



REPORT

Year End Report 2021

Prepared by Cindy Lise

TABLE *of* CONTENTS

Introduction	03
Executive Summary	04
The Network, Accomplishments and Significant Outcomes	05
Making A Difference	06
The Value of In Kind and Grants	12
Our Impact Beyond Data	13
Partnerships	15
2021 Financial Statement	16
Budget Moving Forward	17

Our Cowichan -Facilitating Connections for Good Health

Connected in Health

Our Cowichan Communities Health Network is a locally formed group of individuals and organizations representing the diverse peoples of the Cowichan Communities. Network members strive to optimize the health and wellbeing of all citizens in the Cowichan Region by:

- Exploring issues related to health
- Identifying concerns that can either improve or impede achieving optimum health
- Planning actions that enhance our quality of life through education, healthy living, health care and health services delivery
- Ensuring the community's voice is heard on matters related to health and wellness.

We are guided in our work by the World Health Organization's 12 Determinants of Health and research related to the determinants of health within the region.

For good health, people need more than good health care: they need adequate income, employment, education, social connections and healthy places to live. In fact, all 12 Determinants interact and affect health.

By considering the whole picture and working together, all citizens of the Cowichan communities can enjoy improved health.

Our Cowichan Welcomes You

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Executive Summary

For the second unexpected year, Our Cowichan experienced the impact of the COVID pandemic along with all of our community partners. In the midst of chaos, crisis and the unknown outcomes, OCCHN has much to celebrate with its 2021 accomplishments. The impact of years of relationship building and partnerships that are manifested throughout the region enabled our network to respond to the pandemic with little or no disruption. Together in collaboration with partners we were able to:

- Collectively bring in over 3 million dollars in grant funding, services and resources.
- Through the COVID Response Task Force work with Cowichan Housing Association, Local Governments, Cowichan Tribes, Island Health and many community partners continue to support residents of temporary shelter sites where many continue to thrive.
- EPIC (Eldercare Project in Cowichan) provided 10,000 information packages including resources and access to care information for seniors at vaccination clinics and community sites.
- Disseminate information for grants and funding opportunities for community partners.
- Be the community liaison between Island Health leadership and the community in regards to the COVID response.

- Our Cowichan 3-year strategic plan has goals that include:
 - Recognize and responding to emerging issues in Cowichan
 - Promote health and wellness
 - Continue to focus on identified issues and opportunities
 - Foster the health, vitality and sustainability of the network

- Collective Impact Initiatives that align with OCCHN priorities continue to move forward. These initiatives now bring together over 350 community partners. They are:
 - COVID Temporary Shelter Task Force
 - Housing First for Youth
 - Community Stream of EPIC (Eldercare Project in Cowichan)
 - Cowichan Regional Airshed Roundtable
 - Cowichan Community Action Team (CAT)
 - Physical Literacy (Play Cowichan)
 - Ladysmith and Cowichan Lake Poverty Reduction Strategies
 - Cowichan Youth Vaping Task Force (Now completed)

- Active participants representing a community voice participating at the Collaborative Services Committee, Cowichan Primary Care Network Planning Table, Cowichan Regional Airshed Strategy Round Table, Community Action Team, and Cowichan District Hospital Planning and Poverty Reduction Teams. Participating in this myriad of groups helps us build integral relationships and knowledge of our region.

The Network

- We continue to grow, the Network consists of over 69 active members and 15 members at large.
- Meeting structure includes delegations, spotlight speakers, strategic dialogue and member input.
- 39 OCCHN meetings and sub committee meetings were held in 2021.
- 48 Community meetings related to COVID Response, homelessness, Opioid Crisis, Housing First for Youth, COVID Emergency Shelter Task Force, EPIC and Airshed Roundtable were held that were planned or supported by OCCHN.
- Our website experienced 10,369 visits and 104 209 hits in 2021.
- 46 weekly newsletters were delivered to OCCHN members to keep them informed of meetings, events, granting opportunities and health related information. Current information from Island Health and Province were distributed in regards to COVID.
- The Pathways Resource Guide and Website is now active and growing monthly with 2500 views per month

