the affordable housing initiative forward. Also in 2004, the Foundation made a grant to Habitat for Humanity to help establish this organization on the Coast.

How you can help...

- Support bylaws which encourage higher density in town centres and limit suburban sprawl
- Support affordable housing projects



Arts & Culture

Arts, culture, recreation and sports employ more than 5% of our population, notably higher than the provincial and national averages.



Cultural employment

In 2006, 5.1% of the Sunshine Coast's labour force had jobs related to arts, culture, recreation and sports, an increase from 4.2% in 2001. Cultural employment is also notably higher on the Coast than the provincial and national averages (3.5% and 3.0% in 2006, respectively).



Cultural volunteers

In 2006, cultural organizations on the Sunshine Coast relied on about 1,300 volunteers. The commitment of the volunteer workforce provides evidence of community engagement in arts and culture organizations, and of the strength of the sector. However, organizations need to plan to avoid the potential problem of burn-out among over-committed volunteers.



Festivals and events

More than 90 festivals and events take place on the Sunshine Coast, allowing us to celebrate our community's history and social identity and providing a forum for creativity, customs, and heritage. Attendance, for those events where it was recorded, ranged from 400 to 10,000. Most events serve the local population, but four draw significant numbers of tourists.



Government support for the arts

In 2005, the Town of Gibsons, the District of Sechelt and the Sunshine Coast Regional District spent \$166,410 on arts and cultural activities. The largest expenditure was \$86,000 for museums.



How you can help...

- Volunteer at a cultural event
- Sponsor cultural organizations
- Invite a friend to a local performance or event

How the Foundation is helping...

Approximately 20% of the Foundation's endowed funds are dedicated to Arts and Culture. In addition to four specific fields of interest endowments, the Foundation funded 12 Arts and Culture projects from its general Community Funds over the past six years.





Gap Between Rich & Poor

The Sunshine Coast's seniors are relatively well-off, but our young adults, disproportionately rely on income assistance or unemployment insurance.



Food bank use

In the first six months of 2009, there were 5,804 visits to the Sunshine Coast Food Bank, a 36.7% increase from the first six months of 2008.



Low income residents

In 2005, the percentage of low income residents in the Sunshine Coast Regional District was 7.8%, much lower than the proportion for B.C. (13.1%) and for Canada (11.4%). And only 1.4% of seniors on the Coast were low income, far below the provincial level of 7.3%.



Seniors receiving maximum Old Age Security

In September 2008, only 0.8% of Old Age Security recipients on the Sunshine Coast received the maximum level of income support. This figure was less than a quarter of the B.C. level (3.3%).



Single parent households

In 2006, 26.7% of the Sunshine Coast's families with children at home were single parent families, slightly higher than the provincial figure of 25.7%. The Coast's single parent families have an average income of \$40,490, compared to \$73,976 for two parent families.



Income Assistance

In September 2008, 4.4% of local residents (ages 0-64) were receiving income assistance, higher than the provincial rate of 3.8%. Many of these people were long-term recipients who cannot work; only 0.8% of Coast residents aged 19-64 who are considered employable were on income assistance. Of young adults (ages 19-24): 4.8% of all, and 1.3% of employable young adults, were on income assistance. Plus, 2.7% of young adults were collecting employment insurance, all more than provincial averages.



How the Foundation is helping...

The Foundation holds an Agency Endowment for the Sunshine Coast Community Services Society and has funded several of their programs over the past six years. This agency provides a wide range of programs and services, many directed to bridging the gap between the rich and poor.

How you can help...

- Support our food banks
- Employ a young adult



Safety

The role of volunteer fire departments is changing as fire fighters are increasingly being called on for emergencies other than fire. As well, the lack of an alternative route to Highway 101 complicates emergency responses.



Deaths from motor vehicle accidents

The standardized mortality ratio for deaths from motor vehicle accidents on the Sunshine Coast rose 63.6% from 2002 to 2006. However, in 2006 our death rate from motor vehicle accidents was still lower than the provincial average with a standardized mortality ratio of 0.90.



Crime rates

The rate of serious crimes on the Sunshine Coast decreased 17.5% from 2003 to 2006, and is notably lower than the provincial average. The property crime rate was 9.5 per 1,000 for the Coast and 11.7 per 1,000 for the province. However, the rate of property crimes committed by youths aged 12-17 was higher on the Sunshine Coast (3.0 per 1,000) than the provincial average (2.0 per 1,000). The rate of drug crimes (excluding cannabis) committed by youth on the Sunshine Coast was very high: 104.1 per 1,000, which is more than double the provincial average.



Restorative justice

The Sunshine Coast's Community Justice Program received 64 referrals in 2008. It held 30 Restorative Justice conferences, involving 47 offenders and more than 150 community members. The program provided 284.5 hours of community service and paid \$968.56 to victims of crime. Volunteer support totaled 2,400 hours for the year.



