

# STATE OF THE CHILD REPORT

## Inspiring Action on the Saanich Peninsula



*Together for Children and Their Families*



*August 2017*

This State of the Child Report was developed by Peninsula Connections for Early Childhood (PCEC), a network of community volunteers who work together to promote the healthy development of young children (birth to age 6) on the Saanich Peninsula.

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# Background



## PENINSULA CONNECTIONS FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD

Peninsula Connections for Early Childhood (PCEC) is the early years community table on the Saanich Peninsula, a network of volunteers and early years service providers. PCEC builds relationships and partnerships among people and organizations that provide service for young children and families on the Peninsula. Its mission is to strengthen connections and community involvement. We co-ordinate collaborative efforts so that—together—we can:

- raise community awareness of the importance of the early years.
- promote the healthy growth and development of all young children.
- foster early literacy development and initiatives.
- support parents/guardians with information and resources.
- pool resources, interpret local information, and transform early childhood development research into advocacy, support and action within the community.

A list of PCEC affiliations and their representatives is available in Appendix 1.

## SAANICH PENINSULA COMMUNITY PROFILE

The Saanich Peninsula (henceforth the "Peninsula") is located on southern Vancouver Island. It is governed by the four municipalities of North Saanich, Central Saanich, Saanich and Sidney, and elected officials of the four First Nation communities of TSARTLIP (W̱JOŁŁP), TSEYUM (W̱SÍKEM), TSAWOUT (S̱Á,UTW) and PAUQUACHIN (BOKÉCEN). 4.4% (1685)<sup>1</sup> of the population are of First Nations ancestry, and ~20% of the population are immigrants.<sup>2</sup>

While Sidney, the Peninsula's urban centre, is notable for its significantly older population with 35.4% over the age of 65<sup>3</sup>, there is a growing population of children from birth to 6 living on the Peninsula. Currently comprising ~ 5% (2615)<sup>4</sup> of the population, this age group is increasing at a rate of about 300 babies each year, about 30 per year in First Nations communities.<sup>5</sup> School District No. 63 (Saanich) has about 800 children enrolled in Kindergarten and Grade 1<sup>6</sup>; this number does not include young children enrolled with the ŁÁU, WELNEW Tribal School.\*<sup>7</sup> More than 496 families access services of the StrongStart Centres in Sidney, Brentwood and Lochside schools.

The birth to 6 age group comprises ~5% of the Peninsula population and is increasing at a rate of about 300 babies each year.

The birth rate and growing population of young children necessitates understanding the needs of parents and families with young children so services can be enhanced and expanded. Informal needs assessments have identified multiple barriers, including isolation and lack of transportation, for families to access those services. Surveys completed by participants in early years programming<sup>8</sup> across the Peninsula affirmed the need for extended hours of operation, transportation support (bus tickets, gas cards, pickup), help understanding existing early years services and supports, as well as the need for food in programs—all validated in this report.

The birth rate and growing population of young children necessitates understanding the needs of parents and families with young children so services can be enhanced and expanded.

## STATE OF THE CHILD REPORT

The State of the Child Report aims to build a foundation of research and data about the status of families with young children on the Peninsula and raise awareness about the conditions and factors that contribute to healthy child development. These factors make up six main sections of this report:

- community belonging,
- child care,
- housing,
- transportation,
- health, and
- food.

The report also includes overview information about families on the Peninsula, and about early childhood development initiatives.

It is widely known that the first six years of a child's life set the stage for health and well-being for the remainder of a person's life. This report is premised on that understanding and aims to inform action to develop more child-friendly communities on the Saanich Peninsula where the needs of families are considered in all policy decisions, and stakeholders collaborate to effectively meet those needs.



*Baby drumming at the TSARTLIP Head Start Program.*



*Babies love a good book.*



## Methodology

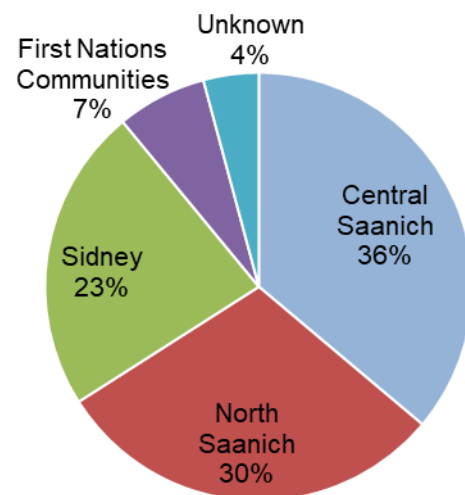
Data presented in this report was gathered from available research and statistics (see References in Appendix 2), and from surveys of 191 parents and caregivers with young children (0-6), and 29 early years service providers on the Peninsula. The surveys were available online and in print and were distributed widely through organizations frequented by parents with young children including the Peninsula Early Years Centre, child care centres, StrongStarts and Aboriginal Head Start programs, libraries, and in the four First Nations communities. The surveys were conducted in January and February 2017.

There are an estimated 2600 children from birth to 6 on the Peninsula.<sup>9</sup> Saanich Peninsula is often grouped into data for Greater Victoria, but no formal assessments on the state of the child for the Peninsula have been done to date. Given that most parents surveyed had an average of 2 children, this survey reached enough people to provide a valid snapshot of life for families with young children, and offer a look at the state of the child on the Peninsula.

There was representation from three municipalities, and from the four First Nations communities. This data is proportionate to the total populations.<sup>10</sup>

Insights from service providers came from the Saanich School District, health authority, recreation centres, libraries, child care providers, early childhood literacy and development programs, StrongStart Centres, Aboriginal Head Start programs, and early years organizations.

**Survey Respondents by Postal Code**



*Eager participants at the PCEC Books for Breakfast event at the Central Saanich Library.*

## Demographics of Parent/Caregiver Respondents

- **Age:** Respondents ranged in age from 20 - 71, with an average age of 36.
- **Marital status:** The majority of the survey respondents are parenting with a partner or spouse (86%), with the remaining respondents lone parenting, and sharing custody, legal guardianship or other care-giving arrangements. There are fewer lone parent families on the Peninsula (about 9% reported in the 2011 Census) than in Greater Victoria (12%), and in British Columbia (19.5%). The majority of lone-parent families with young children live in Sidney.
- **Number of Children:** Respondents reported they have between 1 and 5 children, with an average of 2.
- **Languages spoken:** English is the primary language spoken at home (84%). French (6%), SENĆOŦEN (4%) and Spanish, Tagalog, Halq'eméylem and other languages are also spoken.
- **Ethnicity, nationality or culture:** 74% of respondents identified their ethnicity, nationality or culture as "Canadian" or "Caucasian," with 13% "First Nations" and "Métis", 8% "European" and the remaining 5% split between Japanese, Chinese, Filipino and Mexican.



*L: A child in the Teen Education and Motherhood (TEAM) Preschool Program at the Individual Learning Centre, Saanichton.  
R: Three generations together at the Brentwood StrongStart Centre.*

# Snapshot of Life for Peninsula Families with Young Children



**The adjacent quote captures the essence of what we heard from parents and caregivers.**

The Peninsula offers access to beaches, parks, and many programs, events and facilities for children and families, yet is unaffordable for many families raising young children. Many families feel they cannot “get ahead.” On the Peninsula and in the broader region of Greater Victoria, the cost of living is high, and families’ expenses are dominated by shelter and child care costs—29% and 21.9% of monthly costs respectively—making up half of a family’s expenses.<sup>11</sup>

Many families reported they need a better wage to afford the costs of raising a family here. In 2016 the living wage for Greater Victoria—the wage needed to enjoy an adequate quality of life—was \$20.03/hr.<sup>12</sup> This is calculated based on a family with two parents working full-time (35 hrs/week) to provide a home for two children—one in pre-school and one in grade 2—with a total annual income of \$69,496.<sup>13</sup>

*“Great place to live but lots of stress on parents these days and nothing is getting cheaper.”*

**Lone parent with children aged 2 & 4**

*“Having a healthy work-life balance is nearly impossible because it costs so much for housing and daycare. We have to work two full-time jobs to support our family and that leaves very little time for family and wellness.”*

**Sidney parent**



*PCEC Books for Breakfast events are scheduled on Saturdays to accommodate busy family lives.*



Measures to eliminate child poverty and support families in their child-rearing years are especially important. Research shows that the experience of poverty in early childhood impacts children for the rest of their lives. Birth to 6 is a critical developmental period for the human brain.<sup>14</sup> Poverty is one of the most powerful predictors of poor developmental outcomes.<sup>15</sup>