Accomplishments

- Publishing of Cowichan Communities Health Profile in spring of 2021 www.ourcchn.ca
- OCCHN in collaboration with numerous community organizations supported efforts that brought over 3 million dollars in grants and leveraged resources to our region!
- OCCHN continues to move strategic plan priorities forward although some components were put on hold due to a lack of additional capacity funding has put initiatives such as the small grants project.
- OCCHN was able to respond immediately to the many emerging issues related to the pandemic with well established relationships and foundational initiatives and plans in place.
- As one of the Community Leads, OCCHN supported the COVID Response Task Force that effectively housed over 75 individuals living with homelessness in 2021. This included a full scope of wrap around care, meals and security. An additional \$2.5 million dollar in enhanced services grant will help to sustain programming and improve sleeping accommodations in 2022.
- COVID impacted the hosting of the Airshed Roundtable but 3 Airshed Leadership sessions were held. Incentives to remove wood burning appliances and education were the focus of 2021
- OCCHN continues to lead the community component of EPIC working to support frail and isolated seniors. 10,000 information packages were distributed directly into the hands of seniors via immunization clinics and local Services.
- OCCHN supported the development of Primary Care Networks with Island Health and Division of Family Practice that has begun operation in clinics across the region.
- OCCHN supports the revision of the Municipality of North Cowichan OCP

Our Cowichan has been making a difference in the health of our community

Here's How

We are a conduit to Island Health, Local Governments, First Nations and Community. In 2021 with the pandemic raging around us our Network maintained its response.

Through the relationship building of our community partners and a deeper understanding of each other we have become a platform where health and community work together synonymously to enrich the lives of our residents. OCCHN has grown to over 69 active members and 15 members at large who are informed on community issues, guide responses, share meaningful relationships, friendships and comradery.



(Pictured left: Our Cowichan Regional virtual gatherings continue in 2021. Above; OCCHN Completes the revision to the Cowichan Communities Health Profile which can be found at www.ourcchn.ca)

Cowichan Community Action Team (CAT)The opioid crisis has paralleled the pandemic in our region. The efforts of the CAT highlight the ongoing crisis which has enabled \$66,980.00 in funding from the Overdose Emergency Response Centre to come to our community for 2021. We were able to pilot a very successful peer lead Street Smart Outreach Team that in addition to reaching out to individuals on the street provided lifesaving Naloxone and revived 6 overdoses. Our CAT has grown to over 180 members who work diligently to address substance use in our region. With that said, the poisoned drug supply is relentless and lives continue to be lost as the Cowichan Region grieved with the deaths of 31 individuals in 2021 due to suspected drug poisonings (an increase of 3 over 2020), and reported 384 ambulance attended overdoses (an increase of 42).



The goal of the CAT is to ensure the integrated and collaborative community response and ongoing communication between service providers across the social determinants of health. The relationship and collaboration between OCCHN, RCMP, first responders, local, provincial and federal



governments, community agencies, individuals with lived experience and Island Health are instrumental in improving health outcomes for this very vulnerable population and to mitigate the impact on community.



(Pictured above on previous page: Cowichan CAT members from Cowichan Tribes reaching out to the public to talk about harm reduction. Pictured above right: A Cowichan CAT Peer in a local park for pop up Naloxone Training. Pictured above: Tzinquaw Dancers Open Overdose Awareness Day in Downtown Duncan.

Truth and Reconciliation

2021 was a challenging year in so many regards. Our Cowichan stood beside our First Nations partners and communities as they struggled with the shocking



discovery of unmarked graves. We celebrated with them on Truth and Reconciliation Day and continue to strive to educate ourselves and our Health Network to do all we can to improve cultural knowledge and relationships within the Cowichan Region. We continue to better address systemic racism by providing space for conversation, to learn, to identify where racism exists, and to act to change our ways.



