

**Bowen Island Child and Youth Well-being Study**

**Giving Our Children a Voice**

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### **This report**

This report provides the child results from the *Bowen Island Child and Youth Well-being Study*, conducted by Jayne Pivik, PhD, of the Human Early Learning Partnership, University of British Columbia. Eighty-two children and youth between the ages of 4 -15 years participated in a series of community assessment exercises to identify the impact of living on Bowen Island (BI) on their well-being. Their insight provides valuable information on the effects of the natural and built environment, the impact of community networks and cohesion, the resources, programs and services available and result of commuting by ferry.

### **Purpose of the study**

This purpose of this study was to examine the impact of neighbourhood/community contexts on the health and well-being of children and youth living on a coastal island. The results of the research will provide community members with information for community learning, planning and development. As well, the positive factors identified for child and youth well-being will add to the developmental research and environmental knowledge bases.

### **JUSTIFICATION**

There is now consensus in the child health and development literature that community/neighbourhood effects do have an impact, however, exactly what influences children's well-being is still not clearly understood (Beauvais & Jensen, 2003; Connor, 2001). According to Stroick and Jensen (1999), the three enabling conditions for children are: 1) adequate income, 2) good parenting; and 3) supportive communities. Different authors have attempted to define what constitutes "supportive communities". For example, Ellen and Turner (1997) suggest that there are 6 different community mechanisms that impact child development. These are: quality of social services, socialization by adults, peer influences, social networks, exposure to crime and violence and physical distance and isolation. Connors and Brink (1999) suggest similar constructs, such as: safety and cohesion, increased participation in community activities, and high levels of collective efficacy, i.e., social cohesion and a willingness to intervene for the common good.

Disentangling the effects of the community and neighborhoods from individual and family factors is a major thrust in current research attempting to understand positive child development, health and well-being. According to Beauvais and Jensen (2003), this effort has been undermined by the emphasis placed on solely using quantitative modeling techniques and the paucity of outcome evaluations. In their environmental scan of national programs (e.g., Better Beginnings, Better Futures, Understanding the Early Years, etc.), they conclude that “we know that neighbourhood effects exist, but there is still a lot we do not know about the differential effects for different kinds of communities and about the interdependency of family characteristics and neighbourhood characteristics” (p. 47).

As well, the environmental psychology research clearly indicates that consideration of the effects of the physical environment is an important component for investigating child development and well-being. According to Evans (2006),

Among the potentially developmentally salient physical characteristics of neighbourhoods are residential instability, housing quality, noise, crowding, toxic exposure, quality of municipal services, retail services (e.g., bars, liquor stores, nutritional foods), recreational opportunities, including natural settings, street traffic, accessibility of transportation, and the physical qualities of both educational and health care facilities (p. 435).

A very unique type of community is a coastal island. The community for this study was Bowen Island (BI), a small coastal community 20 minutes away by ferry from West Vancouver, BC. This small island has the largest population of children under 5 years per capita adult in BC (Census, 2001), 3500 permanent residents and is surrounded by forest and ocean. The size, location and rural aspect of the island provides an ideal opportunity to examine the impact of those features of the environment that might influence children and youth, such as: how the physical environment impacts a sense of well-being, physical activity, play and recreation; availability of services and resources; impact of community cohesion and networking; the effect of parents working off island; and the impact of commuting by ferry. The study was conducted by a community psychologist who is a parent and resident of BI.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

A community asset mapping approach was utilized which focused on identifying important elements of the physical environment, the social environment (social cohesion, networking and participation) and available resources, programs and services identified by community members. Community mapping is an inventory of available skills, services and capacities of people, community associations and institutions, physical structures, natural resources, and businesses (Berkowitz & Wadud, 2003; Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). Intrinsic to community mapping is the acquisition of local experiential knowledge of community members. The entire study methods are described in Appendix A. The following describes the methodology employed with the children and youth. The following four methods were used with all of the children sequentially:

1) **Cognitive mapping** (having children draw a map of “where they live” in order to identify key features of importance to them). The description of the map by the child and a content analysis of their description of it, allows an examination of those features of the environment which may be physical, social or resource based.

2) **Individual interviews** asking them to describe their maps and answer the following questions: a) why is this neighborhood good for kids?; b) why is it not good for kids?; and c) can you think of any solutions?

3) **Asset mapping**. A large map of the island was hung and each child was given 4 different colored stickers. Children were asked to indicate the following places and describe why. The questions include: 1) Their favorite place in the community; 2) Where they spend the most time with friends; 3) The place where they most often do after school activities; and 4) Place they would go if they needed help and family wasn't around. This will allow a connection between place and activity and addresses social networking as well programs and resources. For example, where they do after school activities provides a description of the types of activities that the children are involved with and program and services of the community.

4) **Group discussions**. The questions were as follows: 1) Why is this community good for kids?; 2) Why is this community not good for kids? ; 3) Can you suggest changes or solutions? ; 4) How safe is this community for kids?; 5) Does the physical environment of this community impact kids?; 6) Does the sense of

community here impact kids?; 7) Are the community resources good for kids (parks, playgrounds)?; 8) Are the community programs good for kids?; 9) Are there individuals in this community who have made an important impact on you?; 10) Any other issues that are important in this community for kids?

## RESULTS

### Sample

The total sample included 82 children/youth (4 – 15 years). Participation was through the schools (Montessori, n=19; Island Pacific School, n=37; and the Supported Learning Centre, n=9) as well as the BI Community School summer day camps (BICS=20). The following describes the different grade levels, age and gender of children participating.

