

## Saving lives gets easier in the Hazeltons



Paramedics train attendees on life saving techniques at an Advanced Coronary Treatment training session at Hazelton Secondary last week. *Shannon Hurst*

By [Shannon Hurst - Smithers Interior News](#)

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Saving the lives of those in cardiac arrest got a little easier last week at Hazelton Secondary School thanks to the donation of a defibrillator and the training of several staff members.

The Advanced Coronary Treatment (ACT) Foundation in partnership with the BC Ambulance Service, the Paramedic's union, the Ambulance Paramedics of BC and community partners brought the program to the school last Friday which several teachers eagerly participated in.

The training and equipment was especially important to the area according to ACT Foundation representative Jennifer Boissonneault who said there is a "high prevalence of long QT syndrome, an uncommon inherited heart rhythm disorder, among First Nations communities in the region.

"We know that Northern B.C. may be an area with the highest prevalence of long QT syndrome known," Dr. Shubhayan Sanatani, Director, Cardiac Pacing and Electrophysiology, British Columbia's Children's Hospital said. "This syndrome places young, otherwise healthy individuals at risk for sudden cardiac arrest. Therefore this community needs to be prepared to respond to these events. Since young people are at high risk, this initiative to educate and empower the high school students and staff is an essential step."

Currently, cardiovascular disease accounts for more than one fifth of all deaths in BC, ACT stated in a press release.

"Research indicates citizen CPR response can improve survival rate for victims of out-of-hospital cardiac arrest by almost fourfold," Boissonneault said. "With eight in 10 out-of-hospital cardiac arrests occurring at home,

empowering youth with CPR training as part of their high school education will help increase citizen CPR response rates over the long term.”

Acting Vice President of Medical Programs for the Emergency and Health Services Commission, Dr. Karen Wagner agreed.

“Studies have repeatedly shown the importance of immediate bystander CPR as well as early access to defibrillation but it’s estimated that only 15 per cent of British Columbians know CPR,” Dr. Wanger shared. “Even with the best technology, medical expertise and timely deployment of first responders, the best chance for someone in cardiac arrest is still to have a bystander perform CPR until paramedics can provide professional care.”

Sandra Clarke, Executive Director of the ACT Foundation said that in addition to empowering the youth they also have a sting health promotion message.

“Students learn about risk factors for heart disease and the importance of adopting heart healthy lifestyle behaviors at a young age,” Clarke said. “They will then bring their health promotion message and lifesaving skills to their present and future families.”

In addition to the defibrillator, ACT also donated 25 CPR mannequins and curriculum materials through funding from lead community partners, AstraZeneca Canada, Pfizer Canada and Sanofi-Aventis. Community partner RBC also donated four defibrillator training units, five training mannequins and the automated external defibrillator (AED) to the school as part of the program.

For HSS teacher, Simon Dodd the course was well worth it and he was very grateful to be a part of it.

“I learned a lot, the instructors were great and the course was really well done,” he said. “It is pretty outstanding to that the teachers will actually get to teach with the equipment and use it. It was a really good professional development day for all of us and if anyone gets hurt, I will do my best to help save them.”

To learn more about the program visit [www.actfoundation.ca](http://www.actfoundation.ca) or watch a variety of student hero videos at [www.youtube.com/theactfoundation](http://www.youtube.com/theactfoundation).

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