According to Statistics Canada (2014), 1 in 5 children in BC are living in poverty, higher than Canada's child poverty rate.<sup>16</sup> 16% of children in the Capital Region live in families experiencing poverty.<sup>17</sup> Despite having the third-lowest child poverty rate in BC, and despite showing improvement, the Capital Region, with 8700 poor children (some of whom live on the Peninsula), has the greatest number of poor children of any urban area outside of Vancouver.<sup>18</sup>

Particular groups of children are over-represented in these numbers—children of recent immigrants, Indigenous children, children of lone-parent women, children in visible minority families, and children with disabilities are significantly more likely to experience poverty. Indigenous children are more than twice as likely to be poor than the overall child population, reflecting

the continued impacts of residential schools, and other historical and current effects from the experience of colonization.<sup>19</sup> Children in lone-parent families are twice as likely to live in poverty. In Greater Victoria, though they represent 7% of family types, 29% of lone-parent families are living in poverty.<sup>20</sup> The median lone-parent before-tax income on the Peninsula is \$45,738—significantly lower than the median for two-adult families with children: \$124,352 in North Saanich, \$110,139 in Central Saanich and \$89,750 in Sidney.<sup>21</sup>

Not all families on the Peninsula are struggling with affordability. The greatest proportion of people with high incomes (\$80,000+) live in North Saanich, and there are more people with high incomes living in North Saanich (9%) than on the Peninsula (6%) and Capital Region (5%).<sup>22</sup>



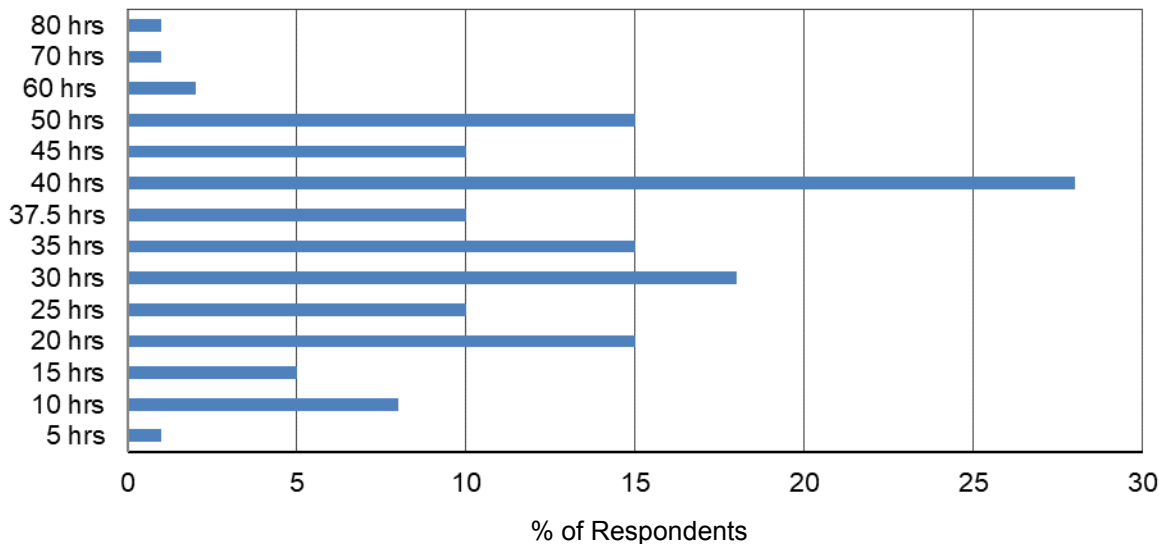
*A parent and child often enjoy reading a book together.*

## Peninsula Working Families



- **30% of parents/caregivers surveyed work or study outside of the home, an average of 35 hours per week (with a range of 5 - 80 hours per week).**
- **Most had one job (79%), 13% had two jobs, and less than 3% had three or four jobs.**
- **The majority (91%) of respondents parenting with a spouse or partner are working, on average 41 hours per week.**

### Hours Worked per Week by Working Primary Parent or Caregiver



Many respondents indicated they work in Victoria and the commute takes away from family time and limits ability to be present in their children's lives. As of 2011, for example, only 30% of the Central Saanich workforce worked within the community; the majority of residents commute to Victoria.<sup>23</sup> Respondents also mentioned that lack of flexibility at work presents challenges in getting children to daycare or school at specific times, or in case of illness or accident.

*“Us being stressed from work definitely affects the kids so we are working as a couple to try and make that better, find outlets for stress so it doesn't negatively impact the kids.”*

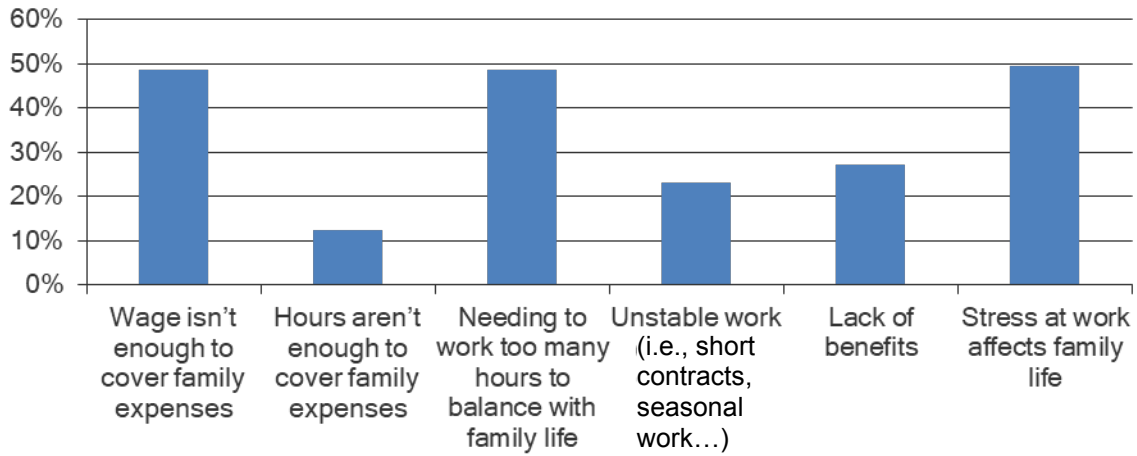
Central Saanich parent



Commuters make frequent use of the No. 70 bus running between the Peninsula and Downtown.

Many parents/caregivers (half of those surveyed) feel they need to work too many hours at wages that do not cover family expenses. This perspective is supported by a recent labor market projection from the Community Social Planning Council, which indicates that lower paid jobs are on the rise.<sup>24</sup> More than one-quarter of parents surveyed lack benefits, and nearly one-quarter work at jobs that are unstable or lack job security (seasonal and contract work). The stressors of work and the number of hours worked are difficult to balance with family life—more so on the Peninsula than in Greater Victoria, as reported in the 2016 Victoria Vital Signs report.<sup>25</sup>

### Challenges Related to Respondents' Employment



**What makes it EASY to raise a child on the Peninsula?**

- #1** Abundant, quality, free or affordable programs, supports and early learning activities for families with young children (71% respondents)
- #2** Access to recreation and activities at public facilities such as Panorama Recreation and Commonwealth Place; Central Saanich, Bruce Hutchison, and Sidney/North Saanich libraries (50% respondents)
- #3** Access to health services such as GP's, walk-in clinics, hospital, Peninsula Health Unit programs and nurses (25% respondents)
- #4** Access and proximity to nature, beaches, farms and parks (21% respondents)
- #5** Sense of community and support (18% respondents)



Enjoying a Peninsula park—Island View Beach.



Community recreation brochures from Panorama Recreation Centre, and Saanich Parks and Recreation.