**Table 1. Sample statistics**

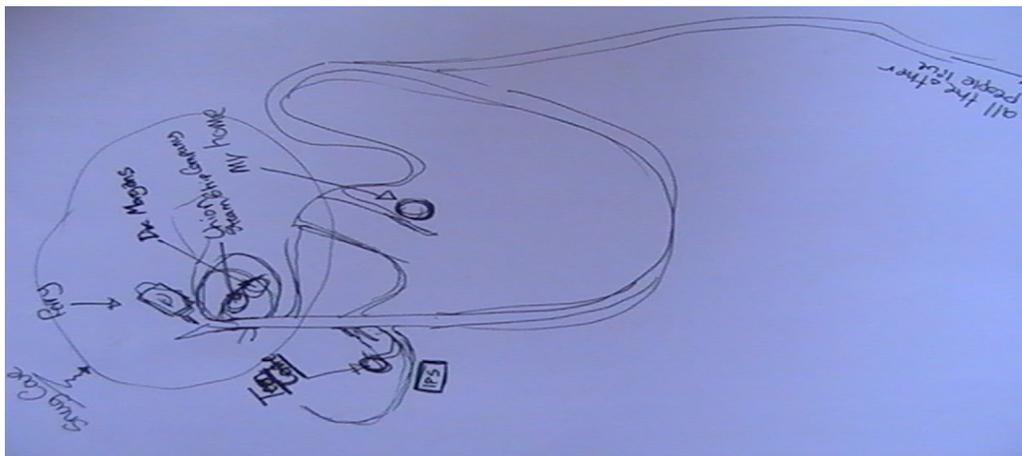
	K-Grade 2	Grade 3-5	Grade 6-9
Total	20	25	37
Gender			
Female	9	14	24
Male	11	11	13
Mean age/yrs	6.0	8.6	12.8

### COGNITIVE MAPPING

Cognitive maps are a type of mental processing by which an individual can acquire, code, store, recall, and decode information about the relative locations and attributes of phenomena in their everyday or spatial environment. These maps are a very good way of identifying how the child sees their environment and what is important to them. Examples of maps drawn by the children included: pictures of homes,



streets, neighbourhoods, road maps of the community, island pictures, and one of the world. Typically, as the child aged, their understanding of their community increased, moving from pictures of their home to streets then neighbourhood and finally island level maps. Below is an example of a community level map of a student in grade 9. This map nicely describes those places of importance to her: home, her school, the Cove, place of work, the teen centre, ferry and her friends who live across island.



The following table describes the average number of natural and built elements depicted in the maps and the frequency of recreational, resource and program elements identified.

**Table 2. Mean response for natural and built elements and frequency reports for recreation, resources and programs for cognitive mapping.**

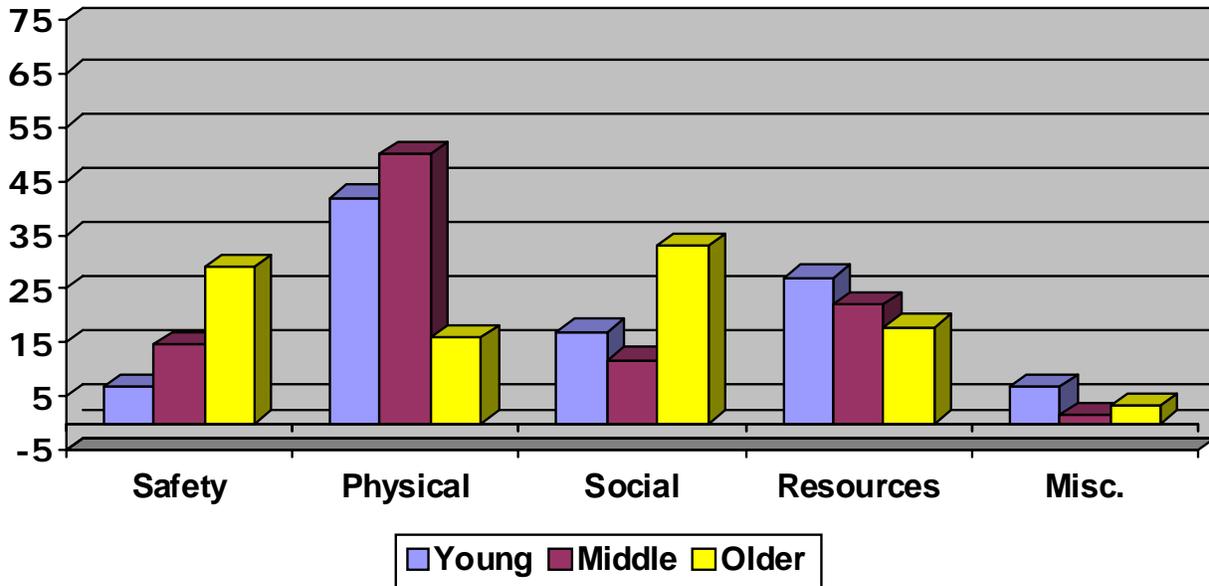
	K-Grade 2	Grade 3-5	Grade 6-9
<b>Natural elements</b>	<b>2.7</b>	<b>9.2</b>	<b>4.9</b>
<b>Built elements</b>	<b>2.8</b>	<b>6.3</b>	<b>8.5</b>
<b>Recreation</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Resources</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Programs</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>

Children in grades 3-5 identified the most natural elements in their maps (e.g., trees, water, animals). The number of depicted built elements (e.g., school, neighbor's houses), recreation (e.g., playgrounds, pool) and resources (e.g., ferry, shops) typically increased as the children aged. Identified resources included the ferry (n=14), stores in the Cove and recreational elements. The younger group focused on trails (n=3) and the beach; the middle group depicted archery, a basketball hoop, the playground, a swing in a tree and the beach; and the older youth identified 9 elements, 6 of which related to a pool or beach as well as a basketball hoop and the Teen centre.

### **INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS**

Following the cognitive mapping, the children participated in an individual interview where they described their maps and answered 3 questions: 1) why is this community good for kids?; 2) why is it not good for kids?; and 3) what changes would you make? Children could provide up to 5 responses per category.

**Figure 1. Percentage reports of “Why BI is good for kids” by group**



The graph above presents the results for the three groups: early (K-grade 2), middle (grade 3-5) and older (grade 6-9) children. The responses fell into 5 categories, a sense of safety, the physical environment, social aspects of the environment, community resources and miscellaneous. The total number of responses by group included: 59 for the younger children; 68 for the middle group; and 144 for the older children. Below is a list of responses by group.