Domestic violence

The number of women seeking help from the Yew Transition House has increased steadily over the past 25 years. In 2008/09, the transition house received 838 calls for support, gave shelter to 97 women and 36 children, and was unable to shelter 24 women and 14 children when the 7-bed shelter was full.



How you can help...

- Support restorative justice
- Drive cautiously

How the Foundation is helping...

In 2006, the Foundation funded a workshop for stakeholders working in the area of violence against older women and in 2008 provided start-up funds for communication initiatives for the Restorative Justice Program.





Economic Health

The unique demographics of the Sunshine Coast hurt the local economy. With a median age of 48.3 (10 years older than the BC average), few post-secondary options, and reliance on an expensive ferry system for transportation and goods, there are limited economic opportunities.



Recent job losses

The global economic downturn has brought major job losses to the Sunshine Coast in 2009. A very significant forest-related company laid off 15% of its workers permanently in the spring of 2009, and up to 50% more are subject to temporary lay-offs. The residential housing market has collapsed; only 28 new building permits were issued in the first five months of 2009, far below the ten-year average of 330 new housing units a year. The unemployment rate for the region increased from 5.4% in 2008 to 8.2% in the spring of 2009.



Biggest employers

The Sunshine Coast was once largely supported by fishing, construction and forestry, but no longer. In 2006, the top-employing industries were retail (employs 12% of local workers), health and social work (9%), manufacturing (8%), education (7%), professional, scientific and technical services (7%), and accommodation and food services (5%). Agriculture, forestry and fishing employ less than 5% of local workers.



Sources of Income

Wages and salaries only accounted for 66.2% of the total income on the Sunshine Coast in 2006. Government transfers made up 14.3% of total income, and "other money" such as pensions and support payments accounted for 19.5%. Nationally and provincially, by contrast, wages and salaries accounted for more than 75% of total income.



Self-Employment

In 2006, 26% of the Sunshine Coast labour force was self-employed, compared to 14% for all of BC



Small Business

Small business is a significant part of the local economy. Of 2,742 firms within the Sunshine Coast Regional District, 97% had fewer than 20 employees in 2008. Only 5 firms employed more than 200 people.



How the Foundation is helping...

In 2007, the Foundation provided funding to help Community Living and the Gibsons Family Network with the training of mentally challenged adults working in the food kiosk at the Gibsons recreation centre. Also, on two occasions the Foundation provided funding to hire local artists to create art for non-profit organization projects.

How you can help...

- Shop locally and hire locally
- Invest in training your staff
- Invite visitors to the Sunshine Coast



Belonging & Leadership

There are 435 volunteer organizations on the Sunshine Coast, one indication of a strong community spirit.



Voter turnout

Voter turnout in our provincial riding, which includes Powell River, has been much higher than the provincial average for the past three B.C. elections and was 64% in the 2009 election. Voter turnout in our federal riding, which includes Powell River, West Vancouver, Squamish and Whistler, was similar to the B.C. average in the last four federal elections and was 63.4% in the 2008 federal election. In the 2008 municipal elections, voter turnout was 41.7% for the Town of Gibsons, 38.5% for the District of Sechelt and 19.3% for the Sunshine Coast Regional District.



Seniors

Compared to the provincial average, seniors on the Sunshine Coast are less likely to live alone. In 2006, 32% of the Coast's seniors lived alone, compared to the provincial average of 35%. In the same census, 17.4% of the population over the age of 15 reported spending unpaid time caring for seniors, which is very close to the provincial average.



Charitable donations

Since 2001, Sunshine Coast residents have consistently been more likely to donate to charity than the average British Columbian, although they give less on average. In 2007, 24.8% of tax filers on the Sunshine Coast donated to charity, compared to the provincial average of 22.8%. Median donations from Coast residents have increased 55% in that same time, reaching a high point of \$310 in 2007. This is still lower than the provincial average of \$340, but the donation gap has narrowed considerably since 2001.



How you can help...

- Organize a block party
- Donate to a local charity
- Volunteer for a political party or cause you believe in

How the Foundation is helping...

The Sunshine Coast Community Foundation holds 20 endowment funds to date with over \$500,000 in contributed capital. In addition to creating endowments and making grants to charities on the Sunshine Coast, the Foundation plays a role in inspiring leadership in the community.





Getting Around

A major effort is underway to get the Sechelt airport accredited so that scheduled flights will be possible.

Modes of transportation

In 2006, 75.4% on the Sunshine Coast drove themselves to work or school, 8.9% rode in vehicles as passengers, 8.2% walked, 4.2% took transit, and 0.9% bicycled. Compared to the provincial average, more people on the Coast used vehicles or walked and fewer used transit or bicycles.

