

“Fueled by  
volunteers and  
staff committed  
to thinking and  
acting beyond the  
conventional.”

MICHAEL CLAGUE

40  
years!



## SPARC BC 40th Anniversary

### Community legacy: 40 SPARC BC accomplishments

A look back at forty contributions in forty years of social planning and community development.

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### Communitas populi

The growth of social planning has the potential to move the Lower Mainland forward into an era of social sustainability, but it's been a long time coming.

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### Add women and stir?

A young planner looks to the future and the day when gender mainstreaming is a mainstream planning process.

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### Income assistance rules exhaust women's resources

The employment requirements for income assistance leave many single mothers on the edge—with little hope of rescue.

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# People Powered—40 years and counting

2006 IS SPARC BC'S 40th anniversary. We're celebrating. And while SPARC BC is fortunate to have a long list of achievements and contributions to community development and social planning to celebrate, to me it is the forty years of visionaries, activists, volunteers, researchers, and advocates—people—that deserve the greatest accolades.


The people who work in the office at SPARC BC consistently impress me. When the Board of Directors receives presentations from them concerning their work, we remark on their passion for the issues involved, as well as their evident knowledge and experience. We are proud that the SPARC BC has been able to grow again in the last few years to become as busy and vibrant as the organization was in its early days. A reflection on the past also reminds me how much this organization has attracted impressive talent over the years, as staff and as volunteers.

They say that only six degrees of separation exist between any two world citizens—there is always some connection. SPARC BC's 40-year history and wide sphere of influence has demon-

strated for me that there is usually less—a lot less—than six degrees of separation when it comes to SPARC BC relationships! I have met so many people over the years where SPARC BC is our common connection—they have read our research, seen us make presentations, attended conferences, served on a committee, had a parking permit, or at least have known someone (or a dozen someones) who has.

This is my last message as SPARC BC President, as I am stepping down at this year's Annual General Meeting in June. It has been an honour to serve this organization and I have enjoyed getting to know so many of the people that have made SPARC BC such an influential participant in communities across the province.

I look forward to seeing the passionate people at SPARC BC continue to work to meet our mission: *working with communities in building a just and healthy society for all.*



DANIEL HILL  
PRESIDENT, SPARC BC

## INTERESTED IN SPARC BC'S BOARD OF DIRECTORS?

To apply, send a letter to the Nominations and Governance Committee before May 15, 2005.

By Mail: 201 – 221 East 10th Avenue,  
Vancouver, BC V5T 4V3

By Fax: (604) 736-8697

By Email: [nhenderson@sparc.bc.ca](mailto:nhenderson@sparc.bc.ca)

Tell us about your background and experience. Tell us how you are currently involved in your community. Please

also describe the ways in which you could represent the region of the province in which you live and any other aspects of the diversity of the province.

Directors attend at least four meetings each year and some travel may be required. There is no remuneration for being a Director, but all expenses connected with attending meetings and activities for SPARC BC are reimbursed.

The Nominations Committee will respond to all applicants to notify them of the process of selection.



## OUR MISSION

The Social Planning and Research Council of British Columbia works with communities in building a just and healthy society for all.

## ABOUT SPARC BC

SPARC BC is a non-partisan, independent charitable organization. Since 1966, SPARC BC has conducted public education and advocacy on key social issues, focusing our efforts on the areas of:

- Income Security
- Accessibility
- Community Development



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**SPARC BC News from the Social Planning and Research Council of BC** is published by SPARC BC four times a year.

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Founded in 1966, SPARC BC is a non-partisan, independent charitable organization who draws its members from across British Columbia.

SPARC BC conducts public education and advocacy on the priority issues identified by a provincial Board of Directors and volunteer committees. SPARC BC's Research and Consulting Services, Parking Permit Program for People with Disabilities, Community Development Education Program, and other programs contribute to the goals of fostering the social and economic wellbeing of individuals and communities in BC.

SPARC BC gratefully acknowledges the ongoing support of over 15,000 members and donors, and the United Way of the Lower Mainland. Membership in SPARC BC is open to all persons who support the mission and goals of the organization.

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## CONTRIBUTORS

We would like to thank those volunteers who have generously shared their knowledge and expertise in this issue of *SPARC BC News*.

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**Winston Leckie** is the Executive Director of ORW and has promoted services for persons with a disability for many years. He has also consulted for social service agencies and served on numerous boards and committees.

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**Frances Tang-Graham** is a Project Coordinator at SPARC BC. After graduating from UBC, she became a development worker in Botswana and the UK, focusing on income generating projects for women's groups and employment issues for people with disabilities.