**WHY IS THE ISLAND GOOD FOR KIDS?**

**K- Grade 2**

Physical environment (42.3%)

- Lots of nature
- Lots of trees for forts
- Not a lot of toxic stuff
- Not too crowded or busy
- Not much traffic
- Can play on street
- Can fly kites
- Can go fishing
- Trails to ride bike

Social environment (16.9%)

- No robbers

• Know almost everyone

- Good people
- Lots of friends

Resources (27.1%)

- Good schools
- Lots of fun things to do
- Toy store
- Swings at school
- Festivals

Safety- physical and social factors (6.7%)

Misc. (6.0%)

### **Grades 3-5**

#### Physical environment (50%)

- Lots of places to play
- Nice and quiet
- Beaches
- A lot of space to play
- Too steep for many buildings
- Wide open spaces
- Lots of fun places
- Safe to play on road
- Lots of trees
- Good hiking trails

#### Safety (14.8%)

#### Social environment (11.7%)

- Nice people
- No robbers
- Not too many people
- No gangs
- Not worried about people taking you away

#### Resources (22%)

- Tunstall Bay pool to swim
- Lots of different things to do
- Candy and toy store

#### Misc. (1.5%)

### **Grades 6-9**

#### Safe (29%)

- Small community
- Safe environment
- Safe; not a lot of traffic
- More freedom for kids
- Very little crime

#### Physical environment (18%)

- Chance to see lots of wild animals
- Wide open spaces
- Nature very calming
- No pollution

#### Social environment (33%)

- People look out for each other
- Nice and friendly people
- Small; know everybody

#### Resources (16%)

- Good schools
- Mountain biking trails
- Teen Centre
- Good arts programs
- Good recreational programs

#### Misc. (4%)

As the individual interviews indicate, the physical environment was important to all age groups and included such descriptors as the natural environment, opportunities for activities such as biking or going to beaches, a sense of quiet or calm, wide open spaces and the opportunity to play on the street.

A sense of safety was another major theme and was particularly important for the older group. Safety was defined in relation to people (no robbers or gangs, good people), physical safety (not too much traffic) and the size of the community, where

most people know each other. The older group often indicated that this sense of safety lead to an increased sense of independence and freedom.

The social environment was also highlighted where children identified BI as good for kids because people are nice and friendly, they look out for each other and due to the small size of the community, most people are familiar.

Finally, in the category of resources, the younger children felt that the island was good for kids because it had good schools, fun things to do, a toy store and for some, swimming in the Tunstall Bay pool. The older children mentioned the schools, trails, the Teen centre and the arts and recreational programs.

### **WHY IS THE ISLAND NOT GOOD FOR KIDS?**

When discussing why BI is not good for kids, three categories emerged: the physical environment, social environment and resources.

Overall, there were not many negative features of BI identified, with the striking exception of the older group in relation to resources (younger=27, middle=7, older =66). Below is a compilation of responses for each group.

### **K-Grade 2**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| Physical environment                    | • People who are not nice to kids (3.7%)                |
| • Traffic on road (11%)                 | Resources   |
| • Wild animals-cougar (11%)             | • Limited activities/boring (7.4%)                      |
| • Pollution, cars, motorcycles (3.7%)   | Misc  |
| • Loud noises from builders (3.7%)      | • Climbing and falling down/ dangerous activities (15%) |
| Social                                  | Nothing (18.5%)   |
| • People smoking, drugs, drinking (26%) |   |

### Grade 3-5

#### Physical environment

- Cougar (14%)
- Dangerous cliffs (14%)
- Pollution from school buses (14%)

#### Social

- People smoking, drugs, drinking (29%)

#### Resources

- Not enough amenities, e.g., toys, clothing, schools, hospital (29%)

### Grade 6-9

#### Resources

- Not enough amenities (44%)
  - No high school
  - Not enough shops
  - No hospital
  - No stores directed at teens
- Ferry (33%)
- Not enough activities/boring (7.5%)

#### Physical environment

- Isolated (3%)

#### Social

- Kids don't know what the real world is like due to sense of safety and close community (4.5%)
- People smoking, drugs, drinking (3%)
- Too small for teenagers (5%)
  - Rumors get around easily
  - Not a lot of older kids

Children in the younger grades (K-5) expressed concern about the cougar, traffic, pollution and cliffs. In the social category, the same group were uncomfortable about people smoking, doing drugs and drinking. Children in grades 3-5 felt there weren't enough shops for children their age, concern about a lack of a hospital and one child mentioned a limited choice of schools.

The youth in grades 6-9 focused on a lack of resources and negative social features. The lack of a high school was mentioned most frequently, along with the lack of "things to do" such as activities and shopping, no hospital, and ferry limitations. From a social perspective, the island "feels too small for teenagers", is boring, doesn't have enough kids their own age and doesn't prepare kids "for what the real world is like due to the sense of safety and close community".

### WHAT SOLUTIONS CAN YOU THINK OF?

The youth in this sample were very proficient in suggesting solutions to the issues they identified as negative (see below).

#### K-Grade 2 (responses=18)

##### Resources (44%)

- Build a public swimming pool
- Make more parks to play in
- Build more climbing structures
- More toys for kids

##### Social (17%)

- Be nice to people so they will be nice back
- Tell mom before going with stranger
- Stop people from doing drugs

- Lock up poison (alcohol, cigarettes)

##### Physical (35%)

- Put in street lights/crossing
- Take the cougar back to where it is supposed to be.
- Not as many cars
- Put "slow down signs"
- Plant more trees

##### Misc. (4%)

- Give out free Slurpees

#### Grade 3-5 (responses=21)

##### Physical (52%)

- Put up signs about smoking-bad for the environment
- Keep island clean
- Build fences for cliffs
- Build bridge instead of ferry
- Have airport so you don't have to take ferry
- Stop logging
- Use bio-diesel

##### Resources (48%)

- Build a public swimming pool
- Bigger playground (slide, big swings, trapeze, fort)
- More trails in Bowen Bay like in the cove
- More climbing structures

#### Grade 6-9 (responses=32)

##### Resources (87.5%)

- Build high school
- Build swimming pool
- Build a recreation centre
- Get ferry moving faster or have 2 ferries
- Organize more activities
- Open centre for younger kids

- More shops
- More activities such as more sports or games
- Open a teen store
- Ensure continued funding for Teen centre
- Build a bridge

##### Misc. (12.5%)

- Lower food prices
- Go to town for excitement
- Go on a long holiday to the Mediterranean
- Do activities in town to meet new people and learn about real world

The most frequently reported solutions related to additional programs, resources and services. The majority of participants in each group identified the need for a public swimming pool. Younger children wanted more parks, trails and playground structures. The older children also wanted a high school, a recreation centre, more sports activities, a centre for grades 5-7 like the Teen centre, continued funding for the Teen centre and additional shops.