Pictured above: a young Tzinquaw Dancer opens the Village with a traditional cultural welcome. Pictured above right: Thousands march in support of Truth and Reconciliation Day

COVID Emergency Shelter Task Force



Photo above: Many unhoused people in Cowichan have gone from the streets to protected tents to wooden sleeping huts. Residents of sites at Cowichan Tribes and Saint Julien Street have now transitioned into larger, healthier sleeping cabins and have access to food, outreach, MHSU supports, primary care, washrooms, showers and running water.

The Cowichan Region was more prepared for the COVID Pandemic than we could have been imagined. Established relationships and the work completed in 2019 to create the “Vision for Community Wellness,” was the foundational plan for the response for the under housed and underserved community when the Pandemic struck. After almost two years of shelter residents have shifted from surviving to thriving. Oversight, food, outreach services, safe supply for those who wanted it, primary care and security were provided. Immediately the effects of the housing first approach began to have an impact as individuals stabilized. Residents are healthier, happier, use less substances are flourishing. The shelter project has been successful in mitigating the impact of COVID as the Cowichan Region through this project reported some of the lowest numbers of COVID in the underhoused populations on Vancouver Island. In addition to temporary shelter 52 people have moved into permanent supported housing with more to come in 2023. Their impact statements from the initial housing are here:

- Peer story from Ramada Inn: <https://vimeo.com/440211760>
- Duncan Bylaw Officer: <https://vimeo.com/438691675>
- Anonymous from Women's Tenting Site: <https://vimeo.com/431592932>
- The impact on Lucas, one of the residents:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LkQ_6X2tXHM

RCMP and bylaw officers reported a significant reduction in crime and public nuisance calls to the sites and with the individuals that the project was able to house. (It is important to note that this is not the case for people who remain unhoused). Funding sources are time limited so OCCHN supported planning and grant writing with the COVID Emergency Shelter Task Force and via the Municipality of North Cowichan, the COVID Task Force submitted a proposal to the UBCM and were successful in receiving a grant in the amount of \$2.5 million. These funds are being used to sustain housing within shelter sites with more durable sleeping cabins while our region awaits access to supported housing.

Housing First 4 Youth

Although significant efforts are underway it is clear that there continues to be challenges related to homelessness, mental health and substance use in youth between the ages of 15 and 24. In particular it has been identified that there is a group of vulnerable youth with high-risk behaviours that are struggling on the streets of our communities. In December of 2021 OCCHN called together leaders from across the region and beyond to highlight the concerns regarding youth and to advocate for funding for a safe space for youth to access supports and reduce their exposure to the elements, exploitation and harm. A complete business case model, terms of reference and local data have been compiled into a comprehensive plan for youth in the region that includes the creation of a safe space for youth, integrated youth hub, supported housing for youth aging out of care and emergency shelter. Community partners are dedicated to working together to find ways to bring these much-needed resources to our region.

We were able to receive a grant from the *Mischa Weisz Foundation* to provide healthy meals to the most at risk youth in our region. Each day outreach teams are able to provide healthy meals to youth on the street to improve their health and wellbeing and to make critical connections to community supports and services.

Working with the Community Health Networks on Vancouver Island

For the second year, the pandemic prevented the annual in person learning day and connection of Health Networks on Vancouver Island. What continued to take place in 2021 were the virtual meetings with coordinators to share and learn about the role that health networks could play in aligning efforts between communities in resource sharing and mentorship. Being virtually connected was critical in providing the sounding board and emotional support with others doing similar work during very chaotic times. We were fortunate to come together at the AVICC conference in April 2022 where we were able to promote the great work undertaken by community health networks on Vancouver Island.



Small Grants Initiative

It is with a heavy heart that OCCHN was not able to distribute small grants in 2021. The lack of capacity funding for the network required that this incredible initiative be put on hold. Until 2020 OCCHN was able to give back to the communities and the organizations who work at maximum capacity to provide the

programs and services for the citizens of the Cowichan Region. Small grants of up to \$2,000.00 may not seem like a lot but in fact have created some of our most impactful initiatives. We have now allocated a total of \$137,500.00 in grants over the past number of years. Due to COVID delays some projects were able to carry over from 2020 and were completed in 2021. The outcome of those projects is highlighted below.

