Leading the Way to Improve the Health of Populations
August 2017
School of Population and Public Health Strategic Plan
Message from the Co-Directors

This plan refreshes a five-year strategic plan for the School of Population and Public Health that was developed in 2013.

In May 2017, the recruitment for a new Director for the School of Population and Public Health was launched. We anticipate a permanent Director will be at the helm in 2018. This has provided an opportunity to review and update the School’s vision and describe our broad priorities. The School is poised to play a leading role in rapidly identifying and solving significant health challenges and training population and public health professionals.

Population and public health are key to the University of British Columbia Faculty of Medicine’s strategic plan 2016-2021, and the School of Population and Public Health has the unique opportunity to play a transformational role in building that future.

This is a living document that will guide the School of Population and Public Health’s priorities, decision-making and academic commitments.

We look forward to the coming years as we continue to progress and contribute to a better world by educating the next generation of population and public health scholars and using our research to improve the health of populations at home and around the world.

Professors Carolyn Gotay and Chris Lovato
SPPH Co-Directors
At the University of British Columbia School of Population and Public Health, our work in research, education, practice, and policy is guided by an ecological model where population and public health is at the centre of a dynamic interplay among multiple determinants.

The School of Population and Public Health’s current focus builds on the pioneering work of Canadian population and public health trailblazers such as Marc Lalonde, Trevor Hancock, and many of our own School of Population and Public Health faculty members.

We recognize that health is a product of dynamic and diverse influences, including society, economic factors, culture, behaviour, health care and health systems, biology, and the physical environment. The multifaceted health problems we face today cannot be solved one person at a time, but require us to consider the health ecosystem in all of its complexity.

Figure 1: University of British Columbia - School of Population and Public Health Framework
Background

The University of British Columbia School of Population and Public Health was named #20 in the world by the 2017 U.S. News & World Report’s global ranking of programs in social sciences and public health.

How did we achieve this eminence?

Our faculty and students have made outstanding contributions, applying science to solving key population health problems including:

- Controlling the HIV/AIDS crisis, learning from novel approaches that are now being applied to address the devastating impacts of opioid drug use.
- Understanding the impact of the environment on health, including the benefits of walkable and bikeable cities, the damaging impacts of air pollution, and the creation of safe and healthy workplaces.
- Investigating how policies affect use of health care services, costs, and outcomes in order to achieve a world-class sustainable health care system.

What is our focus?

- We emphasize prevention – understanding the pathways to poor health at the population and system-level so we can improve and maintain the health of the population.
- Our key values include equity – working to alleviate health disparities linked to income, region, and stigma, as well as historical and current discrimination.
- Our approach is based on using scientific evidence to solve problems, with full consideration of community values and context.

What makes the University of British Columbia School of Population and Public Health successful?

- The province of British Columbia offers an unparalleled opportunity in its accessible and linkable population-based datasets, which include diverse data on health care utilization and outcomes, diseases and conditions, and correlates and predictors.
- British Columbia comprises a diverse physical and social environment: rural and urban, rich and poor, Indigenous populations and new immigrants.
- Our School provides a variety of educational programs to meet different needs including those of discovery-oriented and applied scientists, public health practitioners, and health administrators.
- We work closely with local, provincial, national and international communities and provide evidence to a range of organizations including health care agencies, facilities, and providers, governmental agencies, non-governmental organizations, Indigenous organizations, and the general public.
About the School

The School of Population and Public Health is bordered by the Pacific Ocean, Coast Mountains, and the city of Vancouver, and provides a stimulating setting for learning and research in population and public health.

Our vision of leading the way to improve the health of populations by training the next generation of leaders in population and public health is supported by our diverse educational program offerings, research excellence, vast experience in the field, and collaborative partnerships.

Our more than 350 graduate students are completing masters, doctorate and residency programs investigating local and global health issues; and developing skills, tools, programs and policies for improvements in the health of populations.

We also offer undergraduate courses in key topics related to population and public health. (See Appendix A: Summary of academic programs and undergraduate courses.)

Faculty and research staff at the School study a diverse range of topics related to the determinants of health, such as preventing and controlling epidemics, building healthy workplaces and cities, understanding health needs of communities such as Indigenous peoples and sexual minorities, and investigating and improving the effectiveness of health systems.

All of this work goes toward the goal of improving the health of populations in our local, provincial, national, and world-wide communities through evidence, partnerships, and service. (See Appendix B: Summary of the School of Population and Public Health Divisions and affiliated research units and programs).