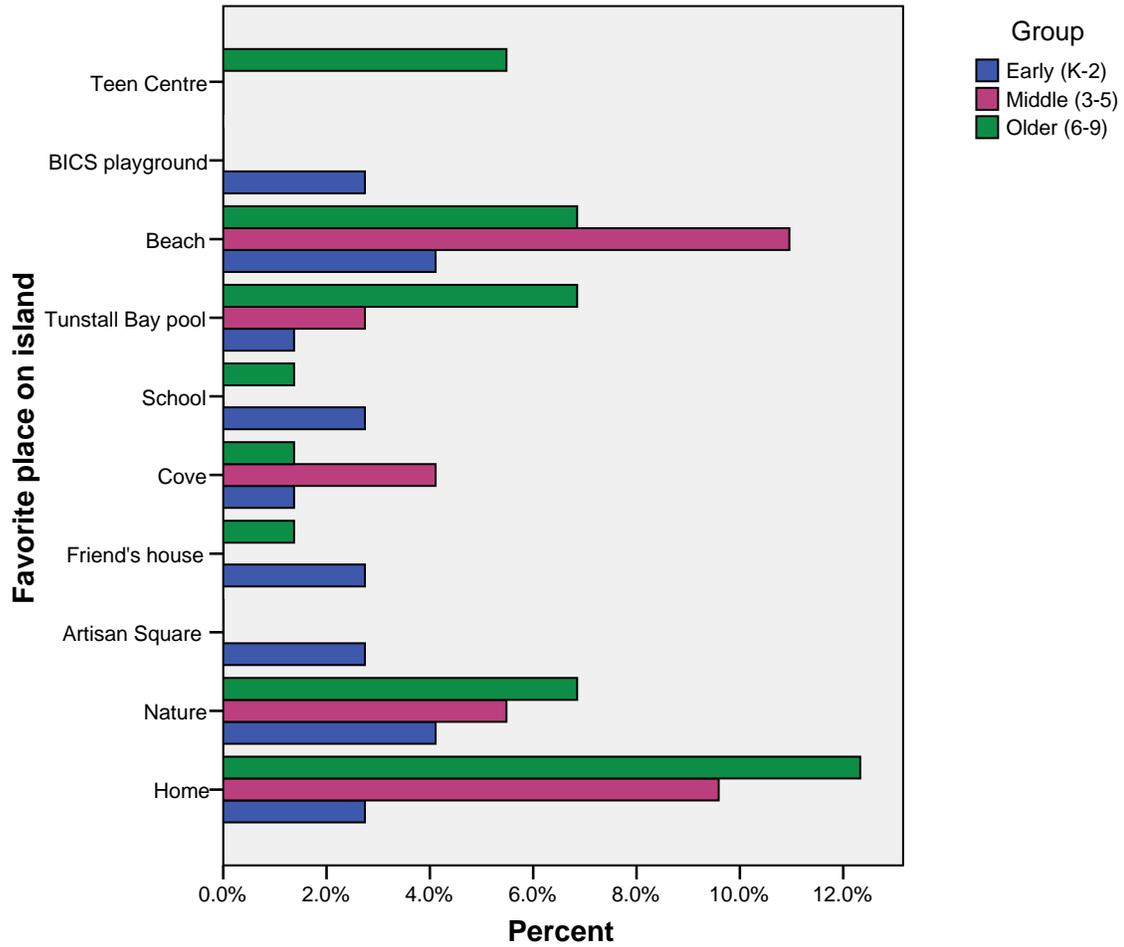
Regarding the physical environment, children in kindergarten to grade 2 were concerned about being hit by cars and suggested putting up street lights or cross walks, "slow down" signs and reducing the number of cars where they play. They also recommended that "that cougar be sent back to where it belongs". Kids in grades 3-5 were also concerned about safety (build fences for cliffs), pollution, and suggestions about dealing with the ferry (build a bridge or an airport).

Two points were quite salient and I believe reflective of BI. The first was from a child in grade 1 who said "she should tell her mom before going with a stranger", reflecting her sense of safety in the community. The second was from numerous students in the older grades concerned about the price of food on the island.

### **COMMUNITY ASSET MAPPING**

A large map of BI was hung up and each child was asked to place different colored stickers on the map indicating: 1) their favorite place on the island; 2) where they spend time with friends; 3) where they do after school activities; and, 4) where they would go in an emergency if their family wasn't home. Each of these answers were recorded along with the reasons given. Figure 2 describes the percentage response per group for their favorite place on the island.

**Figure 2. Favorite place in the community**



**Table 3. Percentage responses per group for favorite place.**

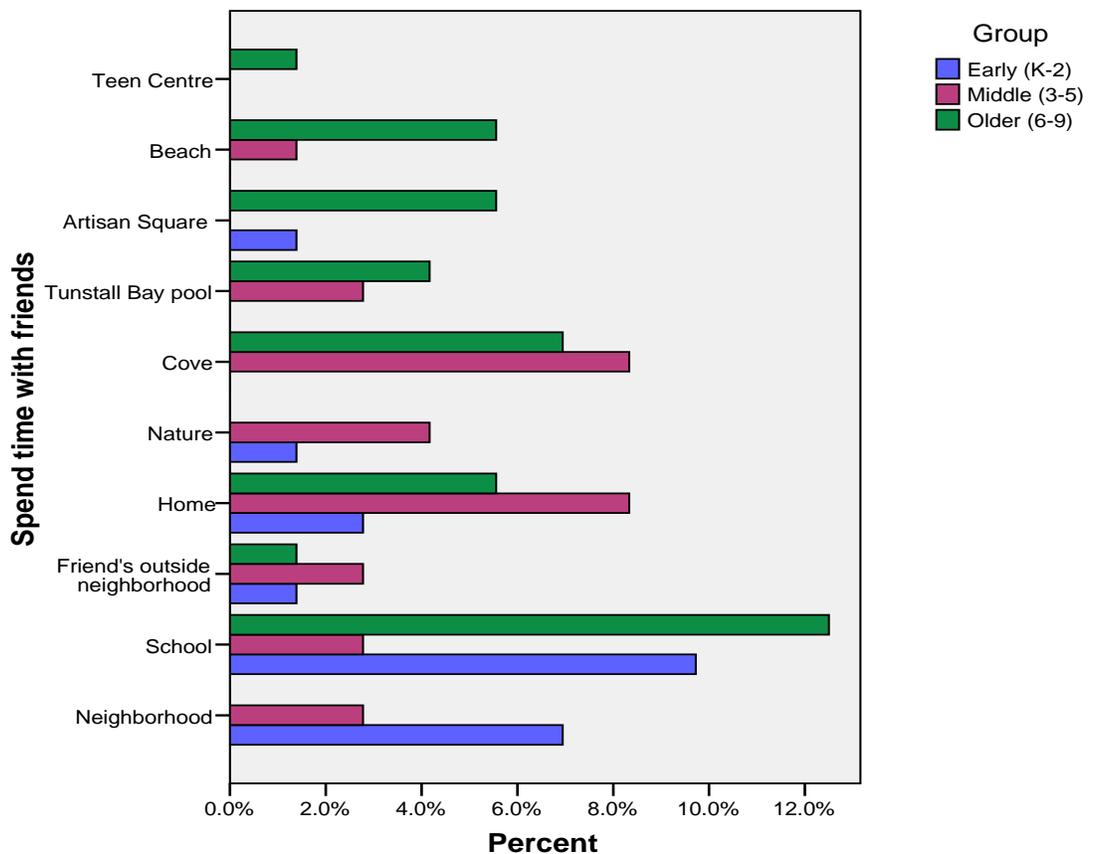
	K-Grade 2	Grade 3-5	Grade 6-9
Home	11.1	29.2	29.0
Nature	16.7	16.7	16.1
Artisan Square	11.1	0	0
Friend's house	11.1	0	3.2
Cove	5.6	12.5	3.2
School	11.1	0	3.2
Tunstall Bay pool	5.6	8.3	16.1
Beach	16.7	33.3	16.1

