



**Vibrant**  
COMMUNITIES  
SYMPOSIUM  
MARCH 10 AND 11, 2010

# SYMPOSIUM REPORT

## Table of Contents

1. Introduction	3
2. Vibrant Communities Symposium Overview	4
3. Vibrant Communities Symposium Evaluation	7
4. Appendices	
a) Pre-symposium Overview	12
b) Pre-symposium Evaluation	13
c) Panel Participants	15

'I fully support moving forward with this initiative, but I would like to see a stronger equity lens, which is missing from the diagram that you showed on the screen. In the handout on the table today, I really liked the inclusion of the priority focus areas and guiding principles, but 'fairness' isn't sufficient to capture an equity/social justice lens, nor do I think that equity/social justice is merely one of several guiding principles - on the contrary, it should be the foundational principle. Without an explicit equity/social justice lens, there is a real danger that this type of initiative can be watered down and result in increasing inequities rather than decreasing them.'

- participant feedback



## 1. Introduction

**Stakeholder consultation, available evidence and alignment at the Pan-Canadian level led to *Vibrant Communities: A Plan for Action*. The Plan for Action acknowledged the need to further engage those involved in creating healthy sustainable communities. As a result, the Vibrant Communities Symposium was held on March 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup>, 2010.**

**The Symposium was an opportunity to discuss the social, economic, environmental and cultural perspectives of a Vibrant Community and develop a Vibrant Communities Charter reflecting these different perspectives (identified as a next step in *Vibrant Communities: A Plan for Action*).**

*The choices we make are shaped by the choices we have. Some communities have easy access to affordable fresh produce; others have only convenience stores and fast food outlets. Some of us have nice homes, clean parks and safe places to walk; others don't.*

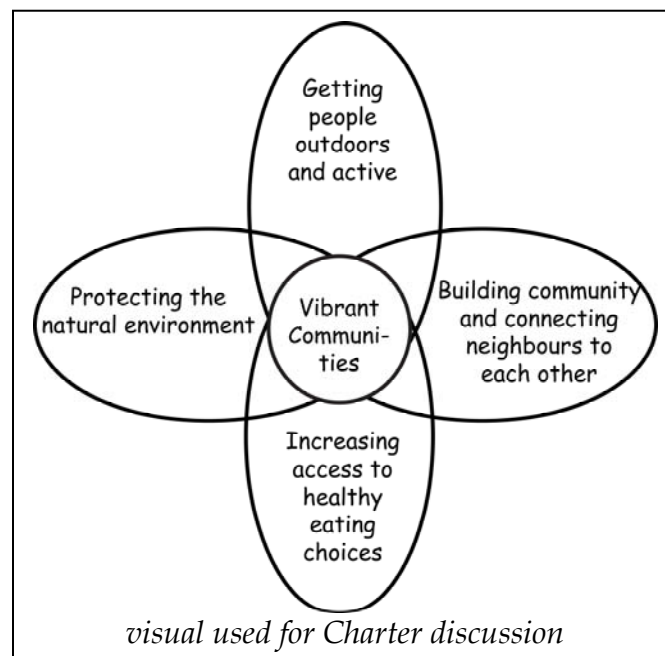


## 2. Vibrant Communities Symposium Overview

After being welcomed to the Symposium by the Minister of Local Government, participants were given an [overview of the process](#) leading to the Symposium.

Asking participants to consider the global realities impacting their communities, Bob Scarfo, the keynote speaker, outlined the need to create built environments that address, collectively, the many issues affecting life at the community level – including climate change, aging populations, water and food insecurity, peak oil and chronic disease. Scarfo clearly articulated the need to bring together diverse groups and sectors to engage in building healthy sustainable communities.

Health Impact Assessment (HIA) offers one option for engaging diverse groups and sectors. Panel presentations provided an overview of the Health Impact Assessment tool and process, with examples of its use; as a way to look at and address the many factors that determine wellbeing in community and as a tool to support decision making through collaboration between the municipalities and local health centres (see pre-symposium overview for more information on panel content and participants).



