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### **Abbotsford Youth Health Centre Receives \$10K Oak Tree Foundation Grant, Approaches 2 Years and 300 Patients**

**July 2012, Abbotsford, BC:** "When we were working towards opening, all we knew was that having a youth-friendly health centre was one of the recommendations to come out of the Child and Youth-Friendly Abbotsford Plan that Abbotsford City Council approved in November 2009," said Dr. Elizabeth Watt, a doctor and Co-Chair of the Abbotsford Youth Health Centre, "And now here we are a year and a half after opening, continually working to find creative ways to serve our near-landslide of patients, many of whom had given up on their health or hadn't seen a doctor in years."

"We see the AYHC changing the culture around health - most importantly among youth previously unattached to other doctors. It's clear from the statistics that youth are now talking peer-to-peer about health matters, and about their positive experiences at the AYHC. For Fraser Health, there couldn't be a better model than one that enables and encourages youth to actively seek help for their problems before they reach crisis points and end up in the ER," said David Portesi, Fraser Health Public Health Director, "That's not just good news for youth. It's good news for everyone."

When a patient is admitted through the Emergency Room, costs run \$1,500 per person per day, but the AYHC has managed, with its dedicated staff and volunteers, to run on less than \$75,000 to date. "Thankfully, every time we're starting to run on fumes, new funding has come through to at least keep our doors open," said Brian Gross, Executive Director at Impact Youth Substance Use Services and another Co-Chair, "But we're still in urgent need of funds. We're running on nearly 60% volunteer time, which isn't sustainable over the long term. We also see much more we could do, especially around prevention in the community. Tax-deductible donations can be made at [www.ayhc.ca](http://www.ayhc.ca)."

The latest grant, allowing the AYHC doors to stay open through the fall, is from the Oak Tree Foundation, overseen by the Redekop family. In addition to the grant, a member of the family, Joanne Hamm, has become one of the AYHC's most familiar volunteer faces. Hamm serves as the Centre's Nurse Navigator and helps to coordinate the AYHC's new Advocacy Support Workers (ASW). "We found youth wanting to discuss all kinds of problems that affect their ability to look after their health – relationships, housing, employment, food security," said Hamm, "Without working on these challenges, the progress we make on immediate health concerns may be erased in other areas. Yet, talking with our doctors about these non-medical issues was making it hard to see our increasing number of patients. Now our volunteer ASWs meet with kids, sometimes for an hour or more. We even have kids who return just to see the ASW." Past AYHC grants have come from the Van Tel Legacy Fund and Sumas-Abbotsford Rotary Club, among others.

"Fraser Health pays our doctors one of the days we are open each week. MCFD has been paying for the other day," said Shairose Jinnah, another Co-Chair and Manager of Counselling, Youth and Family Support Services at Abbotsford Community Services, "Fraser Health has given us a home at the hospital over the last year until at least September, when one of our 2 days will move to Bakerview Learning Centre. Students of the school make up 30% of our patients."

"The school district recognizes how the AYHC has helped to better complete the circle of services necessary to help youth in our district thrive – especially those who may be contending with circumstances that will be most responsive to customized and flexible supports. The AYHC doesn't have a policy of one issue per visit. That's critical for many of our youth," said Board of Education Chair, John Sutherland, "The results we've seen to date have been outstanding."

**Information about the Abbotsford Youth Health Centre:** A program of Abbotsford Community Services, in partnership with Ministry of Children and Family Development, Fraser Health Authority, Abbotsford Division of Family Practice, Impact Youth Substance Use Services & other service providers. Our Mission: "Helping Abbotsford's youth develop the lifelong habit of protecting and enhancing all aspects of their health." Age 12-24. Tuesdays & Thursdays, 4-7pm, ARH.

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