BICS playground	11.1	0	0
Teen Centre	0	0	12.9
	n=18	n=24	n=31

Home and places in nature were identified as the two most favorite places on the island, particularly for grades 3-9. Once again, the beach was identified as important by all groups. The Tunstall Bay pool and Teen Centre were also important to the older children whereas the playground at BICS was identified as their favorite place by the younger children.

The second asset mapping question related to children’s play activities, i.e., where they spend time with friends.

**FIGURE 3. WHERE DO YOU SPEND TIME WITH FRIENDS?**



**Table 4. Percentage responses for where they spend time with friends**

	Group		
	Early (K-2) n=17	Middle (3-5) n=24	Older (6-9) n=31
Neighbourhood	29.4	8.3	0
School	41.2	8.3	29.0
Friend's outside neighborhood	5.9	8.3	3.2
Home	11.8	25.0	12.9
Nature (trails, forest)	5.9	12.5	0
Cove	0	25.0	16.1
Tunstall Bay pool	0	8.3	9.7
Artisan Square	5.9	0	12.9
Beach	0	4.2	12.9
Teen Centre	0	0	3.2

As expected, the youngest children spent time with friends around home, at school and in their neighbourhoods. The middle group typically played at home, in the cove and on the trails. The older group identified school and the cove as the main places they spend time with friends.

Children were also asked to identify what they do while spending time with their friends. See below for their responses.

**What do you do while spending time with friends**

**Early (K-2)**

- School (n= 4)
- Home (n= 4)
- Neighbors (n=3)
- Playground (n=2)
- Tunstall Bay pool (n=3)
- Play with friend at their house (n=3)

- Catch fish with friends in river
- Play at beach (n=3)
- Play games in forest
- School playground (n=2)
- Park at school
- Ride bikes to field
- Bowmart diner (n=2)
- Snake field and forest

**Middle (3-5)**

- Home (n=4)-playing video games
- Baseball field (n=2)

**Older (6-9)**

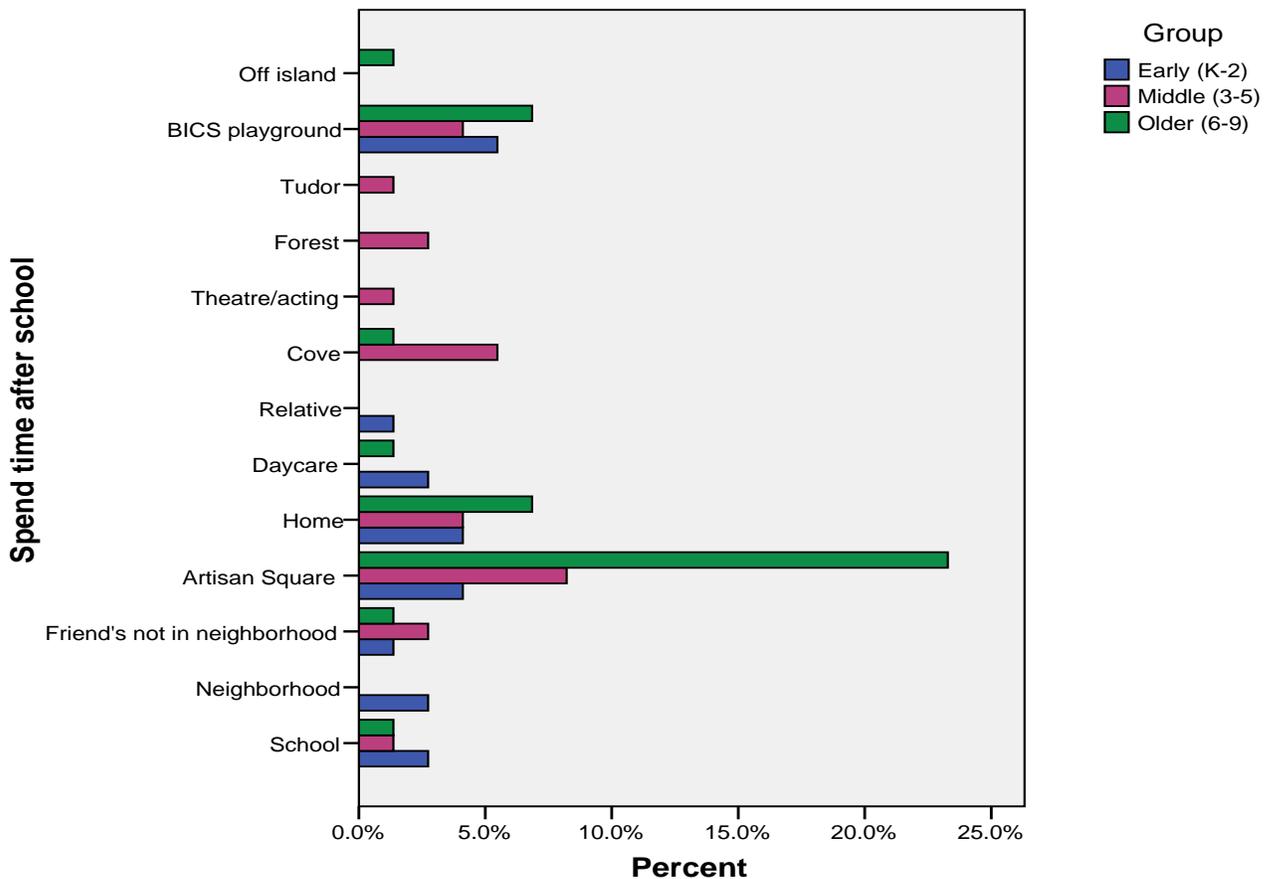
- School (n=9)