For the duration of the Symposium, a series of panel presentations, followed by focused discussions with participants, were used to consider a Vibrant Communities Charter - offering a shared vision for collectively moving forward; recognizing the importance of community development and healthy public policy in creating healthy sustainable communities.

The *Considering and Creating Equity* panel provided an overview of “what equity means in Manitoba”; followed by panel members providing a profile of their demographic focus, what equity means within that context and recommendations to improve and/or address equity.

The remaining panels, focused on *Increasing Access to Healthy Eating Choices*, *Protecting the Natural Environment*, *Getting People Outdoors and Active*, and *Building Community and Connecting Neighbours to Each Other*, each panelist was asked to respond to the following questions:

1. Does the community (residents, local groups, other stakeholders, etc.) play a role in determining the goals and success of your work? If so, how?
2. How, if at all, does your work address the
  - a. social aspect of community?
  - b. environmental aspect of community?
  - c. economic aspect of community?
  - d. cultural aspect of community?
3. How, if at all, does your work address equity (Equity referring to fair treatment of all members of our society - recognizing our differences and value)?
4. How, if at all, does your work impact public policy?

Following each of these panels, Symposium participants responded to the following discussion during ‘table talks’:

1. What is happening in this area in terms of strategizing or coordinating? Who is doing it?
2. If you were to identify specific priorities in this area, what would they be?
3. Of the opportunities identified at your table, which 3 would have the greatest impact?



Opportunities identified as having the greatest potential impact included:

- Protecting the environment with planned approaches
- Breaking down barriers between depts. & making the connections “no more silos” - inclusive approach - linkages
- Getting beyond multiple pilot projects to long-term sustainable programs
- Community development approach/supporting communities to do the work
- Guaranteeing a living wage so all families can afford to buy the food they need
- Creating a cross dept. structure eg. Healthy Child
- Resourcing community-based organizations to provide capacity building on local food growing eg. container gardening for apartment dwellers
- More positive built environment for social housing
- More Community Sustained Agriculture (ie. community gardens)
- Holistic, long-term planning
- Community-run co-ops
- Community gardens - building + supporting them
- Providing tools + resources that would assist communities in coming together
- Creating “people friendly” cities and communities - no more car-centric planning
- Not always being necessary to spend \$ on new infrastructure; sometimes it’s a matter of being creative and using available resources
- Community led policy
- School travel planning/active routes to school
- Requires an organization to coordinate all levels - focus on community nucleus - bring existing resources together
- Milk/vegetables at an affordable set price in the north

At the end of the Symposium, participants were provided with a paper leaf and asked to comment on the proposed Vibrant Communities Charter. These leaves were then placed, by participants, onto a “tree” on the wall with the height of the leaf corresponding to their level of support for moving forward with the charter. Leaves placed high on the tree indicated a high level of support and leaves placed at the bottom indicated low support.



The vast majority of leaves were placed high up on the tree (see photo on cover), with four people putting their leaves right at the bottom. Feedback from this activity, as well as the information collected through “table talks,” was used to develop a draft Charter and identify next steps.

Feedback provided during this final activity, which can be seen on [Health in Common's website](#), included:

*Various departments and organizations are disconnected “communities” that need to come together as neighbours and focus more on the common goal... Youth involvement and education is mandatory and will aid in sustainability.*

*I appreciate the integration of various sectors under common lenses. It highlights our similarities and facilitates collaboration – brings us together rather than divides.*

*This charter can help address some of the policy issues surrounding sharing and working together across sectors and organizations to help establish community based, and community driven programs.*

*The Charter:*

- *requires increased balance to create a Charter inclusive of all Manitobans... currently focused on Winnipeg/urban & low-income populations*
- *could be strengthened by clarifying root issues and expanding beyond the “social justice” agenda*
- *diverse viewpoints will only strengthen the impact*

### 3. Vibrant Communities Symposium Evaluation

Following the symposium, participants were sent an online survey to evaluate the Symposium. The survey asked participants: (1) how they perceived their work in relation to the social, economic, environmental and cultural aspects of community; (2) to indicate their level of interest in Health Impact Assessment as a tool to support vibrant communities; and (3) to provide recommendations for moving forward with a charter. Sixty-six participants completed the evaluation for an overall response rate of 47.8%.