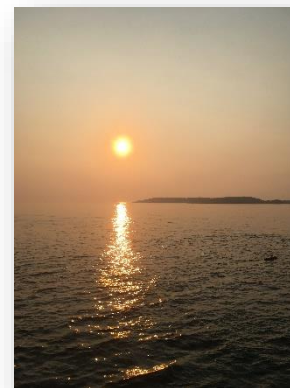
- Cowichan Women’s Health Collective- Cowichan Service Delivery Mapping Project [CWHC website](#)
- Tracy Video Cowichan Green Community- Community Food Access https://youtu.be/nfOfwap_ZM4

The Air We Breath -Cowichan Regional Airshed Roundtable

The Cowichan Region by the nature of its topography is known to have some of the poorest air quality in BC as the smoke settles in the valley bottom. Efforts continue to mitigate the impact of wood burning via incentives to switch to heat pumps, policy and bylaw changes and educating the public about the impact of wood burning on human health. To add to the complex challenge, our province has been faced with the harmful impact of devastating wild fires in the past number of years. Exploration of safe air spaces and refuge



are currently under way for times when emergencies such as wild fires take place. OCCHN, EPIC and the Cowichan Airshed Roundtable will be working with Island Health and the COPD initiative in 2022.



Pictured above: Smoke lies in the valley floor when open burning occurs in the Cowichan Valley. Pictured right: Harmful smoke fills the sky from wildfires.

Pictured above: Smoke lies in the valley floor when open burning occurs in the Cowichan Valley. Pictured right: Harmful smoke fills the sky from wildfires.

EPIC -Eldercare Project in Cowichan



The Community Stream of EPIC continues to meet and work together to find ways to address isolation and prevent frailty. The Pandemic had a profound impact on frail and isolated seniors throughout the region as it significantly reduced in person programs, services and access to health care. The EPIC team jumped into action and increased the frequency of meetings to ensure that no seniors were falling through the cracks. Most programs are run with the incredible support of volunteers, which are often seniors, so extensive efforts were undertaken to find ways to grocery shop, pick up prescriptions and provide in reach to those isolating at home without the senior volunteer supports. Funds were found for senior’s meal programs and community partners found ways to connect via friendly phone visits or providing access to I pads. Caregivers providing support for loved ones were now under

incredible pressures so reaching out to caregivers to provide support also became a priority. It was a

challenging year for seniors and for our partners that support seniors in our region. There were some bright moments including the EPIC information packages that were distributed into the hands of almost 10,000 seniors via the vaccination clinics and community programs.

Are CHNs helping to increase community capacity to take action to address health?