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**Silvia Vilches** is completing her PhD at the School of Community and Regional Planning at UBC, focussing on the health and well-being of First Nations women with young families in Northern and rural communities.

## SPARC BC Annual General Meeting

The SPARC BC Annual General Meeting is being held on Friday, June 2, 2006 at Van Dusen Gardens in

Vancouver. Members are welcome, one and all. See the official notice on page 27 for details.



# Community legacy:

## 40 SPARC BC accomplishments

Forty years of successful social planning, research, and community development would be impossible without a strong sense of social justice and qualities like perseverance, inventiveness, and enthusiasm. Over its history, SPARC BC is fortunate to have had an abundance of all these in the people who are the core of our organization.

Presented here, as a reflection on the past and as an inspiration for the future, are forty contributions from SPARC BC to the social well-being of British Columbians. Today, this list is not only a point of pride, but a reason for humility—the bar's been set high.

### Access Awareness Day

Since 1997, SPARC BC has worked with the Union of BC Municipalities to promote accessibility for people with disabilities. Originally focused on accessible parking and enforcement, the Access Awareness campaign has expanded in recent years to include information on broader issues of accessibility and social inclusion.

### Beyond the Obvious: Exploring the Accessible Community

In April 2005, SPARC BC hosted this dialogue event in partnership with Simon Fraser University. With over 125 experts, planners, citizens, and administrators from across B.C., the dialogue proved to be an illuminating and invigorating venue for meaningful learning about accessibility and inclusion.

### Bridging Social and Economic Planning: An Exploration of Community Economic Development Activities in BC

This 1984 conference and research project opened up a new realm of initiatives for SPARC BC, providing leadership, skills, and research for the promotion of community economic development. The bridging of social and economic planning is still a topic of concern and interest in communities.

### The British Columbia Community

#### Accessibility Network and Access Links

We helped the capacity of everyone tackling disability issues in B.C. when we founded the Community Accessibility Contacts Initiative in 2001. Now, with two issues of *Access Links*, the accessibility contact directory for B.C., under our belts and a burgeoning network, BC CAN, the accessibility community in B.C. is better able to stay in contact and share information than ever before.

#### Budget Submissions and Commentaries

SPARC BC has consistently made submissions on the federal and provincial budgets whenever given the opportunity. It has been seen as an important opportunity to relate SPARC BC's priorities to government agendas and to reiterate our recommendations from research. Commentaries always follow budgets in *SPARC BC News*, to our community partners and networks, and often in other media.

#### A Citizen's Guide to Community Social Planning

This 1993 publication, authored by the then Executive Director of SPARC BC, Michael Clague, is one of the first pieces of reading that new staff at SPARC BC are

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given to orient them to our work. It is also still much sought after by the community and has been reprinted a number of times. It defines community social planning, gives guidance to establishing or improving a community social planning council, and gives advice on using its practices and principles to address social development issues. The *Guide's* words continue to inspire SPARC BC: "In a sentence, community social planning is about practicing good citizenship. It is a process for building community well-being."

## The Citizens Guides

One of SPARC BC's most successful community outreach initiatives of the 1970s, the *Citizen's Guides* covered a wide range of social topics in an accessible and informative way. Examples include *Citizen's Guide to the "Foulkes" Report*, *Citizen's Guide to the B.C. Government*, *Citizen's Guide to Services for Senior Citizens*, and *Children in Focus*. They exemplified SPARC BC's commitment to citizen engagement in the public education they provided and in work of the volunteers that developed them.

## Coalition Building

SPARC BC has, from its very beginning, worked collaboratively with other organizations. In some cases, collaborations have turned into coalitions, and separate organizations have emerged to take on the works. We have welcomed, supported, and encouraged the following evolutions: BC Coalition of People with Disabilities, First Call, BC Centre for Policy Alternatives, et al.

## Community Care for Seniors Study

The Medical Services Association and the office of the Provincial Secretary commissioned this study in 1973. It became one of the reference documents used to design the BC Long Term Care Program. SPARC BC was selected because of the efforts it had made to consciously pursue a provincial approach for the work of the Aging Committee, which recognized that social planning in aging and policy influence was most appropriate at the provincial level. The use of a donated long-distance telephone line, accessible only after business hours, allowed SPARC BC staff to work with communities on seniors' issues and to support the spread of good programs like Meals on Wheels.