## What makes it **HARD** to raise a child on the Peninsula?

- #1** Transportation concerns include limited public transit, distance to amenities and work (36% respondents)
- #2** Cost of living, cost of housing (21% respondents)
- #3** Lack of affordable child care; lack of available spaces, especially for infants; long waitlists for preschools (17% respondents)
- #4** Social isolation. There is a lack of sense of community amongst families with young children (11% respondents)
- #5** Lack of affordable, convenient programs and services for families. Some are too expensive, or at times not suitable for working parents (10% respondents)
- #6** Lack of family doctors accepting patients (9% respondents)
- #7** Lack of walkability. There is a need for more sidewalks, street lights and bike lanes. It is unsafe to walk along some roads (7% respondents and 97% of First Nations respondents)\*
- #8** Lack of indoor play spaces (6% respondents)

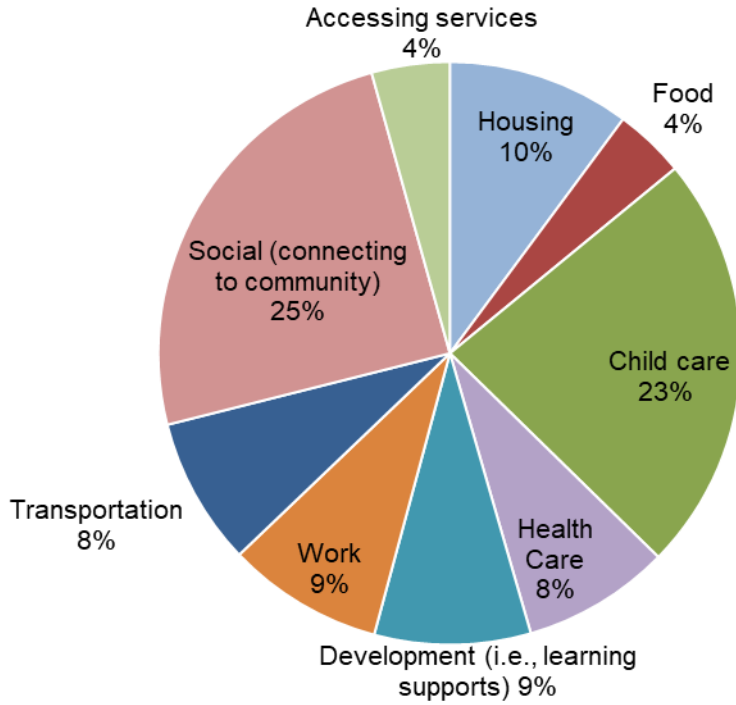
\* Referring to living on a reserve.





The areas families said they needed most support with were **social**—connecting to community and child care.

**Areas of Support Most Needed by Respondents**



*Moms and children in the Preschool and the TEAM Programs at the Individual Learning Centre, Saanichton.*

# Community Belonging



25% of parents/caregivers surveyed said they need help connecting to community.

**R**espondents reported they enjoy the opportunities for family outings and engagement through events such as: the Saanich Fair, pow wows, community meals (at churches and community centres), the PCEC “Children Count!” Fair, “Books for Breakfast” events, informal parents’ networks, virtual groups, and “Baby Talk” sessions.

*“This is a really difficult community to break into... it is very hard to establish a supportive social network.”*

**Young parent who moved here from Ontario**

However, 25% of respondents said they need help connecting to the community. 11% of respondents said they feel socially isolated and don't feel connected to other families with young children, but would like to be. Some commented that getting to activities can be a challenge due to transportation limitations on the Peninsula.

Many of these respondents live in

Sidney, and said there just are not as many families around, and that many places in the community are not always welcoming of young children or have space for strollers or for children to play.

The median age for Sidney is 12% higher than the median age for the Capital Region<sup>26</sup>. Sidney has a higher proportion of seniors than the other municipalities on the Peninsula and fewer children than anywhere in the CRD. Central Saanich has the highest population of children on the Peninsula.



*Saanich Peninsula Literacy's free Open-Air Library at Beacon Park.*

## Sourcing Information on the Peninsula



Parents and caregivers surveyed reported the following sources for information about programs, services and activities for their families:

- Facebook, other social media: 94%
- word-of-mouth: 71%
- parks and recreation centre guides: 63%
- Island Parent magazine: 38%
- public health nurses: 30%

## COMMUNITY BELONGING: CONSIDERATIONS FOR CHANGE

➤ **There is a need to support a culture of “reaching out” and to create opportunities for relationship-building, social connection and building networks of support for families.**

Respondents offered suggestions to address this issue. The majority requested more family-friendly spaces for families to be together, connect and support each other. Specific ideas included:

- drop-in open gymnasium times (at schools) for toddlers/kids and their caregivers to enjoy sports in the evenings.
- regular, open community events when families are available (in the evenings, weekends, during summer) such as music nights or puppet shows at the libraries, BBQ's in local parks and other inexpensive or free events that can be enjoyed by a range of ages together.
- targeted parenting support groups for newcomers, young mothers, older mothers, parents affected by stress or mental health.
- a regular Moms' get-together at a child-friendly café with space for strollers.



*Enjoying a visit to a child-friendly cafe.*

➤ **Increase awareness of and access to events and activities.**

Respondents also reported it would be useful if more information on local events and activities was posted online. It is also important to address transportation challenges on the Peninsula (see Transportation section) to enable parents/caregivers to more easily access opportunities for connection.

# Child Care



24% of survey respondents said they lack the child care services they need.

68% said child care was unaffordable for them.

**P**arents and caregivers surveyed pay between \$0 to \$2,500/month for child care, with an average of \$1,246. Child Care Resource & Referral (CCRR) reported:

- the average cost of child care on the Peninsula for one child is \$845 to \$1,003/month for group child care (range based on age 3 to 5 years and birth to 3 years).
- \$174 to \$422/month for preschool (range based on whether 2 to 5 days/week).
- between \$800 to \$831 for home-based child care.

BC families face a crisis in accessing quality, affordable child care. Child care is the second-highest expense for families in BC (first being housing<sup>27</sup>) which accounts for 22% of families' expenses in the Capital Region.<sup>28</sup> This is true for the Peninsula. Many respondents noted that they need to stay home to care for their children because the cost of child care is more than they could earn working the limited hours they'd be available and able to access child care.

## Child Care on the Peninsula

The average spent on child care, as reported by those surveyed, is about \$1,200/month. This is higher than the average cost of child care reported by CCRR because most families have more than one child in care.





**Peninsula parents with young children:**

*“I can't earn enough to pay for child care expenses, and yet my husband's salary is too high to access subsidy.”*

*“I have had to change careers to work around the cost of putting three children in daycare/ afterschool care. I now only work during school hours for a much reduced rate of pay, but child care would cost me at least \$90 a day, plus we can't get a support worker to help with my child's special needs.”*

*“I can only afford two days a week of child care because I had to give up my full-time job because at the time there was no room for my daughter to go to daycare. Now that there's a two-day spot available I can be on call and go to work those two days. But I can't afford full-time child care because now I am on call and I don't know if I'll get called every day of the week to afford child care. It would be nice if it was more affordable so my daughter could go every day and I could be on call every single day and hopefully get called for work and have more money for my family.”*



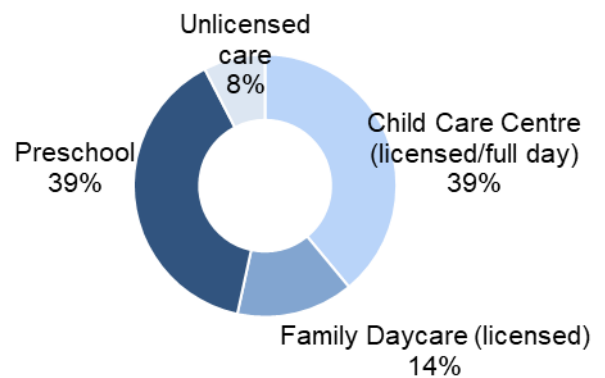
A full, busy child care centre.

The Government of British Columbia offers subsidies for very low-income families, though few are given out. In an average month in 2014/15, subsidies were issued for fewer than 4% of BC children under 12 years of age.<sup>29</sup> The introduction in 2016 of the Canada Child Benefit and an increase in the amount parents can claim for child care expenses (from \$11,000 to \$13,000 annually) has helped to slightly decrease the cost of living for families in the region.<sup>30</sup>

There are long waitlists for child care<sup>31</sup> and siblings often cannot be accommodated at the same child care centre as a result. Victoria Child Care Resource and Referral reports that on the Peninsula—as of March 2017—there were 387 spaces in group child care, 167 in preschool, and 101 licensed spaces in home-based care settings.

The previous government had promised to fund 130 new licensed child care spaces in the Capital Region. With a new government as of July 2017, will this commitment be honoured and if so will some of those spaces be on the Peninsula to help support the needs of current parents/caregivers and the birth rate of 300 babies per year?

**Child Care Types Used by Survey Respondents**



Only 50% of respondents who have secured child care said it was convenient and 55% said it was “good quality.” In addition, early childhood service providers note a **critical shortage of qualified early childhood educators** to offer increased spaces.

Several respondents mentioned they need help identifying child care options. In 2016, the BC Government launched an online child care mapping tool to help families locate licensed child care providers in their community.<sup>32</sup> BC211 was launched mid-June 2017 to provide an online directory and chat (8am to 11pm daily) for comprehensive resources information. Victoria Child Care Resource & Referral also offers services to help parents find child care.

## CHILD CARE: CONSIDERATIONS FOR CHANGE

### > There is a clear need to ensure that child care is affordable for families.

Making child care more affordable through increased subsidies, tax-measures, the possibility of \$10/day child care rates, increasing the minimum wage, and other initiatives could make a significant positive difference for all families, especially low-income families and those living in poverty.