## *Perception of Work*

The symposium was an opportunity to discuss the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of communities. Panel presentations included how their work impacts on each of these aspects of community. Following the symposium, participants were asked if their perception of their work had changed as a result.

In other words, did the degree to which they felt their own work impacts the social, environmental and economic aspects of community change? Eighty-nine percent (89%) stated their perception changed either "somewhat" or "quite a bit". Of these, 65% of respondents stated their perception changed "quite a bit".

Respondents provided specific examples of how Vibrant Communities impacted their perceptions:

*I think what you do best in this type of forum is make the connections for us. Often we feel isolated in our work and we simply cannot see the larger implications.*

*It has made me realize that without addressing or at minimum establishing linkages among the other components (social, economic, environmental), then the intended outcomes of my work would be difficult to achieve. The knowledge shared has created greater awareness for me, especially the opportunities to collaborate and build on some excellent work being initiated out there.*

*As a result of participating in the VC Symposium, I realize that my work addresses the issue of "equity" more than I had previously thought.*

*I have new ideas of how these factors come into my work, and of partners to seek to ensure these factors are addressed. I have a much better idea, for example, of the role of the municipal engineering department.*

*I found that equity and food security is inextricably linked to my work, though I initially thought it had nothing to do with the work I do.*

Other participants felt their ability to impact other aspects of community was limited within their job. For example, participants indicated they are "set in portfolios" or they "find it hard to increase scope ...given my low-level position." One participant commented they were "disappointed topics that were presented ... were very oriented to urban life."

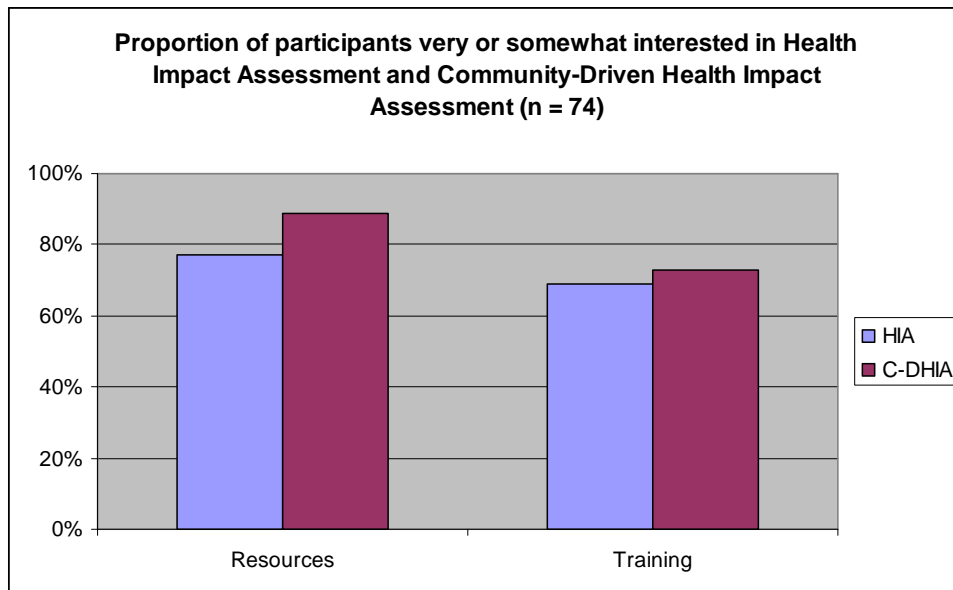


## Health Impact Assessment

Participants were asked to indicate their level of interest in learning more about HIA and/or community-driven HIA. Some participants had also attended a full day pre-symposium session on HIA; results of both are included.

