

Alex Michalos Receives the 2006 Deryck Thomson Award

SPARC BC recently honoured Alex Michalos with the Deryck Thomson Award for his exceptional work to improve the well-being of Canadian communities.

THE DERYCK THOMSON Award for Community Social Planning is named for one of the founders of SPARC BC, an outstanding advocate and community leader, and a pioneer in social planning in British Columbia. The award is given in his name each year to an organization or individual that has made an outstanding contribution to community social planning, in their community or across the province. This year's recipient was Alex Michalos, a long-time researcher and community leader in Prince George whose work on issues of quality of life and social well-being has garnered national attention and had a significant positive impact on the community of Prince George.

Raising public consciousness about the importance of social well-being is one of the primary values recognized by the Deryck Thomson Award, and there can hardly be anyone who better meets that value than Alex. He is a world leader in quality of life studies, and has worked with governments here and around the world promoting social well-being and its development and measurement. In Alex's case, the aspect of the award that particularly speaks to his outstanding efforts in community development is that it recognizes efforts to share research knowledge beyond the academic community. His generosity in sharing his time and expertise

to consult on projects is well known. His commitment to sharing knowledge with the community and has earned him a reputation as a citizen scholar, so much so that he was awarded the Gold Medal for Achievement from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, the Council's highest research honour.

Alex has been active in community development in Prince George since 1994. His work on a range of innovative community-oriented projects—from the UNITY project with youth, to founding a centre for Learning Difficulties, to promoting Healthy Communities, to working with the Institute for Social Research and Evaluation at UNBC, to participating in the Community Partners Addressing Homelessness, to current efforts on the Canadian Index of Well-Being—has improved community awareness, equity, and engagement. In 1996, he joined the Community Planning Council of Prince George and has been its chair since 2002.

SPARC BC wishes Alex all future success in his work. He is one of British Columbia's great champions of social justice. We know that he will continue to tirelessly pursue the equity and opportunity, participation and engagement, and recognition and celebration of diversity that make our communities better places to live. ■