### > There is a clear need to increase the number of child care spaces, especially licensed care for infants and toddlers (birth to 3 years).

Measures to address the long waitlists for child care on the Peninsula need to be taken. Opening up new licensed child care spaces and attracting qualified early childhood educators to these spaces is essential.

### > Information on area child care services needs to be readily available to parents/caregivers.

Increase awareness of online resources such as the BC government's child care mapping tool, online directory and chat, [www.BC211.ca](http://www.BC211.ca), and the services of Victoria Child Care Resource & Referral, <http://www.childcarevictoria.org/>.

### > In addition to affordability and availability, there is also room to improve the quality of child care on the Peninsula.

Key needs identified were:

- more flexible and extended hours, including after-school and weekend care.
- being able to keep siblings together.
- more child care spaces and supports for children with special needs and disabilities.
- more cultural programs for young First Nations children.
- more early learning and healthy activities included in child care, such as sports, nature time, music, and snacks and meals.

# Housing



40% of survey respondents indicated they are living in “core housing need”—substandard shelter that is inadequate because it is unstable, unsafe, or overcrowded; or that they are living with family because they cannot afford market rent.<sup>33</sup>

~95% of local First Nations parent/caregiver respondents said they live in housing that is overcrowded. First Nations people are overrepresented in the need for adequate housing.

## **Securing affordable, suitable housing is one of the top stressors for families on the Peninsula.**

As affordable rentals become more scarce and wait lists for social housing grow longer, young families and families with little to no income are among the groups experiencing the affordable housing crisis on the Peninsula. The 0% overall rental vacancy rate represents great difficulty for low-income families looking for affordable and appropriate rental housing.<sup>34</sup>

*“I would say the situation remains dire for [low and moderate income] demographic groups. The higher incomes are well served on the Peninsula, but there just isn’t much available for the working poor.”*

Marika Albert, Community Social Planning Council of Greater Victoria Peninsula News Review April 6, 2017<sup>38</sup>

Families, especially low-income families, do not have many housing options. There is a severe shortage of affordable rental housing on the Peninsula. The majority—85%—of housing available is unaffordable to the population.<sup>35</sup>

Further, the Peninsula appears to be underserved in terms of social housing and the demographic most represented on the waitlist for social housing are families<sup>36</sup>. For local First Nations, the housing supply is even more limited, and at least 295 families, individuals and elders are on band housing waitlists.<sup>37</sup>

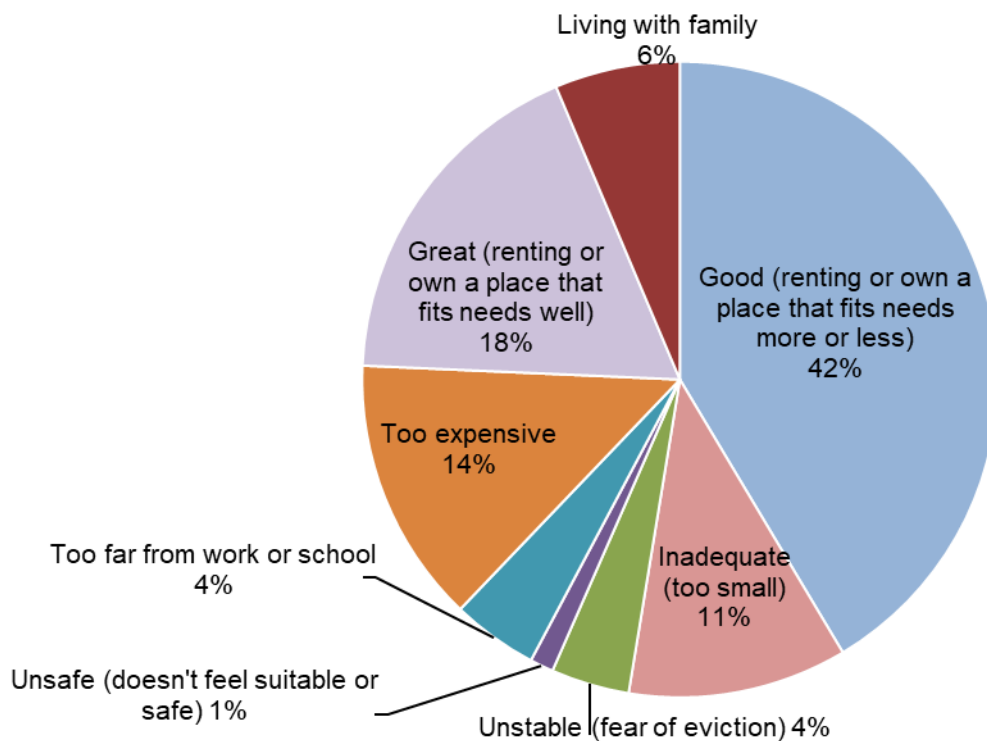
## Housing on the Peninsula



A 2016 report by the Community Social Planning Council of Greater Victoria<sup>39</sup> highlighted the lack of affordable housing:

- Low income households (\$15,000 to \$29,999/year) make up 13% of the population of the Peninsula. Housing options associated with that income represent only 2.5% of the supply.
- Households with a moderate income (\$30,000 to \$49,999/year) represent 17.6% of the population. Housing options with this income category account for only 1.6% of the supply.

*Respondents' Housing Situations*





Survey respondents indicated that their housing expenses are higher than average, as cited in the Saanich Peninsula Housing Needs Assessment. This is likely because most families require larger suites which cost more. In 2015, the average rent for one to two-bedroom suites was \$957 in Central Saanich and \$937 for Sidney. No data was available for North Saanich or the part of Saanich within the Peninsula.

According to the Shelter Cost to Income Ratio for 2011, 24% (3893) of households indicated housing need. This means that nearly one-quarter of families spend more than 30% of their total income on shelter. The highest proportion of households in housing need are in Sidney (30%) and the lowest in North Saanich (18%).

*“Living in housing need can negatively impact all aspects of child and youth physical, mental, developmental and social health.”*

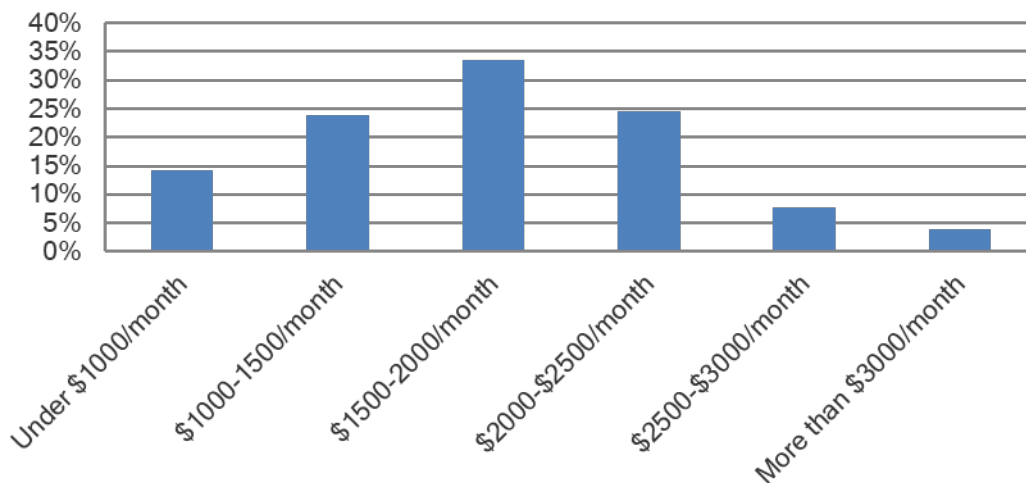
Canadian Pediatric Society<sup>40</sup>



“My house” drawn by a Lochside Kindergarten child.

Considering renter households only, 44% indicated housing need. 20% of renters spend more than half their income on shelter.

### Respondents' Monthly Cost of Rent or Mortgage



## HOUSING: CONSIDERATIONS FOR CHANGE

➤ **There is an urgent need for accessible and affordable housing for all families with young children—those in the population at-large, and families living in First Nations communities.**

Take measures to address the near-0% vacancy rate for rental properties on the Peninsula, the relatively high house prices, the limited housing options (e.g.: subsidized housing, co-housing, cooperative housing...) and long wait-lists for same.

# Transportation



Transportation is pivotal to families being able to access the services and supports to meet their basic needs.

1/3 of survey respondents said transportation was a barrier to meeting their families' needs.

Transportation was the number one response (36%) to “What makes it hard to raise a child on the Peninsula?”

**M**ost families get around by car, though some walk, bike, and take the bus. Many families cannot access programs and services because they live in more rural areas or lack a vehicle and public transportation is limited. Transportation is pivotal to families being able to access the services and supports to meet their basic needs: access to food, recreation, health care, child care and early childhood development programs.