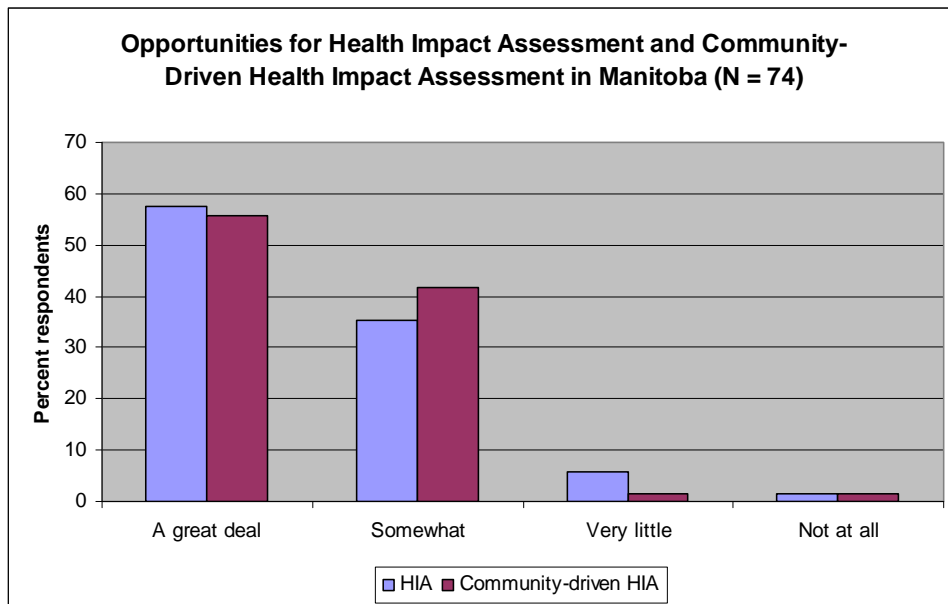
**Table 2: How interested are you in Health Impact Assessment training and resources?**

		<u>Very/Somewhat</u>		<u>A little/Not at all</u>	
		Pre-symposium participants	Symposium participants	Pre-symposium participants	Symposium participants
<u>Training</u>	HIA	80%	75%	20%	25%
	C-DHIA	90%	89%	10%	11%
<u>Resources</u>	HIA	80%	65%	20%	35%
	C-DHIA	85%	69%	15%	31%



Almost all participants (see next table) indicated there is opportunity for using Health Impact Assessment (93%) and Community-Driven Health Impact Assessment (97%) in Manitoba. Of these, more than half felt there was a great deal of opportunity (HIA, 57% and community-driven HIA, 56%). Many participants saw Health Impact Assessment as a potential policy and planning tool that could be used by provincial government, municipalities and community. Others commented on HIA as a platform to “link partners,” “connect with and support municipalities,” and include “partners from other sectors.”

In terms of the potential benefits of this approach, it was stated that “this could go a long way to identifying how communities can work together to solve many of their problems.” With regard to implementation, some commented on the need to engage decision makers to support and move the process forward.



All comments related to Community-Health Impact Assessment were positive. Suggestions include having funders “support community-driven HIA activities as a stand-alone activity or as part of a proposal development cycle,” or having “decision-makers/funders invite a community to run a community-driven HIA on a project.” The need to ensure that community-driven HIA is carried out in a way that has impact at a policy or decision making level was identified.

Some suggested a combination of the HIA and community-driven HIA approaches as a potential model; while one participant stated “I honestly don’t know why there is a distinction between the two. Shouldn’t the health sector always be planning with (not for) communities?”