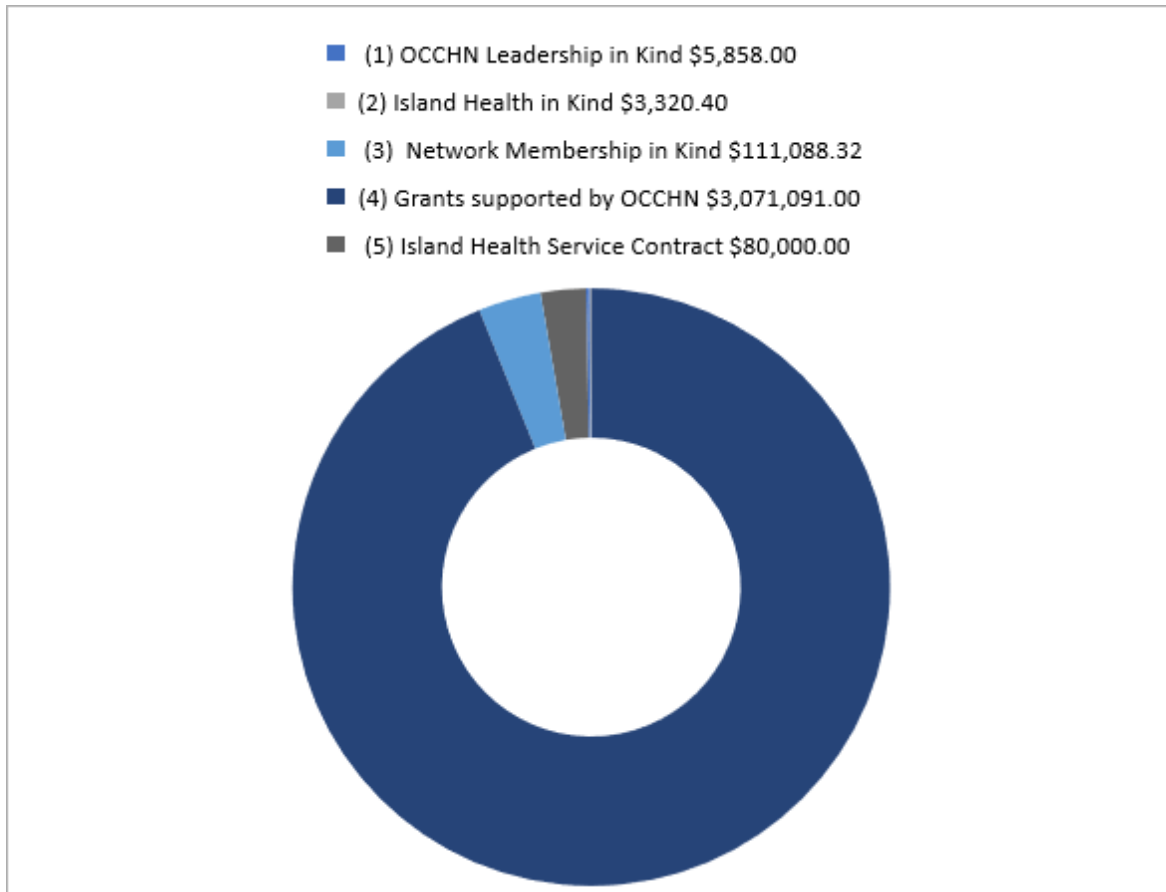
The findings of evaluation of networks on Vancouver Island strongly indicate that the existence of health networks such as Our Cowichan increased community capacity to address social determinants of health in a number of significant ways. Our Cowichan has acted as a conduit for learning, data collection and analysis, collective impact and networking. There was agreement that the outcomes of many of the initiatives would not have experienced the same level of success without the network functioning as the common sustaining thread, that persisted through the challenging times, such as the COVID pandemic or seasonal and safe shelter. The ability of Our Cowichan to work with community partners for collective planning and grant writing has resulted in resources coming to our region in ways we have not experienced before. Duplication of resources are diminishing and joint initiatives are demonstrating success with organizations aligning efforts and providing resources or sharing the lead. The Village project is a perfect example of dozens of community partners in health, local government, First Nations and community partners working together to improve the lives and health of the underserved population.

Challenges

Our Cowichan has been able to operate on grant funding that has allowed the network to engage in numerous activities to improve the social determinants of health including the very successful small grants initiative and the Cowichan Communities Health Profile for example. Due to grant funding coming to an end and without any imminent options, activities such as the small grants project were cancelled in 2021 to ensure that the remaining funds allowed the network to continue to engage and meet with members. It has just been announced that OCCHN has received a small grant from Island Health to assist in our ability to have some activities in 2022 continue with the focus on network engagement being a priority.

The pandemic has taken its toll on so many within the region and although zoom has been helpful it has made it challenging to engage in deeper conversations and relationship building amongst members. Outreach via the facilitator and existing strong relationships have been successful. Efforts to maintain the momentum and welcome new members so they can build relationships and connections with others will be a priority in 2022.

