

# Tubbies in tiny Taylor, B.C., shed pounds for CBC-TV reality show

BY ETHAN BARON, THE PROVINCE    OCTOBER 14, 2010



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**Photograph by:** File photo, The Province

I'm going to tell you a secret: This winter, CBC-TV plans to run a 10-part reality show filmed in a small northern B.C. town with a big weight problem.

Earlier this year, Vancouver film company Force Four Entertainment put Taylor (population 1,384) on a diet.

"When we first visited Taylor, B.C., we knew we found a community with people committed to making big changes when it comes to living healthier lives," says an email to villagers from Force Four.

Let me translate: "We searched all over Canada for a town full of fat, unhealthy people, and Taylor won hands-down."

CBC-TV did not respond to a request for an interview but is expected to announce the *Village on a Diet* series next month.

Force Four hired two personal trainers — including Vancouver fitness god Garfield Wilson — plus a doctor, a dietitian, a psychologist and a chef to transform the eating and exercise habits of the town.

Before the project, many in Taylor showed the physical effects of poor diets and lack of exercise, says participant Tiana Folk, 19.

The film production brought profound change, says Folk, who dropped 10 pounds.

"Not only did it help each person individually to lose weight and eat better, it brought the whole community together, really close," Folk says.

"Before, you wouldn't see that many people outside walking, where now you see people outside all the time."

Throughout the 90-day filming, participants took part in "endurance tests" including pushups and hula-hoop rotations, and took part in healthy-cooking seminars, fitness and dietary workshops, walks, hikes and hill-climbs.

A number of factors conspire to pad the flesh in northern B.C., say health experts involved in the project.

Maria Thomas, a Vancouver dietitian brought to Taylor by Force Four, notes that long winters with heavy snowfall and short days deter outdoor activity.

Northern Health Authority dietitian Nita Abbi, who gave workshops to participants, says fresh fruits and vegetables are harder to come by in the north, and truckers and workers in oil-industry camps tend to eat unhealthy foods.

Taylor, which prides itself as "The Industrial Capital of the North" and sits 14 kilometres south of Fort St. John, lacks some amenities to entice people outside, Abbi says.

"You don't really look out your window and decide, 'I'm going to go for a walk,' because it's not the most esthetically pleasing town," Abbi says.

Some in Taylor looked askance at the born-again fitness folks.

"Them kind of people, they didn't really patronize our place," says Brian Burtch, owner of the Mile 36 Cafe, where bacon and eggs, burgers and cinnamon buns fill burgeoning bellies.

"We have working-class people coming in here. They just want to eat and go back to work."

Down at Coyote's Pub, bartender Sharon Parsons has noted a few more salad orders than usual, and some women choosing low-calorie coolers. But the men have kept to habit, Parsons says.

"They're stuck in their ways with their beer, and that's all there is to it. There's no changing them."

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