Commuting flows

On the Sunshine Coast in 2006, 38.9% of the labour force commuted to a different district for work, 14.7% worked from home and 16.2% had no fixed work address. In Sechelt, 8.9% commute to Gibsons, 5.6% commute to Area F (Port Mellon) and 5.8% commute to the Lower Mainland. In Gibsons, 14.6% commute to Area F, 13.8% commute to Sechelt and 14.5% commute to the Lower Mainland.

Transit service

As of 2007/08, there were four public transit vehicles on the Sunshine Coast to serve a population of 19,800. This translated to 23.9 rides per capita and 28.2 rides per hour, a higher ridership than most other Tier 3 transit systems in small BC communities. The cost per ride for providing transit service was \$2.90, considerably lower than the \$4.22 average for Tier 3.

Ferry fares

Between June 2007 and March 2009, the average return fare for all vehicles on the Sunshine Coast – Mainland ferry route rose by 19%.



How the Foundation is helping...

Although the Foundation has not funded in this area of interest, the Foundation applauds the advocacy work of the Sunshine Coast Ferry Advisory Committee and the excellent communication that it provides to our community on ferry travel issues.

How you can help...

- Take the bus
- Bicycle to work
- Combine several errands during one car trip
- Carpool



Acknowledgements

SCCF Board of Directors

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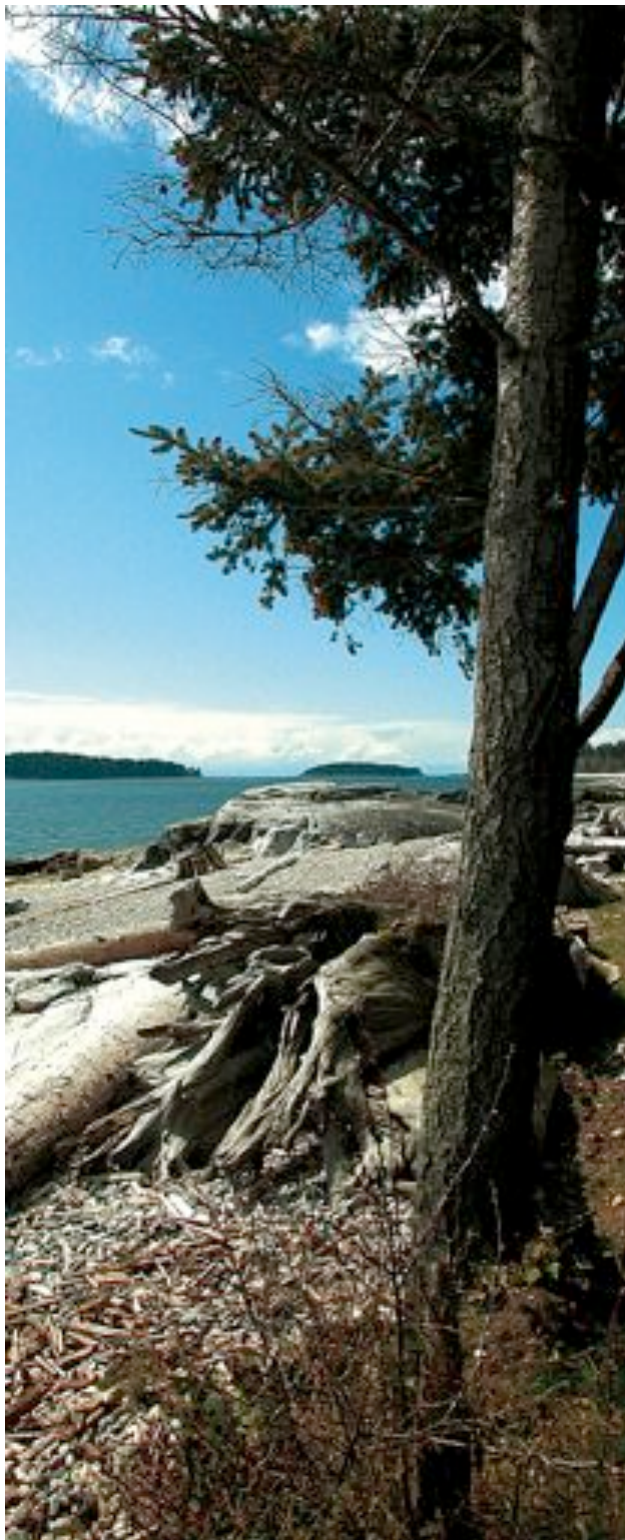
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Vital Signs is a community check-up conducted by community foundations across Canada that measures the vitality of our communities, identifies significant trends, and shares opportunities for action in at least ten areas critical to quality of life. *Vital Signs* is coordinated nationally by Community Foundations of Canada.



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