Early childhood service providers on the Peninsula are aware of the transportation barrier, as it arises from surveys, plans, and assessments again and again. For instance, the Saanich Peninsula Literacy Task Group prepared a Community Literacy Plan (2013) which prioritized addressing barriers to accessing services—in particular lack of transportation—but also noted this was beyond their capacity and funding.<sup>41</sup>



*Buckled up for a family outing.*

## TRANSPORTATION: CONSIDERATIONS FOR CHANGE

### > Pursue opportunities for transportation improvements on the Peninsula:

- *Improve “walkability”* by creating sidewalks with streetlights to and from public transit and key amenities. Certain areas of Brentwood Bay and other areas of the Peninsula, particularly in First Nations communities, are unsafe for people and especially families with young children to walk or push strollers.
- *Extend public transportation routes* to better serve the Peninsula and connect to public amenities.
- *Build transportation into programs and services.* Include gas stipends, bus tickets, transportation services and/or help arrange carpooling.
- *Bring early years programs and services to families.* Explore “pop-up” and mobile services and programs such as book carts and pop-up produce markets.



Overhead lighting and paved, wide road shoulders for improved walking and cycling safety on busy Mt. Newton X Road.

# Health



**The Peninsula offers basic health services** including walk-in medical clinics, the Peninsula Health Unit and Saanich Peninsula Hospital, GP's, dental clinics and private clinicians for overall health, counseling, and more. Dental care for children and youth from low-income families is available through ORCCA Dental Care located in Sidney.

The Island Health Authority's Peninsula Health Unit offers screening and immunization clinics and health outreach, as well as dental hygiene, speech and language, nutrition, lactation, and perinatal depression and anxiety support. Community Health Nurses are available in First Nations communities. Walk-in medical clinics, and a range of early years services with strong health components, including "Baby Talk," "Peninsula Babies" and the "TSAWOUT Babies Circle," are available.

Child, youth and family mental health resources are offered through private clinicians, the Island Health Authority, Saanich Child & Youth Mental Health, Beacon Community Services and NIL/TU,O Child and Family Services. Some counselling and therapy services are free.

Despite this array of health services available for children and families, survey respondents identified gaps, outlined below.

## Health Services on the Peninsula

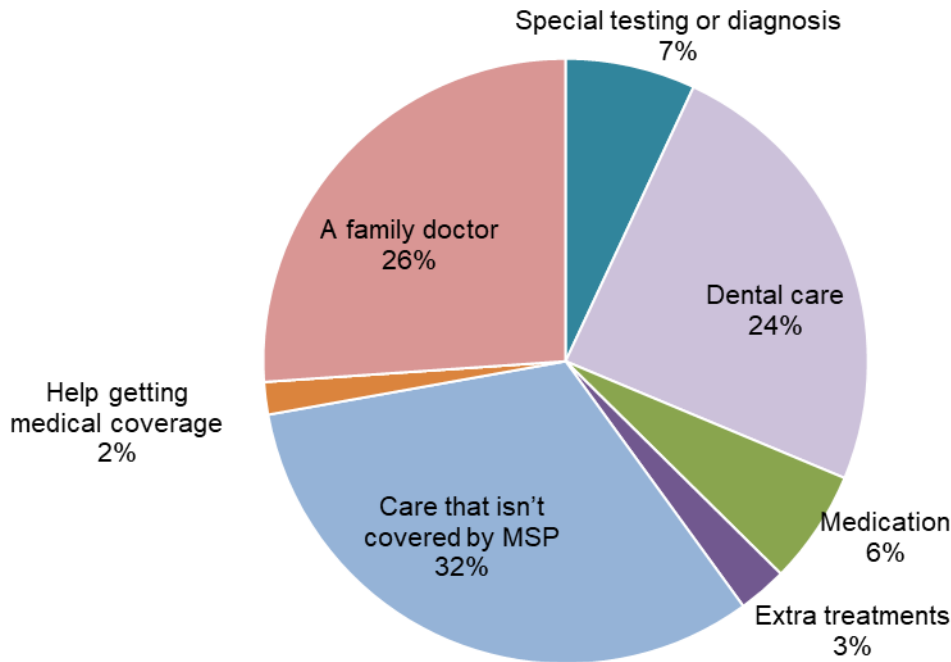
The Primary health services issues identified by respondents are:

- lack of affordability of health care that is not covered through MSP
- lack of available family doctors
- long wait times to see specialists
- lack of affordable dental care.





### Health Care Supports Required by Respondents



In terms of the care not covered by MSP and/or where families can use more support respondents mentioned the need for:

- increased mental health services for parents and young children, including counseling and therapy services for anxiety, ADD/ADHD, Asperger's syndrome and peri-natal depression and anxiety.\*
- increased services, programs, funding, and inclusivity for children with disabilities.
- increased local speech therapy services.\*

\* Service providers identified that the services requested by parents in the survey as outlined above **are** available on the Peninsula. For instance, Beacon Community Services and Saanich Child & Youth Mental Health provide services at no cost to families, but there are often waitlists. Island Health has speech and language pathologists available through the Peninsula Health Unit. If a family's concern is only for speech they receive services through Island Health. If the child has additional health concerns, they are then referred to the Queen Alexandra Centre for Children's Health in Victoria.

The survey data indicates few parents access the screening and therapy services available. Respondents said they do not know where to access dental care, mental health supports and other health services on the Peninsula.

*"I just get stressed out about the lack of health care options sometimes, and I worry that if we ever did have an emergency, we wouldn't have the ability to get treated in a timely manner."* Peninsula parent

Respondents mentioned that the need to travel to Victoria to access some services is an impediment. Some specialized services for children's health—including developmental supports, and some supports for mental health, disabilities and severe illness—are not located on the Peninsula, and families must travel to access them.

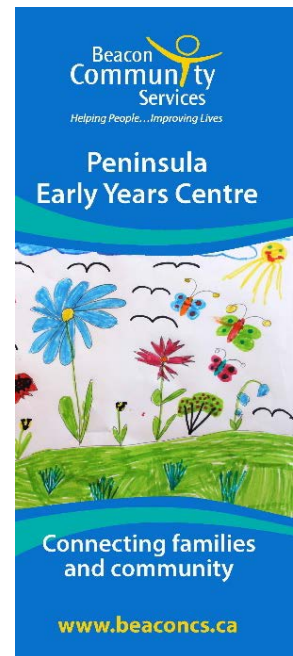
The Peninsula Early Years Centre staff help to fill this gap through “Ages and Stages” questionnaires and seeking early intervention support for families. Some services are offered throughout the Peninsula via outreach; the Queen Alexandra Centre for Children's Health provides Outreach Workers for Infant Development and Behavioural Interventionists. Additionally, Jeneece Place offers a temporary home for families visiting Victoria for child medical care.

*“We have had lots of community support for our child's medical issues, which we really appreciate. We still feel that we are struggling, but we are not sure how else to get help.”*

Peninsula parent

## HEALTH: CONSIDERATIONS FOR CHANGE

> **There is an opportunity for Peninsula service providers to increase outreach to families, and focus on increasing knowledge and awareness of physical and mental health services available and how to access them.**



L: Enjoying the many choices for playing and learning at the Peninsula Early Years Centre. R: The Early Years Centre brochure.

## Physical Development and Well Being

Respondents recognized the importance of, in the words of one parent, “...routines that provide lots of fresh air, healthy foods, nurturing people, places to safely play and restful sleep.”

80 to 95% of respondents reported their families stay active by going on walks, playing in parks and on beaches, playing in the yard and swimming. Others reported they also visit public facilities. In order, they mentioned: playgrounds, Panorama and Commonwealth recreation centres/pools, and libraries. The majority of families mentioned free activities such as reading, playing games, going for a bike ride, free CRD events, or going for a walk, as their favorite family activity. A few mentioned family outings such as going to the Shaw Centre for the Salish Sea or to see a movie. Kindergym, toddler drop-in, parks play, TSARTLIP nature and medicinal plant walks, and outdoor programs and TSEYCUM and PAUQUACHIN outdoor programs were also mentioned.



*A five-year-old plays on climbing structure.*

## PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT AND WELL BEING: CONSIDERATIONS FOR CHANGE

### > Ways suggested by respondents to contribute to greater health for children and families:

- Have more playgrounds near housing developments (where they live), especially in North Saanich.
- Have a gym/recreation or fitness centre in or nearer to First Nations communities.
- Offer subsidies for children to play sports.
- Provide transportation support to get to sports games or practices, which are often in Victoria.



*Rathdown neighbourhood park in Sidney.*



# Food



When rent “eats up the lion’s share” of the household budget, families face hunger and a lack of access to nutritious food.

