



A PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH
A CANADIAN COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE
IN ECOSYSTEM APPROACHES
TO HUMAN HEALTH WITH
A TRAINING AND AWARDS PROGRAM
FOR ECOHEALTH RESEARCH IN
INTERNATIONAL AND DEVELOPMENT
SETTINGS

SUMMARY OF THE TECHNICAL REPORT FOR THE PERIOD JANUARY TO
DECEMBER 2008

UNIVERSITY OF GUELPH, UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA,
UNIVERSITÉ DU QUÉBEC À MONTRÉAL
CANADA

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SYNTHESIS

The three primary goals of the Canadian Community of Practice in Ecosystem Approaches to Health (CoPEH-Canada) are to stimulate exchanges between interested key stakeholders, to provide skills in using ecohealth approaches to a new generation of researchers and policy makers and to study the processes and outcomes of the first two objectives. In 2008, the Canadian Community of Practice in Ecosystem Approaches to Health initiated the construction of a sturdy platform that will allow for the Canadian contributions in ecohealth research to develop and grow through stimulating knowledge sharing between Canadian and international researchers, stakeholders and decision makers. Our official launch was held on the 15th of August at the UBC farm.

Our community's foundation, the nodal structure, has been solidified with the support of the three initiating university's expertise on the ecohealth approach. The progressive development of the community of practice with the participation of colleagues, partners and collaborators interested in the ecosystem approach to health has been set in motion through CoPEH-Canada national and nodal activities as well as the construction of a communication list comprised of some 500 individuals. Furthermore, our website has allowed us to reach out to new colleagues and keep old ones informed and a CoPEH-Canada listserv was developed for alumni. Finally, the CoPEH-Canada had a strong showing at the International Ecohealth Forum 2008 held in December in Merida, Mexico. In all, 20 CoPEH-Canada members attended, contributing to 25 presentations.

Our second goal, that of building on Ecohealth training in Canada, was inaugurated in August with our first 11-day intensive Ecohealth Training and Awards Program hosted by the University of British Columbia's Department of Family Practice and College of Health Disciplines, from August 5-15, 2008. The Ecohealth Training Program in Vancouver included a variety of methods sessions, two team-based learning scenarios, a field trip to Vancouver Island, a World Café, guest speakers and dynamic presentations by students in university and community settings. To complement this, local working groups were established to assist with the design and delivery of the course. One was focused on the incorporation of Indigenous perspectives into the short course and two others were oriented to the two team-based learning scenarios for the course (one based around *Cryptococcus gatti* and the other on the linkages between housing, food security and transportation in Vancouver). The final group of graduating "alumni" included **19 graduate students** and **3 career development participants** from six provinces. Each of the 19 graduate students received a 1,000 \$ travel award. Following the course, students were invited to apply for the Ecohealth Research Grant. There were nine applicants and four winners were selected. In the interest of helping students advance their projects, we provided critical feed-back to each applicant. A short-term evaluation of the course was carried out by 20 of the 22 graduates and all 15 CoPEH-Canada team members (faculty and staff) in October, giving an overall response rate of 95%. The results are currently being analysed. These will be of value in the planning of the second iteration of the course and will provide a base-line in the longer term follow-up with course participants, focused on collaborative relationships and capacity building for ecohealth. Preparations are already under way for the second

Ecohealth Training & Awards Program to be held next summer at the University of Guelph.

The research component of the CoPEH has two main and complementary research themes: “collaboration” and “collaborative learning and sharing.” The first stage of this research project goes hand in hand with the course evaluation and the latter addresses questions of collaborative learning. Medium and long term evaluations, meetings minutes, interviews and network questionnaires will complement these data. Planning of the research is well underway, but, as per the initial project, most of the research endeavour will start in the second year of CoPEH-Canada.

Nodal activities

Each of the Nodal Advisory Committees was responsible for establishing and defining CoPEH work-plans for their region.

Québec-Maritimes: A first meeting was held with the members of the CoPEH-Québec/Maritimes node at the short course in Vancouver. The goal of this meeting was to get a chance to know each other and each others’ research interests and needs. A special emphasis will be given to the participation of graduate students and community groups involved in our research projects. A list of people and organizations was created and several have already been invited to the second CoPEH-Québec/Maritimes meeting which will be held January 14, 2009 with the goal of preparing the first CoPEH-Québec/Maritimes activity.

Ontario: The Guelph node has had two meetings and has developed a strategy to encourage new members and participation from across the Ontario region. As part of this strategy, the Ontario node will host a half day symposium to discuss the role of ecohealth in professional health training curricula. Planning for the 2009 short course is underway.

West: The primary activity of the Western node was the planning of and preparations to host the inaugural short course under the coordination of Vancouver’s CoPEH PIs and Co-PIs. The node members chose to profile the theme of Indigenous Perspectives through a networking gathering entitled “Health of the People – Health of the Land – An opportunity for dialogue.” The interest generated from the exchange between Indigenous scholars from New Zealand and Canada has provided the basis for a collaborative NZ- Canada funding proposal for submission in February 2009 to the NZ International Opportunities Fund, entitled: Indigenous Perspectives on Ecohealth: a New Zealand -Canadian Collaboration. After the completion of the 2008 course, the Western node chose to establish a monthly pot-luck dinner for alumni and team-members, with discussion on topical Ecohealth themes or research questions.