- Bowfest field; play Ultimate (n=5)
- Beach (n=4)
- Home (n=3)
- Cove (n=2)
- Bowmart diner
- Café (n=2)
- Tunstall Bay pool/beach (n=3)
- Friends in neighbourhood (n=2)
- Teen centre-hang out

The youngest and oldest group reported that they played with their friends during or after school. Once again, the youngest stayed mainly in their neighbourhoods. The middle group reported a lot of outdoor activities associated with the physical environment such as beaches, fields, forests and parks. The oldest group reported playing Ultimate Frisbee at Bowfest field quite often and hanging out in the Cove, beach/pool or at cafes.

After school activities was the third category examined for the children in this study.

**Figure 4. Where do you do your after school activities?**



### WHAT ARE YOUR AFTER SCHOOL ACTIVITIES?

#### Early (K-2)

- Neighborhood friend (n=3)
- Playground (n=2)
- School (n=2)
- Tae Kwon Do (n=2)
- Cove
- Play on computer at home
- Day care
- Sword fighting with sticks
- Dance class
- Piano lessons
- Swimming at grandpa's pool
- BICS; playing roller hockey
- Home

#### Middle (3-5)

- Bowmart diner (n=3)
- Tae Kwon Do (n=3)
- Play in forest (n=2)
- Home (n=2)
- Dance class (n=2)
- Play video games

- Friend's house
- Baseball field
- Go to karate
- Learn Japanese
- BICS gym
- Play date
- Tutoring
- BICS field for soccer
- Tir Na Nog-acting classes
- BICS tennis court

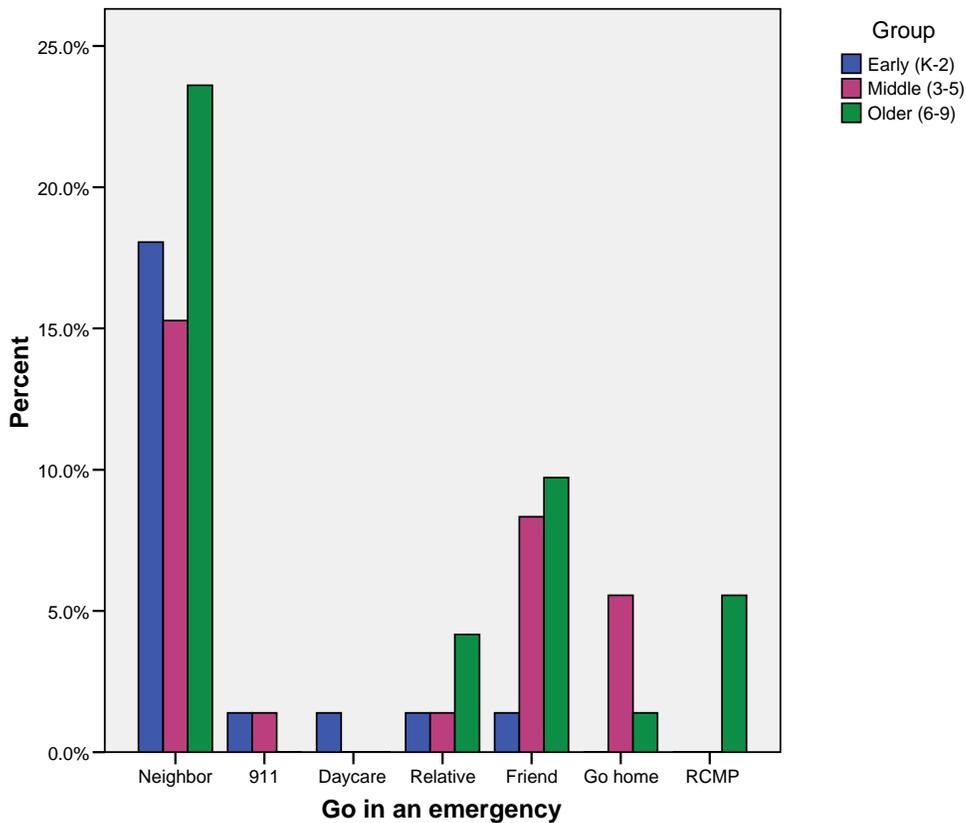
#### Older (6-9)

- Dance class (n=13)
- Home (n=5)
- Tae Kwon Do (n=5)
- Play Ultimate Frisbee (n=5)
- Piano lessons (n=4)
- Singing lessons
- Cove
- Friend's house
- Babysitting
- Off island-horseback riding

As the above list indicates, two main areas of the island are providing programs and services to children: Bowen Island Community School and Artisan Square. The majority of older kids are taking private lessons (dance, piano, Tae Kwon Do) in Artisan Square. The younger and middle group are more focused around the Bowen Island Community School, playing soccer, baseball, tennis, in the gym or on the playground/fields. This likely reflects the types of recreational programs and services available to children of different ages, suggesting a need for more community based services and programs for the older group (instead of private lessons which may be financially inaccessible for some families).

The final question asked where children would go in an emergency if their family wasn't around. This question was posed to identify issues associated with community networking and ferry commuting.

**Figure 5. Where would you go in an emergency if your family wasn't around?**



As figure 5 clearly indicates, most children would go to a neighbor's house in an emergency; reinforcing the idea that BI has high community cohesion. The middle and older kids would also go to a friends house (usually located in their neighbourhood). A little unsettling was the number of children in grades 3-5 who would just go home and wait for their parents.

### GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Following all of the individual exercises, the children then gathered together as a group to discuss the three main questions: why is BI good for kids?, why is it not? and what changes would they make? If time and attention level were still present, we also talked about the natural environment, the community people and resources, programs and services. The groups for this part of the report are separated into grades K-5 and 6-9.

## Why is this a good community for kids?

### Grades K-5

#### PHYSICAL

- Safe (n=9)
- It is nice and safe, not too many people
- Good place to play
- Good trails
- I like that there's no stop signs or anything, to stop you from walking
- Good for breathing
- Not so many cars driving past your house
- Big bike park, its hard though
- No cars screeching in front of my house
- Walk the trails safely
- Only one retired criminal

- No gangs, its pretty safe; Its very environmentally friendly, energy efficient, no smog
- A lot of nature, we can learn a lot more about nature
- It feels very spacious
- There's a lot of animals. I like that because you can learn more from them

#### SOCIAL

- Feels like everybody is a neighbor
- See your friends a lot (n=9)
- Everyone knows each other, so if you lost something, they would phone you and give it back. My sister lost her camera at a restaurant and she got it

### Grades 6-9

#### PHYSICAL

- Everything is close together so its easy to walk anywhere
- I think compared to other communities its safe, so it teaches kids to trust
- A lot more freedom, not so much supervision required.
- Its a lot of fun to be able to walk from your house to go anywhere, and be by yourself (freedom)
- Nobody is going to break into your house.
- There are trails everywhere and there's so many trees.

#### SOCIAL

- A safe community where everyone knows each other. I'm not afraid to ask for help

- Wide variety of people like artists and they're always willing to help.
- You can participate with adults, it is more of a mixed environment.
- Open community and people are willing to share their time; like the gallery is open and no one is worried about stealing.
- Learn how to deal with problems i.e., if you fight with someone you will see them twice a day so you have to learn how to resolve the issue
- Slower pace, people stop on the road and talk in their vehicles.
- Everyone cares about people in the community, (i.e. cost for an operation everyone helps)
- Open minded community... if you have an idea-it's not going

to be immediately put down by the people around you.

Similar to the individual interviews, the children focused on the physical and social factors of the environment, often related to a sense of safety. For the physical environment, the younger children reported feeling safe, it being a good place to play and enjoying the natural environment. The older children focused more of the safety issue in relation to an increased sense of freedom. Socially, both groups reported positive and supportive relationships with community members. Interestingly, the older children focused on a sense of support from different age groups regarding participating in events, assistance by artists or individuals' being open-minded.

### **Why is this not community not good for kids?**

#### **Grades K-5**

1. No traffic lights. They're good for kids so you can cross the street safely.
2. Lots of smoking on Bowen
3. Powdered alcohol (I heard it on the radio)

#### **Grades 6-9**

1. Separated from the mainland and the ferry is difficult
2. Some kids live far away (Blue Water) so its difficult for them to participate in activities
3. No high school on Bowen
4. No time or place to hang out with friends
5. We're protected here but what about when we move away?
6. We feel safe, but we forget to lock our car door when we go to Vancouver
7. Especially hard for the younger kids to commute
8. Our entire lives revolve around the ferry schedule
9. Teenagers don't have as many activities on BI so we like to try to hang out in WVan
10. For little children, if both parents have to work, children have to go to daycare. That doesn't seem like so much fun
11. Always worried about Teen Centre (650) closing
12. After school where do we go to hang out? We want somewhere safe and supervised (Out of roughly 30... 7 hang out at 650 (you have to be 13yrs old)
13. We don't have anywhere to go that's supervised, the group of us
14. It costs a lot of money to go into town for the day
15. There's drugs on the island, its being homemade here
  - o *More drugs here than on WVan?*  
-WVan kids think BI kids have lots of drugs, we're known as a pot

territory.

-We have a reputation for drugs.

-We've all seen people doing drugs but I can't say its worse than WVan because they're bigger.

*What kind of drugs do you see?*

-Just pot, not crystal meth

-I've never seen anyone doing anything worse than smoking pot.

-Adults from WVan assume we're going to start doing drugs because we're labeled

-Sometimes the WV adults won't let the kids hang around with us because they think we're doing drugs

-Late at night at the store the kids/people are all there to get drugs or meet people to go get drugs

-It used to be at night you could go into the cove but now we don't because we all know that's where you go to get the drugs

16. Rumors get around quickly on the island

The few comments identified by the younger children were concern related to pedestrian safety and worries about drugs and alcohol. Drugs were also a main topic for the older children. They reported that BI has a reputation for drugs, particularly from other high school students and their parents from West Vancouver. Generally they were uncomfortable about this reputation and wanted places to be together that were supervised by adults. The older kids also reported concerns about not enough to do, issues associated with commuting by ferry and concerns about being prepared for "the real world".

### **What solutions can you recommend for Bowen Island?**

#### **Grades K-5**

1. Public pool (100%)
2. Bowling alley (94%)
3. Basketball court (53%)
4. Volleyball (35%)
5. Baseball for younger kids (29%)
6. I want more programs, more sports, like... tennis ... field hockey (18%)
7. Make a bike park for my age
8. Make a fun park, bouncy things, Playland, rides
9. Ice skating rink
10. A place to create music
11. Rugby
12. Swimming program (so you don't have to be a member to take lessons)
13. More baseball fields
14. Rent boats, power boats, jetskies and kayaks

15. A big place where you can adopt animals and you don't have to pay for them

### **Grades 6-9**

1. Teen Centre, one for middle school and one for the older.
2. Community Centre - with a pool (86% agreement).
3. Bigger teen center, pool, more planned activities.
4. Preventing drugs and alcohol for teens, to keep the island cleaner, and safer, and preserve the reputation of BI
5. School funds to allow a high school to Grade 12.
6. Prevention program against drugs.
7. We need more things for teens to do
8. Give money to build a bigger dance studio because its where lots of kids go
9. Fixing the roads up because of the single lanes, roads with pylons, no sidewalks people could get hurt.
10. More ferries because we miss things on the mainland because its late.
11. A Recreation Centre, or a gym with different types of activities (the current gym costs a lot)
12. Ferry on the half hour rotation.
13. More cafes- informal places that you could just hang out.
14. Make a space where you can come play music
15. Make more things that people of all ages can participate in i.e. soccer, football, with both teenager/younger/older all mixed.
16. People who are addicted go into rehab; why not put money into preventative as well.
17. Add a cafe or something in the Bowen Bay area
18. Sports center - just a building filled with things to do
19. Hospital/medical clinic on the island
20. More bus service to the other side of the island
21. Better education for kids with financial assistance for parents
22. Build a bridge instead of the ferry.
23. Don't build a bridge!!! then it wouldn't be an island anymore!!!
24. Teen Center is safe from drugs that's why we go there.