## Community Development Education Program

The CDE program is SPARC BC's response to the need of rural and Northern B.C. communities for supported skills and capacity expansion in community development. In its third year, the program is running strong and has already successfully delivered 14 workshops across the province.



## Community Development Institutes

The CDI's have provided some of the most fun that SPARC BC has ever had—from drumming, to kids' games, to hay rides, to painting, to dialogues, to bagpipes, and always lots of dancing, singing, and eating! The CDI's were also serious opportunities for professional development, skills building, and experience and knowledge sharing. Each CDI took place in the complete context of the sponsoring community. From the communities that hosted CDI's, Salmon Arm, Nelson, Sechelt, Britannia in Vancouver, Chilliwack, Comox Valley, and Prince George, to the attendees from around the province, the memories of CDI are still strong and positive. It's still a significant regret that the program was unsustainable without assured provincial funding. Kudos to the many dedicated CDI volunteers from the partner communities and who served on committees.

## Community Economic Development (CED) Regional Workshops, 1986

These workshops include instruction on models and case studies of CED, financing CED, skills for development, CED strategies appropriate to the northern economy, promoting partnerships among agencies, and decision-making models for CED planning. They provided foundations for the dynamic energy of the social economy now flourishing in B.C.

## Community Education and Citizen Training Project for Physically Disabled Persons

In April 1986, this project organized and facilitated workshops for physically disabled persons in order to provide information and skills that would enable them to become more involved in their community.

## Community Initiatives Digest

SPARC BC has recognized, as part of its community development approach, the power of communities sharing knowledge and experience with each other. The CID was a newsletter published by SPARC BC to facilitate that sharing and to spread the word about active and successful practices in community initiatives for social development.

## Community Social Planning Network of B.C.

CSPN BC connects the social planning community in B.C. The network is an enabler and catalyst for social planning and action. With over 300 informational members, CSPN BC is the largest network of social planners and organizers in the province.

## Defining Poverty

When Statistics Canada proposed that it would abandon its method of defining poverty through the low-income cut-off levels (LICO's), Michael Goldberg and members of the Income Security Committee wrote the definitive paper on defining poverty in Canada. They reviewed possible models, promoted the discussion among researchers across the country, consulted with Statistics Canada, and ultimately were persuasive in having them retain the LICO analysis.

## The Deryck Thomson Award for Community Social Planning

Deryck Thomson is a founder of SPARC BC and the model of someone who works tirelessly in community social planning. In celebration of SPARC BC's 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, the Award was established in Deryck's name. Each year, the award honours an individual or organization in the province that has made a significant contribution to community social planning. The award recipients are a distinguished list. The 2006 Award recipient is Alex Michalos of Prince George. Alex has long been involved with the Community Planning

Council of Prince George, but also has an international career working on development models that measure the social well-being of communities.

## External Consultants

SPARC BC often employs social policy research experts to help with our work. SPARC BC has benefited greatly from the intelligence, passion, and guidance of these individuals and we value their collaboration with us.

## A Galaxy of Shining Volunteers

Over the last 40 years, SPARC BC has the amazing fortune of working with thousands of bright, dedicated volunteers from every part of B.C. Not just a constellation of 'SPARC Stars,' our volunteers make up a veritable galaxy of passionate, committed citizens.

## Gap Reports and Falling Behind Reports

As part of an agreement with the United Way of the Lower Mainland, over the last 19 years, SPARC BC has tracked the changes in income security programs in B.C., including the impacts of the federal-level changes in replacing the Canada Assistance Plan. Income security issues have been a priority for SPARC BC, which has involved huge volunteer commitments from our Income Security Committee.

## Housing and Homelessness

This important aspect of income security has been an area in which SPARC BC has worked and built expertise over a number of different projects. The work started with a study of housing needs in the District of North Vancouver and a study on secondary suites for the City of North Vancouver, and continues today with a study underway on best practices to address homelessness and a recent snapshot of the number of homeless people within the West End of the City of Vancouver.

## Lobbying for Change

Often, the ability of a community organization to influence the provincial government depends on the degree to which it is familiar with who is filling what role. SPARC BC has lobbied on a number of issues and has seen advocacy as part of its mandate. Further, SPARC has often sought to empower other to lobby for them-

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selves. For example, in a 1991 article, Michael Clague offered *SPARC BC News* readers an up-to-date picture of the Provincial government in an effort to aid lobby efforts by local groups and concerned individuals.

## **A New Vision for BC: Building our Social Future**

Held in November 1992, this conference was another in a series of events that networked professionals and volunteers in the community sector to examine emerging issues and new ways of thinking and planning. This conference focused on discussing ways of integrating social, environmental, and economic initiatives.

