



The Canadian Community of Practice in Ecosystem Approaches to Health (CoPEH-Canada) is composed of scholars and practitioners from throughout Canada. It aims at supporting the development of ecosystem approaches to health through:

- Training and Capacity building
- Profiling and applying ecosystem approaches to health research and practice in Canada
- Contributing to field building in ecosystem approaches to health internationally
- Evaluating and researching networking and capacity building

WHAT ARE ECOSYSTEM APPROACHES TO HEALTH?

In the last three decades, ecosystem approaches to health have emerged in response to complex health issues that demand combined effort to address social determinants of health while also fostering ecosystem sustainability. Ecosystem approaches to health seek to understand and promote human health and wellbeing in the context of complex social and ecological interactions. These approaches also encourage social and gender equity and participation, recognising that improving health and wellbeing requires sharing and exchange of different kinds of knowledge in order to enhance both integration and action.

Research and intervention results using such approaches have shown that they are an innovative and relevant theoretical and methodological framework for dealing with complex environmental, societal and health issues at various scales in Canada and elsewhere.

WHY A CANADIAN COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE?

Over recent decades, many Canadian scholars and practitioners have been deeply involved in the development of ecosystem approaches to health throughout the world. Since 2008, CoPEH-Canada has sought to benefit from this involvement by favouring greater collaboration among Canadians in the field and by focusing explicitly on integration and application of ecosystem approaches to health in the Canadian context. Initial funding from Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC) provided the opportunity for this pan-Canadian collaboration to arise.

Today, CoPEH-Canada is a network of Canadian scholars and practitioners dedicated to the understanding, teaching and application of ecosystem approaches to health. CoPEH-Canada mobilizes individuals and groups in the field, builds capacity for the development and promotion of ecosystem approaches to health and offers occasions for exchange and collaboration.

The community of practice provides a forum for Canadians to consolidate and extend ecohealth approaches through collaboration and exchange. It enables the development and evolution of knowledge and skills, the sharing of experiences, and the generation of innovative ideas. The CoPEH acts as a broker between the various groups in the field.

CoPEH-Canada is organised around three regional "nodes": Québec/Acadie/Atlantique Node, Ontario Node, and Western Node. Members of the CoPEH-Canada core team come from more than 10 Canadian universities and institutions.

KEY AREAS OF COPEH-CANADA'S ONGOING CONTRIBUTIONS

CoPEH-Canada's contributions can be regrouped under four key areas: training and capacity building, profiling and applying ecosystem approaches to health research and practice in Canada, international field-building and evaluative research.

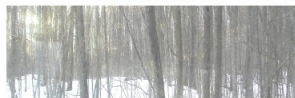
Ecosystem approaches to health training and capacity building

CoPEH-Canada designs training opportunities that bring people together from various backgrounds and multiple ways of knowing. Students are trained to approach complex problems in ways that address the diverse considerations of ecosystem approaches to health - spanning environmental, social, cultural influences on health for humans, animals and ecosystems.

Short courses. A central activity is the collective design and delivery of ecosystem approaches to health summer schools. Over the last eight years (UBC 2008; U of Guelph 2009; UQAM 2010; UNBC 2011; Moncton 2012; UNBC 2013; York 2014, UQAM 2015; multi-site; hybrid 2016) these courses have convened a diverse group of graduate students, practitioners, instructors, staff, advisors, and community members for an intensive learning opportunity including case studies, fieldwork and

interdisciplinary group work. Since 2012 our summer schools have offered both a career-development workshop, as well as course credit for students taking the full graduate level course. In addition to our annual summer schools, the CoPEH-Canada team has also developed other types of short-courses and training for targeted audiences, most recently for provincial public health organizations.

ECOSYSTEM APPROACHES TO HEALTH TEACHING MANUAL



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Teaching Manual: CoPEH-Canada has designed a teaching guide based on its learning in the design of the intensive course. This initiative has mobilized practitioners, faculty and graduate students across Canada and internationally. The team has developed a flexible modular structure intended for many uses such as short introductory training, two-week intensive courses, workshops, introductory one-day presentations, etc. This online manual ([english version](#)) continues to be developed with new modules.

Profiling and Applying Ecosystem Approaches to Health Research and Practice in Canada

CoPEH-Canada identifies and develops strategies for long-term regional and institutional capacity to support ecosystem approaches to health, including complementary funding for diffusion, research, and exchange. In 2010 the Canadian Institutes for Health Research and Canadian Public Health Association recognised Ecosystem approaches to health as a 'Milestone in Canadian Population and Public Health research', in recognition of major contributions to addressing challenges at the interface of ecosystems, equity and health in Canada and beyond.

In addition, the Community has enabled initiatives such as:

- A meeting series called "Ecohealth in Canada" involving colleagues from research, practice and policy;
- Networking events (i.e. during CPHA conferences and other related conferences);
- Participation as CoPEH-Canada in conferences on health, environment and equity related topics;
- Organization of *Cafés scientifique* in different provinces;
- Collaborative research applications in areas of knowledge synthesis, methodological development, capacity building and intersectoral prevention research.
- Organization of the 2014 International Association for Ecology & Health (IAEH) Biennial EcoHealth conference.

Contributing to International Field Building in Ecosystem Approaches to Health

International collaboration has always been part of the practice of CoPEH-Canada, reflecting the fact that most members of CoPEH-Canada also work in other countries. For example, members of CoPEH-Canada played a part in the creation of the first community of practice in ecohealth (in Latin America and the Caribbean), others have been involved in the development of the [International Association for Ecology & Health](#), [Vets without Borders Canada](#) and a range of international projects.

As a community of practice, CoPEH-Canada has been fostering exchange and field building between international CoPEH's and networks that have lead to joint publications. Members of international CoPEHs and networks in ecohealth, including CoPEH-Canada, are now working towards developing other exchange opportunities. The training guide and the EcoHealth 2014 conference presented above have been "occasions" to further these collaborations.

More recently, CoPEH-Canada has partnered with the Latin American and Caribbean Community of Practice on Ecosystem Approach to Human Health *for the strengthening of research, policy and practice at the intersection of health, ecosystems and society* in a project called [Ekosanté](#).

Evaluative Research

Since its inception, CoPEH-Canada has conducted research and evaluation through follow-up with CoPEH-Canada members, using online surveys and in depth interviews in order to examine the networking, collaborative and capacity building outcomes of the community of practice. This work has contributed to the betterment of our practice, but it is also part of a larger research program aimed at better understanding the functioning of transdisciplinary groups and communities of the emerging field of ecosystem approaches to health. Papers from this research are forthcoming.