2021 Contributions of volunteers and in kind services have great value for Our Cowichan. By working together we are more effective.



1. \$5,858.00 In kind hours from Administration Team and Co Chairs
2. \$3,320.40 In kind support from Island Health for the Creation of the Cowichan Communities Health Profile
3. \$111,088.32 In kind support and contributions from all health network members via committees and actions undertaken by OCCHN
4. \$3,071,091.00 Grants/funds received via Our Cowichan in preparing applications and supporting community organizations with granting opportunities for COVID relief Funding.
5. \$80,000.00 Island Health Services contract for facilitation of OCCHN

*NOTE Average wage per hour of members is \$29.28 per hour * \$18.30 volunteer members; \$26.26 Managers; \$43.27 Directors, Executives, Physicians (based on "provincial averages" of indeed employment postings). **Actual wages are significantly higher than "in kind" wages.***

Our Impact Beyond Data

Each year community partners reflect on the impact that OCCHN has on their organization or work in the community. Here's what they have to say.

"As the Island Health Executive Director for Cowichan Valley and the new replacement hospital, I am grateful for the incredible contribution of the OCCHN to the health and wellness of the Cowichan Valley residents.

Over many years, I have observed Cindy and the OCCHN grow and flex to the evolving needs of this community, most recently with the Covid 19 pandemic. The passion, energy that this organization brings along with the capacity to assume a very broad and diverse mandate has facilitated improved housing; mental health, physical literacy, cleaner air, and more support for seniors to name a few significant contributions.

They are a key partner in our network of services, and through an aligned vision, and established relationships and communication channels we are able to bring a collective strength to the resolution of both short term and long-term challenges that ultimately result in a healthier community.

I would like to personally thank Cindy Lise and the OCCHN for their ongoing commitment to this work and for sharing their experience and learnings with other regions within Island Health."

Alice Gelpke
Island Health

"As the mental health manager and co-lead on the opioid crisis response working group for Cowichan Tribes, the collaboration with Our Cowichan Communities Health Network and the Community Action Team has been invaluable, life-saving, and soul-nourishing. As like-minded people dedicated to supporting our most vulnerable community members, we have been able to create and sustain collaborative services bringing together Elders, knowledge-keepers, and art with outreach and harm reduction to build community. The CAT team brings a wealth of knowledge and experience together and Cindy Lise is the hub of knowing all the things and who needs to be connected to who. I have no doubt that the good work being done in the Cowichan Valley is a direct result of the CAT team and Our Cowichan's leadership."

Erin Kapela
Mental Health Manager
Cowichan Tribes

“As the current Chairperson on behalf of the Cowichan Valley Regional District it has been a privilege to have the Our Cowichan Communities Health Network in our community for all these years. It brings all the stakeholders together in a common understanding of the health and wellness and the needs in our region. There is value of having this service under one umbrella to share knowledge and resources. This is a wonderful gift for the different organizations and so helpful for our diverse citizens in Cowichan. I look forward to my Friday Health Matters Newsletter and I appreciate catching up on all the work being done. Continued success!”

*Lori Iannidinardo
Chairperson CVRD*

Thank You to Rob Hutchins

It has been an honor working with Rob Hutchins who has been the talented visionary in the Co-Chair role since the inception of the network in 2009. After almost 13 years Rob has stepped down from this leadership position. We are grateful for the hundreds of hours that Rob has provided to the governance and promotion of Our Cowichan in this region. His role in establishing the successful framework from which we operate was the catalyst for other health networks on Vancouver Island. This includes developing the key relationships between health, local government, First Nations and community that are the foundation of our successes. By working together in such a way, we have been able to accomplish many great things. Our proudest work from Rob includes his leadership in the development of the state-of-the-art Hospice House and the advocacy of getting the new Cowichan Hospital Replacement Project underway. Although not in a direct leadership role, Rob will still be with us at the network and we look forward to more years of working together.