## **Organizational Skills Project**

The resourcefulness of citizens in organizing to meet their communities' challenges has inspired SPARC BC's approach to community development. In the 1970s, when communities were anxious to improve their social services, SPARC BC recognized the opportunity to work with local organizations and deliver a comprehensive program of organizational skills courses and workshops. The goal was to make it possible for groups in the North East region of the province to identify, plan, and implement their own skills training.

## **Organizing the 7th Biennial Conference on Canadian Social Welfare Policy in 1995**

This was an exciting opportunity for SPARC BC staff to work with colleagues from UBC, SFU, U.Vic, UNBC, and community groups to present this important national conference. SPARC BC has continued to present and participate at these events and enjoy renewing the relationships forged in 1995.

## **Panel on the Handicapped**

A SPARC BC-led committee that in the 1980s made pioneering recommendations to government regarding accessibility issues, particularly in the area of transportation. Its work helped shape accessibility policy in B.C.

## **Parking Permit Program for People with Disabilities**

Currently serving 85,000 permit holders, SPARC BC's Parking Permit Program has its foundation in a grass-roots campaign for municipalities and the province to

mandate designated accessible parking. As a member of SPARC BC's former Parking Placard Committee, Ron Eveleigh put the question to then Solicitor-General Russ Fraser: "When are you going to pass the legislation establishing province-wide enforcement of parking regulations for people with disabilities? We know it's ready to go." One of the many voices advocating for social change at a time when the need for accessible parking for people with disabilities was not properly addressed.

## **Planning Ourselves In**

Some SPARC BC publications have enduring appeal. *Planning Ourselves In*, published in 1994, is one of these. This toolkit was written to help integrate women into the community planning process. The City of Vancouver recently posted the toolkit on their website as a resource for city staff.

## **Policy Spotlights**

Topical and accessible, this new series of SPARC BC publications uses the research and core projects of SPARC BC to present short analyses of social policy issues facing British Columbians.

## **Presentation to the Federal House of Commons Finance Committee on the Capping of the Canada Assistance Plan**

In 1990, the provincial Ministry of Social Services and Housing covered the expenses to have SPARC BC experts to present arguments on the capping of the Canada Assistance Plan to the House of Commons Finance Committee.

## **Relationships**

SPARC BC is empowered by the vast network of relationships that it maintains and has had the privilege of being a part of. Further, we are also inspired and encouraged by the relationships between passionate and forward-thinking individuals and organizations that we help create through our work.

## **Report of the Task Force on Teenage Pregnancy**

This 1980 Report of the Task Force on Teenage Pregnancy and Parenthood, was produced entirely by volunteers from the Health Committee and the

Coalition for Children and Youth. It was the first such study in Canada and became a benchmark for subsequent research. It is also an example of the depth of talent, expertise, and commitment of the volunteers attracted to SPARC BC and the important work they were able to achieve.

### Research and Consulting Services

SPARC BC's Research and Consulting department is a solid example of a successful social enterprise. Our research and project management services offer great value and first-class social research expertise to clients across the country. Further, our consulting work allows us to undertake and fund a greater depth and variety of mission-oriented charitable work.

### SPARC BC News

The issue you are reading right now has a pedigree of fine social-issue-reporting that goes back over twenty years. *SPARC BC News* has changed a lot over the years—just like SPARC BC—but it has always remained sharp, timely, and on-point.

### Staff

SPARC BC staff members have always been committed to thinking and acting beyond the conventional, to acting toward the positive, possible change that they can see. This organization would never have accomplished so much or come so far were it not for the dedication, intelligence, ingenuity, and big smiles of its employees.

### Strengthening Communities Publications

A series of six community development skills guides produced by SPARC BC in 1995 that together constituted a complete curriculum for organizations to build their capacity to efficiently undertake inclusive, collaborative community development processes. The series was extraordinarily well received by community groups and remains a frequently requested publication.

### Towards a Sustainable and Just Society

This SPARC BC-led 1987 conference worked to engage participants to discuss a range of social, economic, environmental issues under the rubric of a just and sustainable society. Topics included social justice, community economic development, biotechnology, ethics of



life, power sharing and decision-making, and more.