**P**overty is the key driver in food insecurity, and food insecurity is a key factor in food bank use.<sup>42</sup> According to Food Banks Canada, a person or family is defined as food insecure when they:

- worry they won’t be able to afford enough food.
- eat suboptimal food because they can’t afford better.
- skip meals because they are unable to purchase enough food.

*“I know adults who only eat one meal a day when the kids are in school, because all their resources go to providing for the children.”*

**Mavis Underwood, Band Councillor  
TSAWOUT First Nation  
Victoria Vital Signs (2016)<sup>44</sup>**



*Helping with food preparation; important at any age.*

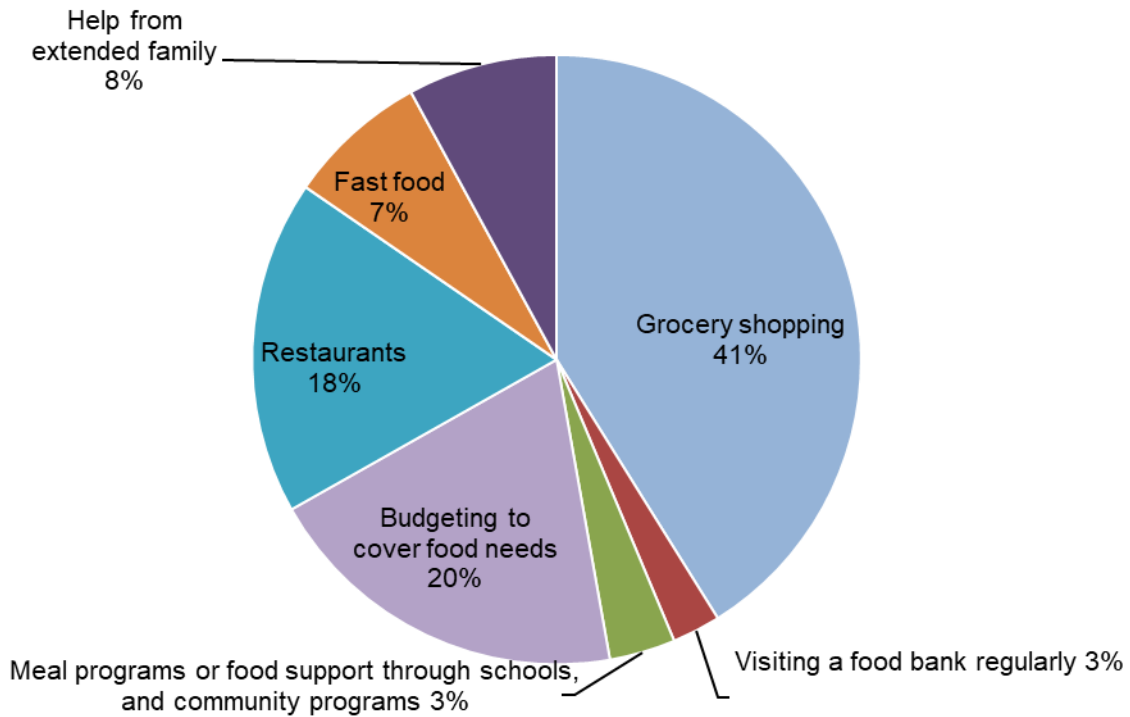
In 2016 the average monthly cost of a nutritious food basket for a reference family of four on Vancouver Island was \$944, about

14% of an average family’s expenses.<sup>43</sup>

Respondents reported that the cost of groceries has increased. It is especially difficult to afford nutritious food and foods necessary to support health-related dietary needs (e.g., gluten-free and food allergies).



### How Respondents Meet Their Food Needs



Respondents indicated food and nutrition support is offered through the Sidney Lions' Food Bank and Island Health community nutritionists. Some respondents also referred to the "Good Food Box" (affordable fresh produce), TSARTLIP Family Gardening project, TSAWOUT food program, NIL/TU,O community kitchen and "Trinity Time" (food, social time and hamper distribution) as services available for First Nations families.

### Hunger on the Peninsula

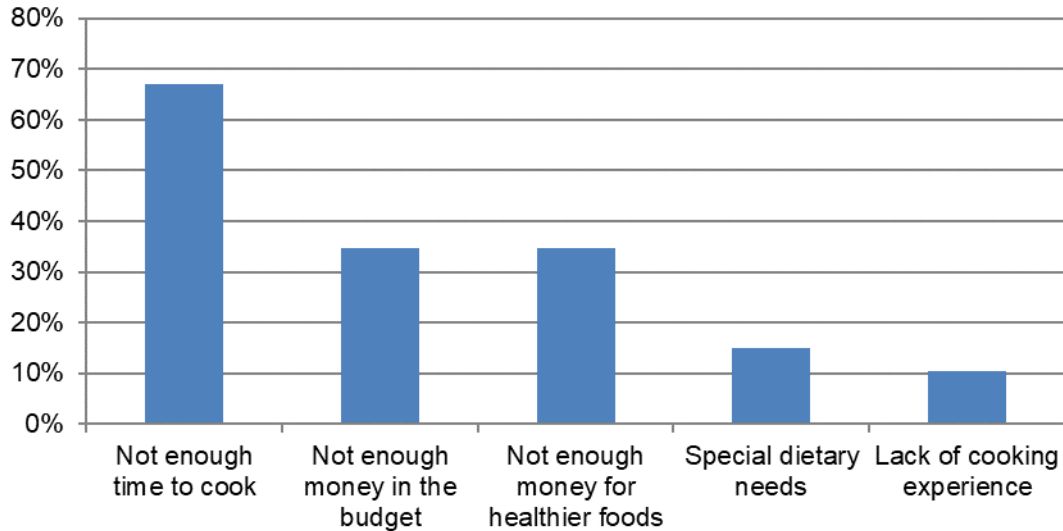
The 2016 Hunger Count by the Sidney Lions' Food Bank noted:

- 337 children (birth to 17 years) accessing food, representing more than 1/3 (37%) of food bank clients for the Saanich Peninsula.
- 39% of food bank users were families
  - 16% were single-parent families
  - 23% were two-parent families



Because Sidney Lions' Food Bank users are required to be residents of the Saanich Peninsula, and because food bank usage is correlated with food insecurity, the Hunger Count numbers<sup>45</sup> provide a helpful indication of food insecurity for this specific region.

### Respondents' Challenges in Meeting Family Food Needs



Regional statistics align with national statistics on food bank usage and food insecurity:

- More than one third of people helped are children and youth; and more than 40% are families with children.<sup>46</sup>
- Children under 18 are overrepresented among people who are food insecure.<sup>47</sup>
- Higher rates of food insecurity are found in lower-income households and among families headed by single women, Indigenous peoples, marginally-housed, and homeless people, and new immigrants.
- In 2011 to 2012, 24% of BC lone parents with children under 18 experienced moderate to severe food insecurity.<sup>48</sup>



Some of the items in need at the Sidney Lions' Food Bank.

Inadequate nutrition during pregnancy can have negative health impacts on both the mother and baby. For example, low-income women who are unable to meet their dietary requirements during pregnancy have an increased risk for a low birth weight baby.

*“Children who repeatedly experience severe household food insecurity are two to four times more likely to have poorer health or a diagnosed chronic condition.”*

**Dietitians of Canada**

A report by the Dietitians of Canada notes that “Children who repeatedly experience severe household food insecurity are two to four times more likely to have poorer health or a diagnosed chronic condition. Greater risks of developing depression and suicidal ideation in adolescence and early adulthood have been associated with childhood experiences of household food insecurity. Parents who go hungry or have poor-quality diets also struggle to be the best they can be, both from the physical and mental effects of poor nutrition and the stress of raising children in poverty while living in a wealthy society.”<sup>49</sup>

Food insecurity affects children's physical development and health. Food insecure children may also have poorer academic outcomes and social skills compared to children who do not experience food insecurity. Food insecurity impacts social and mental well-being and can increase the likelihood of depression, distress (including feelings of worthlessness and hopelessness), and social isolation.



*Kindergarten student and teacher, Lochside Elementary.*

## FOOD: CONSIDERATIONS FOR CHANGE

### ➤ Address poverty and reduce food costs for families with young children by:

- providing meals and snacks in more programs.
- offering more free (or by donation) family dinners.
- pursuing healthy food access programs such as the “Good Food Box.”



*Fruit and vegetable boxes from The Good Food Box.*

# Early Childhood Development on the Peninsula



**T**he many close partnerships among the Saanich School District, the health authority, and organizations providing services for young children are making a positive difference for Peninsula families. This section of the report provides an overview of early childhood development programs and services in the area.