### *Recommendations for moving forward with a charter*

Finally, participants were asked to provide their input on moving forward with a Vibrant Communities Charter and Plan for Action. Many recommendations reflect a need to continuously ensure full and diverse representation. For example:

*I recommend more involvement in the Aboriginal communities/Aboriginal organizations.*

*(M)ake sure you have good representation from rural Manitoba as you move forward.*

*Include community residents in the Plan for Action.*

*Involve youth every step of the way.*

*The north should have a stronger focus and be recognized for its uniqueness.*

Community engagement and inter-sectoral collaboration were stressed by several participants as an important aspect of the Charter's ongoing development. Recommendations were made around ensuring that the process is inclusive and effective at various levels:

*Keep joint planning and coordinating policies and strategies at the "macro" provincial level with the goal of making things more effective, shared and owned at the "micro" community-based level.*

*Continue to host the symposium as a key driver in bridging the gap between these sectors.*

*Test priorities for action in a strategic series of focus groups with stakeholder representatives chosen carefully by each... group/community.*



## Pre-Symposium Overview

Attended by 44 people, the Health Impact Assessment workshop, offered the day before the Symposium, intended to:

- inform participants on the Health Impact Assessment (HIA) and community-driven HIA approaches using theory and case study;
- enhance knowledge and skills of participants by working with HIA and community-driven HIA tools on concrete examples to measure its applicability;
- provide participants with two Canadian examples of their use and implementation; and
- give a sense to participants of the tool's relevance in their own diverse contexts and practices.

Health Impact Assessment (HIA) is an approach which proposes a framework and tools to help identify the potential impacts on the well-being of a community that can arise from a proposed policy or program. HIA aims to support the policy making process in a collaborative way with decision-makers, while supporting the participation of the community.

The facilitation of the HIA workshop was shared by Louise St-Pierre and Marie-Christine Ross, the National Collaborating Centre for Healthy Public Policy; Susan Eaton, PATH (People Assessing Their Health), Nova Scotia; and Jean-Pierre Landriault, Agency for Health and Social Services Montréal, Quebec.

The National Collaborating Centre for Healthy Public Policy (NCCHPP) seeks to increase expertise in promoting healthy public policy, with a focus on its potential to impact the social, economic, and environmental determinants of health.

People Assessing Their Health (PATH) is a process that uses community-driven health impact assessment to build the capacity of people to actively participate in the decisions affecting the well-being of their community.

Engaged in the promotion of the HIA approach at the local level, the Agency for Health and Social Services Montréal has been involved in a pilot project supporting a local health center in its work with municipal government; assessing policy and community development projects using the HIA approach.



Pre-Symposium Evaluation

Following the Health Impact Assessment (HIA) workshop, 44 participants were invited to complete an online survey in which they were asked to indicate the level of knowledge gained, their level of interest in learning more about HIA and community-driven HIA, and to share their overall impressions of the workshop. Twenty-one participants completed the evaluation for an overall response rate of 47.7%.

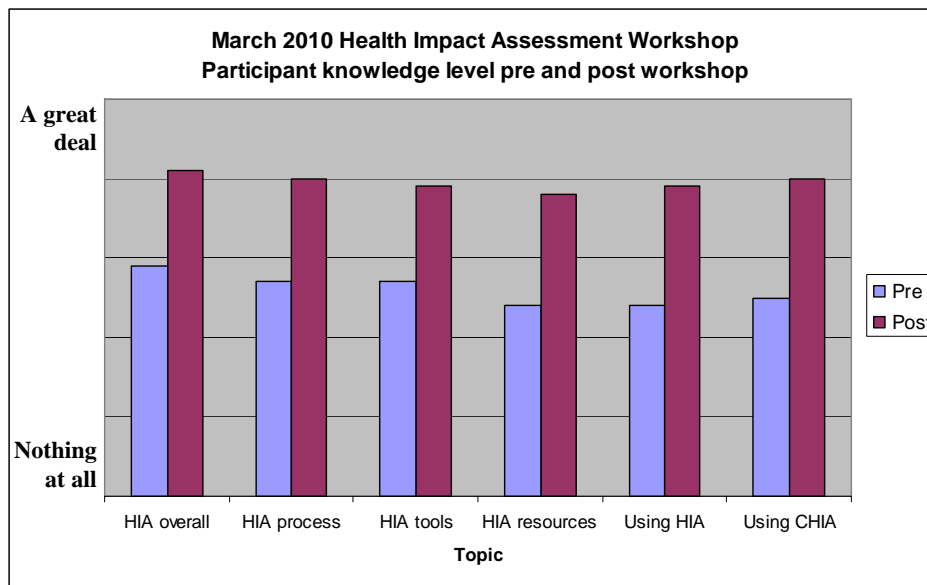
Level of knowledge gained was assessed by asking participants to rate knowledge on six aspects of HIA and community-driven HIA prior to and after the workshop. Responses were based on a six point scale ranging from knowing nothing at all to knowing a great deal about the topic.