Vision

Create, share, and apply knowledge that provides innovative solutions to problems that will result in better health for all.

Mission

Faculty, staff, and students in the School of Population and Public Health create and nurture a vibrant environment that fosters learning, innovation, and partnerships to improve the health of populations at home and around the world.

Principles

Five basic principles provide the foundation for our goals:

- **Equity** - We are committed to reducing the health inequities that exist in our society and around the world.
- **Excellence** - We generate evidence and advance knowledge by conducting research that is recognized for its outstanding quality, relevance, and innovativeness.
- **Evidence-informed** - We work to make discoveries and support decision-making by using the best available evidence to inform health practice, programming, and policies.
- **Interdisciplinary** - We work across disciplines, crossing the traditional boundaries, to address the complex health problems facing our society.
- **Collaboration** - We work jointly, with a wide range of partners, to build healthy communities through advances in population-based policies and practices.
Pillars, Goals, and Objectives

This plan includes goals and objectives for the School within three pillars: education, research, and organizational development.

These pillars straddle the diversity of interests represented by our faculty, and their goals and objectives guide the School in making decisions, and aim to facilitate future growth.

The pillars represent the means through which we will bring our vision, mission, and principles to life and serve to guide us toward leading the way to improve the health of populations.
Education Pillar

Population and public health cross disciplinary boundaries, and the School’s faculty and staff reflect a hub of expertise in a broad range of disciplines.

Over the past decade, we have witnessed advancements in technology and educational methods that have vastly changed the teaching landscape. By focusing our efforts on strengthening links with experts from other disciplines, and advancing our use of technology to educate learners, our reach will expand extensively.

**Goal:** Create an exceptional learning environment for students by using innovative approaches to pedagogy, and fostering partnerships across programs where learners are trained in disciplines associated with health.

**Objectives:**

- Build educational programs that utilize emerging technologies to address the needs of learners in the most effective and efficient way possible.

- Expand public and population educational opportunities for alumni, professionals, and community partners through continuing education and lifelong learning opportunities.

- Enhance and improve educational opportunities for Indigenous students, as part of an integrated plan for Indigenous health across the university.

- Expand undergraduate course offerings in population and public health in key areas.
Research Pillar

Our researchers are renowned for their work in a broad range of areas critical to the health of populations. We work with decision-makers to address important health challenges including communicable and non-communicable diseases, prevention, health services and systems, work and community environments, and health policy. We have a rich resource of accessible and linkable population-based health datasets for research and training.

By expanding our network and collaborative relationships at all levels, and working across disciplines, we will synergize our capacity, strength, and contribution to addressing the leading health issues facing communities.

Goal: Grow our reputation as a leader in research excellence in population and public health that is recognized for ground-breaking, vibrant, highly collaborative, and forward-thinking scholarship.

Objectives:

- Increase our research collaboration across School Divisions and research units, organizations affiliated with the School, government and non-governmental agencies, and other disciplines focusing on population and public health.
- Strengthen our collaboration with other Faculty of Medicine and University of British Columbia researchers to capitalize on opportunities to address the needs of specific populations.
- Align our research priorities and approaches with the people and communities we serve to ensure their voices are heard.
- Focus research activities on identifying and addressing health equity issues in underserved populations locally and globally.
- Strengthen and diversify our approaches to sharing and applying the knowledge we gain from research.
Organizational Development Pillar

We need a robust plan that considers continually changing infrastructure and technology demands, and maintains financial sustainability. This is critical to support our vision of “leading the way to improve the health of populations.” It is essential to continue developing a foundation to advance and sustain the School for decades to come. Continuing to communicate the impact of our work on improving the health of populations is key to building our reputation and the recognition of School of Population and Public Health achievements.

**Goal:** Enhance our infrastructure to support innovative educational programs, collaboration with other researchers and health organizations, and the long-term sustainability of the School’s work to improve the health of populations through teaching, research, practice, and service.

**Objectives:**

- Ensure faculty renewal that enables our vision and mission.
- Improve our capacity to facilitate communication among our faculty, collaborators and community partners who work at different sites.
- Secure additional external funding from donors to support our vision, mission, and objectives.
- Develop infrastructure and technology to support the delivery of high quality educational programs, including distance learning.
- Increase awareness and visibility of the School to extend the impact of our research.
Conclusion

By seeking solutions to population and public health problems using an ecosystem framework, the School is poised to rapidly identify and address today’s significant health challenges, and train the next generation of population health researchers and professionals in a rich learning environment.
This post gives the story of the origin of the Musqueam First Nation name: there was once a lake called xʷməm̓qʷe:m (Camosun Bog), where the sʔi:ɬqəy̓ (double-headed serpent) came from. Everything the serpent passed over died and from its droppings a new plant grew, the məθkʷəy̓. The people of long ago thus named that area xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam – place of the məθkʷəy̓). The post represents Musqueam ancestors and the Nation’s connection with them and the land, through their teachings.