According to survey respondents, more than half of young children are enrolled in an early learning program, including:

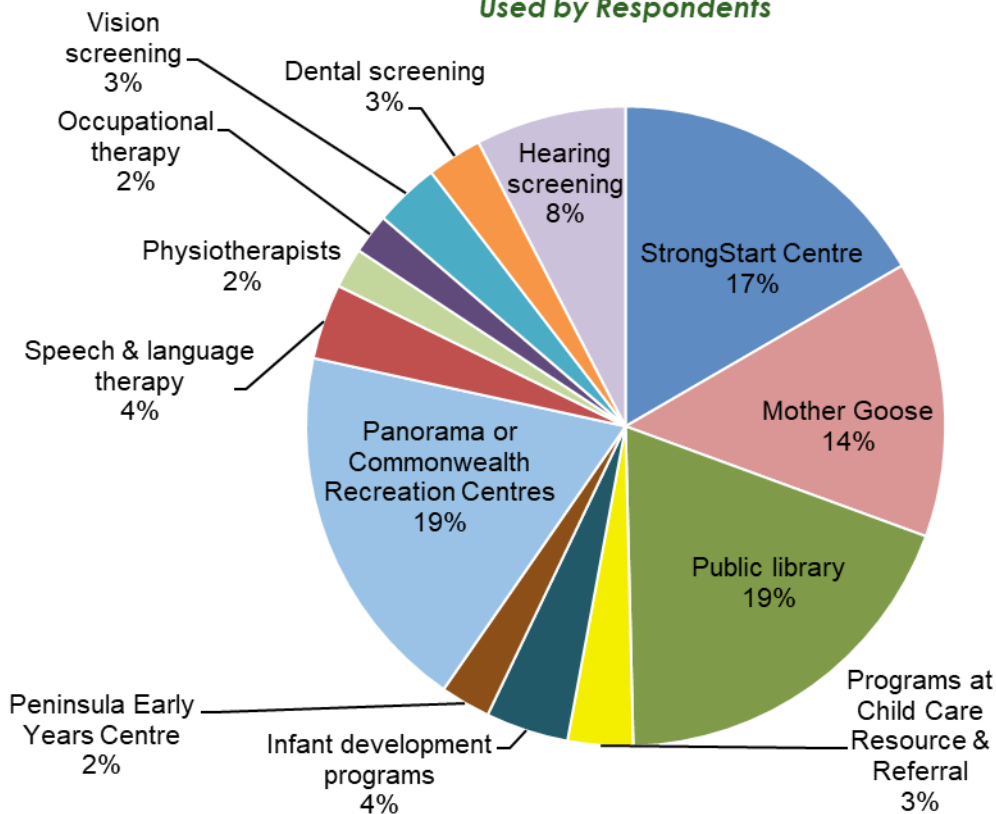
- **literacy, language and communication programs** such as library drop-in programs, Mother Goose, Language Nests (W̱SÁNEĆ School Board), the PCEC “1000 X 5” Children’s Book Recycling Project, and speech and language therapy through Island Health.
- **early learning and child care centres** such as StrongStart Centres and Aboriginal Head Start programs.
- **emotional development programs** such as KIDCARECANADA resources, ©Roots of Empathy and those offered through the Victoria Native Friendship Centre.
- **physical development programs** such as TSAWOUT food program, kindergym, and those offered at recreation centres.



*Storytime at a PCEC Books for Breakfast event at the Sidney/North Saanich Library.*



**Children's Health and Development Programs and Services Used by Respondents**



*Happy infants at the annual®Roots of Empathy Baby Celebration.*

## Spotlight on Peninsula Early Childhood Development Community Programs

### Parent-Child Mother Goose

(offered through Beacon Community Services & Success by 6)

- Parent Child Mother Goose is an 8 - 10 week early literacy program where parents learn songs, rhymes, and stories to share with their young children. The program promotes parent-child attachment, builds parental confidence, and provides positive language and communication experiences for children
- **Reaches 125 families and 150 children across the Peninsula**
- **65 families attend each week** at the Sidney/North Saanich Library and Brentwood Cultural Centre and there is a waitlist

### WJOLELP (TSARTLIP) Family Gardening Program

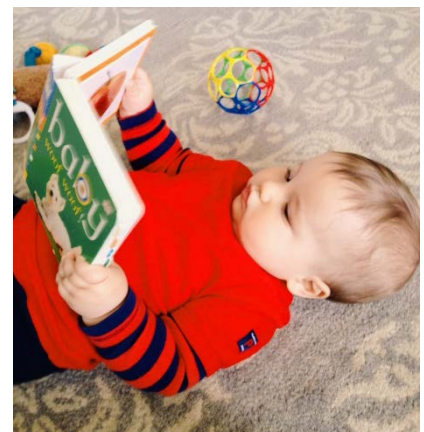
(offered through TSARTLIP Head Start Centre)

- With a focus on early childhood wellness, this 13+ year old program offers households with young children an opportunity to build and grow a backyard garden. The program addresses the crucial need for families to have immediate and regular access to healthy food and build food skills
- **Each year 50 - 60 households participate**

### PCEC “1000 x 5” Children’s Book Recycling Project

(offered through Peninsula Connections for Early Childhood)

- Collects used children’s picture books from within the community and redistributes them, free-of-charge, to families with young children (0-5). The goal is to help ensure young children have the opportunity to hear at least a thousand books read to them by the time they are five years-old and have a better chance for early success in school
- **Distributed over 124,000 books to date** across the Peninsula
- **Reaches 450 young children each month; 2500 children are served annually**



L, C: Families take part in the TSARTLIP Family Gardening Program. R: Infant looks at a new book from the PCEC “1000 x 5” Project.

## Early Development Instrument (EDI) Data

Early Development Instrument data indicates Saanich School District has an overall vulnerability rate of 20% compared to the provincial vulnerability rate of 32%.<sup>50</sup> First Nations populations on the Peninsula, concentrated mostly in Central Saanich, are not necessarily captured in this data; if a child is identified as Aboriginal/Indigenous, even in the public school system, their information is separated and only available to the Saanich School District and First Nations communities.<sup>51</sup>

There has been a meaningful overall decrease in childhood vulnerability since 2004. The Peninsula's early year's initiatives have likely contributed to this decrease.

Early years initiatives have likely contributed to a decrease in overall vulnerability rates in EDI results (since 2004). These initiatives have been driven by EDI data over the past 10 years and are based on inter-sectoral leadership and collaboration, and close alignment with the Saanich School District, commitment to advocacy, and support for literacy and development.

Other factors that may have had a positive impact on the reduction of vulnerability are implementation of StrongStart Centres, Aboriginal Head Start programs and full-day Kindergarten. Over the last three waves of data collection, between a fifth to one-quarter of the Saanich School District's kindergarten children are deemed vulnerable in one or more domains.<sup>52</sup>

Vulnerability is highest (12%) in the Emotional Maturity domain. There is a need to support programs that promote pro-social behaviour—helping, tolerance, empathy, self-regulation.

In addition, increased vulnerability in emotional maturity for the most recent wave, Wave 6 (2013-2016), was noted. District-wide, vulnerability is highest (12%) in the Emotional Maturity domain, meaning that there is a need to support programs that promote pro-social behaviour—helping, tolerance, empathy, self-regulation. There is a need to offer opportunities for informal, peer-to-peer interaction; and programs that address aggressive behaviour, anxiety, hyperactivity, inattention and impulsiveness.

The data collected through the EDI is valuable because it indicates supports and services for families and young children where and when they are needed. This EDI data informs the Saanich School District and early years service providers. For example:

- There is a definite case to support programs geared to addressing emotional development, such as “Mother Goose” and @Roots of Empathy and to enhance supports that further physical well-being.



*Kindergarten children enjoy a snack break.*



- Peninsula Connections for Early Childhood, as major part of their work, offers professional development opportunities bi-annually to early learning and care providers, Kindergarten teachers and administrators on the Peninsula. Over the past 12 years, many aspects of early childhood development have been explored in order to help enhance professional expertise and foster early child development.
- The Saanich School District draws on EDI data to design professional development opportunities and select resources to better support students. In 2016/17 District personnel observed an increase in complex needs and the number of needs children have. More support is required to help children become self-regulating. Therefore, in the fall of 2017, Kindergarten and grade one teachers will participate in workshops and receive resources to enhance students' abilities to self-regulate.

## EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT: CONSIDERATIONS FOR CHANGE

### > Parent/caregiver respondents and early years service providers offered the following suggestions for improvement:

- Increase access to developmental assessment services on the Peninsula.
- Build capacity and supports for the interim while families await assessment, or offer free assessment clinics.
- Extend or change hours of early childhood and parenting programs to be open at times accessible to working parents, including evenings and weekends.
- Continue to do outreach and promote early development services, programs and resources (online as well as in person).
- Inform parents and caregivers about the new [www.BC211.ca](http://www.BC211.ca) online directory and chat (8am to 11pm daily).



