

## Hearts in Motion Walking Club – Powell River, BC

*Contributed by Christine Parsons, Health and Fitness Coordinator, Powell River Parks, Recreation and Culture*

Hearts in Motion Walking Club is a program in partnership program with the Heart & Stroke Foundation and the City of Powell River. The program was designed to get community members up and walking. When we started the program our goal was to walk through the trails around our Recreation Complex. If it was raining they would come inside and walk around our arena. What has happened with this program exceeded my expectation.

Powell River has a large population of Seniors. Even though this program was designed for all ages, 100% of the participants are over 65 years of age.



During the first season of the program we had some great weather. When we had days of rain or bad weather our participants refused to come inside and walk the arena. They insisted on continuing to walk outdoors. The participants loved the feeling of being outdoors and being physically active. Our instructor implemented the use of walking poles to help increase the safety of participants with mobility issues continue to participate. We also noticed that participants were eager to walk in other nature locations throughout the town. For the second

season we created a 3 month schedule with various nature locations each week. Participants would meet at the scheduled location and head out for their walk from there. This allowed many of the seniors to experience locations that they had never been to before. We had one participant thank us as she had lived here for 50 years and had never been down one of the trails.

This program has grown over the 4 seasons we have offered it. Not once have they come inside. Even when we have had some very bad winds & lightening, they chose to walk the streets around our community. We regularly have 15 participants in the program and many of them now go for coffee together after the class.

This program connects people to nature, although the initial intention was to just get people walking. Not only is it getting our seniors physically active they are connecting to nature, exploring various nature location and enhancing their social connections.