Partnerships that Make Our Cowichan Possible

Health Networks such as Our Cowichan build the foundation of a strong community-based approach to challenges we all share. Intersectoral collective action via the Health Network is working and we are busier than ever! We thank Island Health for the funding that allows us to engage in this important effort as well as the Cowichan Valley Regional District for their contribution by providing administration and staff support. We are also grateful for the opportunity to work with multiple sectors within Island Health from Executive, to Directors to talented employees at all levels in ways we have never done before. Success does not just happen so we recognize the thousands of hours of volunteer time of Co-Chairs, Administration Committee Members, Task Force Members, and the numerous committee members that are committed to this work and who are the core drivers of OCCHN.



Budget January 2021 to December 31, 2021

Account Description	Our Cowichan Communities Health Year to Date	Network Budget Amount	Variance
General Revenue			
Grants			
Provincial Conditional	-80,000.00	-80,000.00	0
General	-218.53		0
Total Grants	-80,218.53		
Donations	0	0	0
Surplus Deficit Current Year	-44,569.60	-44,569.60	0
Total Operating Revenue/Exp	-124,788.13	-124,788.13	
General Expenditures			
Advertising	0	0	0
Consultants	2,317.55	3,000.00	682.45
Training and Development	0	0	0
Contract Services Lead	75,769.16	80,000.00	4,230.84
Contract Services Support	770.00	1,875.00	1,105.00
Alloc- General Government	5,007.00	5,007.00	0
Meeting Expenses	749.74	6,500.00	5,750.26
Office Supplies	752.87	1,500.00	747.13
Airshed Strategy	0	0	0
Opioid Dialogues	0	2,500.00	2,500.00
Grant in Aid	0	18,000.00	18,000.00
Contingency	0	0	0
Community Forums			
Advertising	0	500.00	500.00
Rentals/Building	0	0	0
Refreshments	0	280.00	280.00
Communications			
Community Information	619.59	1,000.00	380.41
Web Page	1,000.00	1,000.00	0
Total Operating Expenses	86,985.91	118,622.00	38,856.43
Total Surplus Deficit	-37,802.22	0	37,802.22
Total General Revenue Fund	-37,802.22	0	37,802.22

Proposed Budget Moving Forward January 2022 to December 31, 2022

Our Cowichan Budget Proposal	2021
Revenue	
Remaining from previous year	32,782.00
Remaining Contingency from 2021	80,000.00
Island Health Contract Services Grant	
Airshed revenue	
Total Revenue	112,782
1 Advertising	0
2 Consultants	0
3 Training and Development	0
4 Contract Services- Lead	80,000.00
5 Contract Services (Admin support)	1,200.00
6 CVRD Administration (Allocation. - General government)	4,565.00
7 Meeting Expenses	5,000.00
8 Supplies -Office, insurance, cell phone stipend, materials	1,250.00
9 Airshed Strategy	0
10 Grants in Aid (Small Grants)	18,000.00
11. Contingency	1,767.00
12 Community Forums <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advertising • Rentals- building • Audio visual • Refreshments 	0
13 Communication/ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Awareness • Website 	0 1,000.00
Total Budget	112,782.00
Estimated Remaining	0

****OCCHN is nearing the end of its 2015 capacity grant. Further funding will need to be acquired to maintain the great work that has been accomplished with capacity funding.***

1. Advertising- Calls for proposals, community gatherings,
2. Consultants- Research, services not provided by facilitator
3. Training and Development- Professional development for network members
4. Contract Services Lead- Facilitator
5. Contract Services- Occasional admin support
6. CVRD Administration- Fees for accounting services
7. Meeting Expenses-Food for network meetings, strategic planning
8. Supplies- Paper, ink, photocopying and resources for meetings
9. Airshed Roundtable
10. Grant in Aid – small grants projects providing grants up to \$2,000.00 each
11. Contingency
12. Forums- Advertising -rentals -audio visual- refreshments- facilitation
13. Communications- Community information- new brochures, potentially magazine inserts or news paper inserts and promotion of OCCHN- Website- ongoing support for updating website