### **Q: What programs/services do you want?**

1. Sports, music
2. More outdoor activities: group of kids to Mt. Gardner or down to the lake to go swimming
3. Programs like mountain biking, not just summer activities but all year; after school, weekends, whenever; involve not just BI kids but mainland kids so we can meet more people
4. Art classes
5. Tutoring centre
6. Busses to go all over the island

7. A pool open for everybody
8. Weekly sports choice after school/weekends (offer different sport per week)
9. A ferry later at night to come home, always have to leave at mainland at 8PM to get to the last ferry.

When identifying solutions, the younger group focused on activities related to recreation such as more play structures, organized sports and most importantly, a public swimming pool. The older group also wanted more recreational resources (pool, recreational centre, opportunities to play ad hoc sports like basketball). They also recommended: having a high school, better drug prevention programs, a place with musical instruments where they could “jam”, arts programs, places to hang out like cafes or a younger teen centre and transportation solutions such as more frequent bus and ferry service.

#### **SUMMARY**

Using a variety of different methods with the children provided an opportunity for capturing the voices of children at different ages and differing abilities. This study looked at the children’s perspective on how they see their community, why the island is good for kids, why it is not good for kids, how it can be changed, their favorite places, where they play with friends and do after school activities and where they would go in an emergency if their parents weren’t home.

Consistent themes emerged across these different methods and across the different age groups. Positive benefits of the community for all of children/youth included: a high sense of safety, the positive influence of the natural environment and a close-knit community-- high in collective efficacy. The sense of safety in the community was related to caring people, the lack of crime, and not too much traffic.

Consequently, this sense of safety was related to more independent activities and less adult supervision. This likely explains the reports of children playing at beaches, the forest and in fields with their friends. At the same time, concern was expressed by the older children about the need to be prepared for leaving the island and going to the mainland.

The positive benefits of the natural environment were also identified by all groups, although especially children in grades 3-5. Children reported that the physical

environment was calming, serene and provided wonderful opportunities to play. They appreciated the quiet, and the lack of crowding, pollution and traffic. Consistently, the beaches were identified as favorite places or places that they spent time with friends. Associated with the natural environment was the concern by the younger children regarding the cougar and dangerous cliffs. Concern was also expressed by the younger children regarding the lack of sidewalks and lights for crossing streets.

Another extremely positive aspect of living on BI expressed by the children was the social environment. This included a caring and friendly community, its small size where most people are familiar, and the feeling that people look after each other. Most children reported that they would turn to their neighbors in times of need. The older youth appreciated the support by other community members and enjoyed mixed aged community events. The smaller population level was associated with “the need to get along with others” and “communal activities with people of all different ages”. However, even though the older kids reported positive aspects of a close-knit community, they also felt a sense of surveillance by other adults (“where you know they are going to tell your mother on you”).

When exploring the negative aspects of BI, three areas were consistently reported: 1) the lower level of resources, particularly for youth; 2) the impact of commuting by ferry; and 3) concern about substance abuse. All children reported wanting more recreational opportunities such as a public swimming pool, a recreational centre, and more organized sports. The younger and middle groups also wanted more play structures and parks. Older youth wanted more and different programs, as well as places to gather as a group, play music or do pick-up sports. As well, the older youth wanted a high school on island, a hospital or medical clinic and more shops directed at their age group.

Children as young as 4 years old expressed concern about relying on the ferry. The ferry was depicted by all age groups in their cognitive maps and was mentioned frequently in the interviews and discussions. The older group felt most limited by the hours of operation impacting sports activities or social events. They also mentioned concern about bus transportation on island not servicing certain areas.

The final major concern was associated with drugs, alcohol and for the younger kids, also smoking. Solutions reported by the younger children included “locking up all poison” whereas the older youth suggested educational and rehabilitation programs. They don’t like the reputation of being “Boners” and want safe and supervised places to hang out with their friends.

Although not all children on BI were able to participate in this study, there was a wide variety of ages and children from different educational backgrounds. As evidenced from this report, the children and youth were very capable of identifying assets and concerns in their community and able to provide a variety of solutions. It is hoped that these voices will be heard and respected in decisions about community planning and development, thereby supporting our commitment to *The United Nations Rights of the Child* (1989) where all children are viewed as citizens with the right to have a say in decisions that impact them.

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## Appendix A

### Methodology for entire study

1) Focus groups and key informant interviews will be conducted to acquire and compare the experiential knowledge of a wide range of individuals (parents, children/youth, teachers, child development specialists, community leaders, law enforcement and health specialists) who live on BI regarding those factors most important for child/youth health and well-being. Each focus group will have between 6-8 participants. It is expected that at least one focus group will be conducted with each of the groups identified above, resulting in a total of 6. Key informant interviews will be conducted with those interested participants unable to attend the focus group meetings.

2) Along with the interviews and group discussions, children and youth will also have the opportunity to participate in 3 different types of multi-sensory measures: cognitive mapping, community asset mapping and PhotoVoice. See below for a description of sequence. The PhotoVoice portion will be conducted throughout the fall of 2007 and presented to the community at the Gallery at Artisan Square in early January 2008.

2) A survey will be given to all interested parents responding to community advertising. Entitled the *Neighborhood Study Questionnaire* (Mueller, Briggs & Sullivan, 1997). This 190-item survey measures community members' perceptions of their community on a number of key indicators, including: physical and social conditions of neighbourhood, awareness of and satisfaction with available services, housing satisfaction, perceptions of neighbourhood safety and social cohesion. All adults expressing an interest in participating in the study will be asked to complete the survey and leave it at the local school drop box.

3) A document review of published community based information including: population based data, features of the physical environment, services and resources available to children and youth, description of schools and recreational areas and cultural aspects of the environment will be conducted.

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