Hover Collective

References:
Appendix A

Summary of academic programs and undergraduate courses

The School of Population and Public Health currently offers seven academic graduate programs and approximately 10 undergraduate courses.

Master of Public Health (MPH): The MPH program prepares students to undertake research, develop public health policy, evaluate health plans and preparedness, and provide leadership in public health both in Canada and beyond. It is intended for those interested in working in public health.

Master of Health Administration (MHA): The MHA program integrates skills and ideas unique to healthcare administration with advanced business and management training. The program gives students the career mobility to explore new areas of work in a leadership capacity within their current organization or another employer.

Master of Science in Population and Public Health (MSc PPH): The MSc PPH program enables students to gain core knowledge and skills in epidemiological, biostatistical, and other methods. Students gain research experience by applying these methods to a thesis under the supervision of a faculty member.

Master of Science in Occupational and Environmental Hygiene (MSc OEH): The MSc OEH program provides the skills and knowledge to anticipate, recognize, evaluate, and control chemical, physical and biological hazards in workplace and community environments. The program prepares graduates for careers to meet the challenges of today and into the future in research, occupational and environmental hygiene, policy analysis, health and safety, and more.

Master of Health Science (MHSc): MHSc applicants must have an MD or equivalent, including dentistry or veterinary medicine, and will learn skills that can be applied to their academic and clinical interests, bolstering their research abilities and opportunities.

Doctor of Philosophy in Population and Public Health (PhD): The PhD program equips graduates with the skills necessary to contribute to the population and public health research community. Graduates are able to conduct advanced health research to contribute new knowledge and understanding, lead teams to perform independent investigation, and teach others how to investigate, interpret and analyze this research.

Public Health and Preventive Medicine Residency program: The Public Health and Preventive Medicine Residency program provides residents with the skills necessary to measure the health needs of populations and develop strategies for improving health and well-being, through health promotion, disease prevention and health protection.

The School of Population and Public Health’s undergraduate courses provide an introduction to some of the foundational principles, ideas, and skills, of population and public health. Topics addressed in our undergraduate courses include the sociocultural determinants of health, informatics, environment, Canadian health care policy, and public health ethics.
Appendix B

Summary of the School of Population and Public Health Divisions and affiliated research units and programs

The School is organized in four Divisions, each acting as a nexus for School of Population and Public Health faculty who share common research and interests, and also for internal governance and accountability.

**Epidemiology, Biostatistics and Public Health Practice:** This Division addresses the fundamentals and practice of biostatistics and epidemiology, and contributes to the understanding of the etiology and prevention of disease through excellence in research. It also integrates public health teaching, research and practice with a focus on improving well-being and preventing disease at a population level.

**Health in Populations:** This Division addresses population health perspectives on improving the health and well-being of Indigenous peoples, women, children, youth and their families; and, the determinants of population health, including social, biological, and developmental forces, throughout the life course from birth to death.

**Health Services and Policy:** This Division addresses the organization, regulation, accessibility, utilization, and allocation of health care resources, and the resulting costs and health effects.

**Occupational and Environmental Health:** This Division focuses on health effects and prevention measures related to chemical, physical, biological, and psychosocial hazards, and to the design of buildings, workplaces and communities.

There are 11 research units and programs housed within the School of Population and Public Health:

- Centre for Excellence in Indigenous Health
- Centre for Health Services and Policy Research
- Centre of Excellence in Cancer Prevention
- Collaborating Centre for Prison Health and Education
- Global Health Research Program
- Health & Community Design Lab
- Human Early Learning Partnership
- Partnership for Work, Health and Safety
- Population Data BC
- Sexual Health Research Team
- W. Maurice Young Centre for Applied Ethics

The School of Population and Public Health has affiliations with many research centres and units, including:

- Centre for Clinical Epidemiology and Evaluation
- Centre for Health Evaluation and Outcome Sciences
- BC Centre for Disease Control
- Arthritis Research Centre
- BC Cancer Agency
- Child and Family Research Institute
- BC Women’s Hospital & Health Centre
- Women’s Health Research Institute
- Liu Institute for Global Issues