Mean scores were calculated for pre- and post-workshop. Table 1 shows the distribution of knowledge among participants both pre- and post-workshop. The chart on the next page shows the overall change in knowledge from pre- to post-workshop based on mean scores.

**Table 1: How much do you know about each of the following (pre and post workshop)?**

	A great deal/ a lot		A fair amount/ a little		Very little/ nothing	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
HIA overall	10%	43%	46%	52%	43%	5%
HIA process	10%	27%	37%	66%	51%	5%
HIA tools	10%	34%	41%	58%	47%	10%
HIA resources	5%	24%	38%	71%	54%	5%
Using HIA	5%	33%	38%	62%	57%	5%
Using CHIA	10%	48%	33%	43%	56%	10%





Participants were asked about their level of interest in obtaining further information about HIA and community-driven HIA. Eighty percent (80%) of respondents indicated that they were somewhat or very interested in accessing resources, further training or implementing HIA. There was slightly more interest in learning more about community-driven HIA. Ninety percent (90%) stated they were somewhat or very interested in accessing resources or seeking opportunity to use community-driven HIA and 85% were interested in additional community-driven HIA training.

Sixty three percent (63%) and 71% responded that there was a great deal of potential for using HIA and community-driven HIA in Manitoba respectively.

Finally, participants were asked to share their overall impressions of the workshop. Sixteen participants provided written feedback. Comments were generally positive and included statements such as “valuable” and “excellent introduction to the topic.” Other feedback included: “felt it was more information sharing than sharing the process and tools”; “I felt it was a very interesting concept that needs more buy in from decision makers.”



## Panel Participants

**Considering and Creating Equity**, hosted by the Minister of Labour and Immigration, included:

- Shauna McKinnon, Director, MB Office, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives
- Terra Johnston, Provincial Coordinator Early Development Instrument, HCMO
- Kathleen McKay, Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs (presenting for Chief Bone, Keeseekoowenin First Nation)
- Laura Rempel, Livable and Inclusive Communities Canadian Center on Disability Issues

The Legislative Assistant for the Minister of Conservation hosted **Protecting the Natural Environment**, which included:

- Sophia Rabliauskas, Poplar River First Nation
- Cassidy Dankochik & Christine Durocher, Gimli High School
- Shoni Litinsky, Community Facilitator Community-Led Emissions Reduction

**Building Community and Connecting Neighbours to Each Other**, hosted by the Acting Manager - Neighborhoods Alive!, on behalf of the Minister of Housing and Community Development, included:

- Lindsey McBain, Program Co-ordinator Prairies and Northern Territories, Canadian CED Network
- Christine Paquette, Manitoba Chapter Canada Green Building Council
- Richard Milgrom, Canadian Planners Network



Hosted by the Minister of Agriculture, the **Increasing Access to Healthy Foods** panel included:

- Coral Maloney, Landless Farmers Collective
- Jennell Majeran, Manager, Northern Healthy Foods Initiative  
Manitoba Aboriginal and Northern Affairs
- Kreesta Doucette, Executive Director, Food Matters Manitoba

Getting People Outdoors and Active, hosted by the Director of Recreation and Wellness, on behalf of the Minister of Healthy Living, Youth and Seniors, included:

- Beth McKechnie, Coordinator, Workplace Transportation Demand Management, Resource Conservation Manitoba
- Anders Swanson, Active Transportation Advisory Group
- Cory Jackson, Recreation Connections Manitoba