*Playing with blocks at a PCEC Books for Breakfast event at the Central Saanich Library.*



# Conclusion



**L**ife for families with young children on the Saanich Peninsula is made easier by the many programs, supports and early learning activities, especially free, drop-in programs at recreation centres and libraries, access to health services, and the proximity to nature.

However, there is a strong need to **improve public transit** on the Peninsula and to help parents get their children to child care and other programs. There is also a need to **increase outreach services and provide information** about how to access them.

The overall high cost of living makes it hard for many families to raise a child on the Peninsula. The lack of **affordable housing** and **affordable, available and appropriate child care** (especially for infants and toddlers) are significant stressors for families. Increasing child care spaces, reducing the cost of child care and providing more flexibility in child care options/programs are much-needed measures to support families with young children. Increasing **support for mental health needs** and **for children with disabilities** is an identified need as well.

Most of all, survey respondents mentioned the need to have a **stronger connection to community** so they feel less socially isolated. This points to a need to create **more opportunities for relationship-building, social connection** and **networks of support** for families. It is important to provide more parent support groups and family-focused events—so families feel they belong and have the support they need to raise young children.

There are many benefits to living on the beautiful Saanich Peninsula. Peninsula Connections for Early Childhood is pleased to have completed the survey of parents and caregivers with young children and early years service providers. We now have an up-to-date State of the Child Report for the Peninsula. We hope to liaise with many people to share our work and hold discussions on the report's insights and ways to strengthen support for young children and their families.



# Appendices



## Appendix 1: Peninsula Connections for Early Childhood (PCEC) Affiliations and Representatives\*

(\*as of August 2017)

Beacon Community Services—*Elaine Venables*  
Camosun College—*Jeanne Puritch*  
Child and Youth Psychologist—*Dr. Kimberly Lane*  
Countryside Preschool—*Madelaine Hittos*  
Greater Victoria Public Library—*Vicki Neilson*  
Intergenerational Song Circle—*Nancy Dobbs*  
KIDCARECANADA Society—*Estelle Paget*  
NIL/TU,O Child and Family Services—*Cedar Shackelly*  
Panorama Recreation Centre—*Hannah Nawroth*  
Parent-Child Mother Goose Program—*Joyce Wautier*  
PCEC “1000 X 5” Book Recycling Project—*Daphne Macnaughton (Project Leader), Lorraine Borstad, Paulette Kushner, Karin Macaulay, Liz McAllister*  
PCEC Coordinator—*Marlene Dergousoff*  
Peninsula Early Years Centre—*Jodi Sing, Suzanne Larimer*  
Saanich Peninsula Community Literacy—*Shantael Sleight*  
School District No. 63 (Saanich)—*Scott Stinson*  
Success by 6, Aboriginal Engagement—*Suzanne Jackson*  
Success by 6, South Vancouver Island—*Lisa Fenton*  
University of Victoria—*Sandy Buyze*  
Vancouver Island Health Authority—*Keely Kastrukoff*  
Vancouver Island Regional Library—*Virginia MacLeod*  
Victoria Child Care Resource and Referral (CCRR)—*Belinda Macey*  
Victoria Early Years Centre—*JoAnne Gordon*  
Volunteer & former Burnaby CCRR—*Carolyn Levasseur*

## Appendix 2: References

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Albert, Marika (2016). Saanich Peninsula Affordable Housing Needs Assessment Report. Victoria: Community Social Planning Council of Greater Victoria.

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## Appendix 3: Endnotes

- 
- <sup>1</sup> Stats Canada, 2011 Census. Available at: <http://earlylearning.ubc.ca/maps/data/>
- <sup>2</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>3</sup> Sidney Community Profile (2009): pg 8 @ <http://www.sidney.ca/Assets/Community+Development+Office/Community+Profile+2009.pdf>
- <sup>4</sup> Stats Canada, 2011 Census. Available at: <http://earlylearning.ubc.ca/maps/data/>
- <sup>5</sup> Official birth stats from Island Health (2016) indicate 311 births on the Peninsula. Unofficial count by community workers.
- <sup>6</sup> As of June 2017.
- <sup>\*7</sup> Indigenous populations on the Peninsula are not necessarily captured in census data.
- <sup>8</sup> T.E.A.M. survey (2014), Beacon Community Services.
- <sup>9</sup> Census 2011 (with consideration of recent School District No. 63 enrollment stats and Island Health birth stats)
- <sup>10</sup> None of the parent/caregiver surveys indicated a Saanich Municipality postal code, however surveys from service providers represented members in the Municipality. Saanich Municipality is also represented in the data presented in this report gathered from available research and statistics (see References in Appendix 2).
- <sup>11</sup> Albert, Marika (2016): "Greater Victoria Living Wage Report," Community Social Planning Council
- <sup>12</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>13</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>14</sup> 2016 BC Child Poverty Report Card, First Call: pg 8.
- <sup>15</sup> BC's Wave 6 (2013–16) Early Development Instrument trend data from the Human Early Learning Partnership at the University of British Columbia
- <sup>16</sup> Statistics Canada. Table F-18. Family Data. CANSIM Table 111-0015
- <sup>17</sup> 2016 BC Child Poverty Report Card, First Call.
- <sup>18</sup> Ibid: pg 30.
- <sup>19</sup> Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. Shameful Neglect: Indigenous Child Poverty in Canada, May 2016.
- <sup>20</sup> 2016 BC Child Poverty Report Card, First Call: pg 13.
- <sup>21</sup> Stats Canada, 2011 Census.
- <sup>22</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>23</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>24</sup> Community Social Planning Council of Greater Victoria (2015) Building an Effective Labor Market Development System for Greater Victoria.
- <sup>25</sup> Victoria Vital Signs (2016): 66% people surveyed are satisfied with their work and home/life balance
- <sup>26</sup> Stats Canada, 2011 Census.



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- <sup>27</sup> Albert, Marika (2016): "Greater Victoria Living Wage Report," Community Social Planning Council
- <sup>28</sup> Victoria Vital Signs (2016)
- <sup>29</sup> Government of Canada
- <sup>30</sup> Albert, Marika (2016): "Greater Victoria Living Wage Report," Community Social Planning Council
- <sup>31</sup> No complete available data on waitlists for child care on the Peninsula.
- <sup>32</sup> Available at: <http://maps.gov.bc.ca/ess/hm/ccf/>
- <sup>33</sup> The Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation defines core housing need as falling below in one of these standards: adequate, affordable and/or suitable.
- <sup>34</sup> Albert, Marika (2016). "Saanich Peninsula Affordable Housing Needs Assessment Report," Community Social Planning Council of Greater Victoria: pg 43.
- <sup>35</sup> Ibid: pg 6.
- <sup>36</sup> Ibid: pg 20.
- <sup>37</sup> Ibid: pg 14.
- <sup>38</sup> Sidney leads the way to affordable housing initiatives. Peninsula News Review. April 6, 2017 Available at: <http://www.peninsulanewsreview.com/news/sidney-leads-the-way-to-affordable-housing-initiatives/>
- <sup>39</sup> Albert, Marika (2016). "Saanich Peninsula Affordable Housing Needs Assessment Report," Community Social Planning Council of Greater Victoria: pg 5.
- <sup>40</sup> Waterson, S., B. Grueger and L. Samson, 2015. Paediatrics and Child Health, Canadian Paediatric Society, 20(7):403-07
- <sup>41</sup> Community Literacy Action Plan (2013), Peninsula Literacy Task Group: pg 22.
- <sup>42</sup> Tarasuk, V, Mitchell, A, Dachner, N. (2016). Household food insecurity in Canada, 2014. Toronto: Research to identify policy options to reduce food insecurity (PROOF). Retrieved from <http://proof.utoronto.ca>
- <sup>43</sup> Island Health, Cost of Eating (2016).
- <sup>44</sup> Victoria Vital Signs (2016): pg 37
- <sup>45</sup> Hunger Count 2016 – Food Banks Canada. \*results from the 2017 weren't available at the time of publication.
- <sup>46</sup> Hunger Count 2016 – Food Banks Canada
- <sup>47</sup> Ibid: pg 20
- <sup>48</sup> Dietitians of Canada. Position Statement and Recommendations on Food Insecurity, Executive Summary, pg 4.
- <sup>49</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>50</sup> Human Early Learning Partnership, Early Development Instrument Data for School District No. 63
- <sup>51</sup> Described in personal communication with several Saanich-area early years service providers.
- <sup>52</sup> HELP EDI Wave 6 Community Summary for School District No. 63, Saanich: pg 1.