### Visionary and Gifted Directors

Not-for-profit organizations cannot exist without strong governance, and rarely survive over 40 years, or through turbulent times—as SPARC BC has—without some amazing leadership. Congratulations and thanks to the Presidents and Board members of SPARC BC such as Deryck Thomson, Nicola Malim Hall, Patricia Fulton, Angela Julian, Tim Beachy, Kevin Ronaghan, Jeremy Triggs, Barbara Grantham, Coro Strandberg, and many important others. A special thank you to our current President, Daniel Hill.

### Voter Information Papers: Canada Votes, B.C. Votes, and Municipalities Vote

Hugely popular with candidates and community members, these voter information packages on social issues keep voters up-to-date with the issues that SPARC BC sees as important in each election and arms them with incisive questions for candidates. 2005 was a particularly exhausting year on this front, with elections at all three levels of government!

### The Well-Being Project

From 1991 through 1995, SPARC BC collaborated with the University of Victoria Faculty of Human and Social Development to explore an integrated approach to understanding the social and economic well-being of individuals and communities. Researchers explored the implications of new understandings of well-being in Canada. The conceptual framework of well-being, the idea of monitoring well-being through social indicators, and the work done on collaborative service planning are three aspects of the project that continue to strongly influence SPARC BC's work with communities.



This article discusses social planning and its long road toward legitimacy in B.C., as well as its role in social sustainability and community politics. **BY MATTHEW BEALL & KARI HUHTALA**

## Communitas populi: Social planning and the realization of community vision in the Lower Mainland

*“We have moved into an era where we are called upon to raise certain basic questions about the whole society. We are still called upon to give aid to the beggar who finds himself in misery and agony on life’s highway. But one day, we must ask the question of whether an edifice which produces beggars must not be restructured and refurbished.”*

—Martin Luther King Jr., 1968

### **Social planning is important and legitimate**

Organizations, individuals, and families face an increasing challenge in the availability of consistent support resources. In Canada, we watch as the social safety net—our old populist agreement to protect everyone from the hardships of social and economic disruption—frays under the strain of corporate interests, the diminishment of real incomes, and the growing gap between the haves and have-nots. Powerful global forces continue to influence the way we shape our communities and plan for future health and prosperity. In this environment, social planning has become less a laudable community development exercise and more an essential tool we use to maintain and develop healthy, sustainable communities and ensure ongoing comprehensive municipal and

regional planning practices.

On its face, the goal of social planning is simple: improve, by process, the complete quality of life in a community. The realization of the means and ends of social planning, however, remains challenging and complex, and depends on a commitment to a collaborative social perspective and shared values. A complete understanding of social planning depends on many modern community development concepts, such as social sustainability, social capital, social inclusion, social involvement, the complete communities model, and the global community. Even so, at its root, the motivation for social planning lies in human rights and social justice: a recognition that beyond the basic rights of food, clothing, and shelter lay the universal needs of happiness, safety, freedom, dignity, and affection, all of which are inextricable from the idea of a truly healthy community.

To realize healthy communities, social planning depends on a comprehensive and inclusive process that comprises a fundamental commitment to security for all, recognition of the interconnectedness of all community members, a commitment to fairness and equity in social and

economic relationships, broad participation and contribution in any form, and a responsibility to represent diversity.

### **The development of social planning in B.C.**

The development of social planning in the Lower Mainland is typical of the evolution seen in other jurisdictions across North America, where the provision of basic community social services over decades of shifting economic, social, and political conditions led to the eventual adoption of social planning processes.

The Lower Mainland's history of social policy has its roots in the community-level social services offered by the City of Vancouver in the early part of the twentieth century. The City's early efforts, spurred by the realization that service provision was important to community building, became significant catalysts in the region's social planning efforts. Vancouver's civic leadership in this area was instrumental in the promotion and development of social planning as a responsible community service in B.C.

The City's original community service efforts, childcare for working mothers, relief payments, and old-age assistance, were undertaken by the Relief Department, which in time became the Social Services Department. Later, the department ran an old age home, offered medical services, and managed alcohol rehabilitation, among its more typical municipal services. During this period, staff tailored social service delivery according to local needs and resources, and is typical of how other regions of North America

responded. The lessons of this period, and the realization that other levels of government also had social service responsibilities, led many citizens to recognize the value of comprehensive, forward-looking social and community development planning.

**“At its root, the motivation for social planning lies in human rights and social justice.”**

The formal process of social planning grew in Vancouver in the 1950s and 1960s and culminated in 1966 when City Council approved the Department of Social Planning and Community Development. The new department, with a modest initial budget, built on the decades of social development work in the region. Early projects for the new department included backing Strathcona's Neighbourhood Improvement Program, funding the Vancouver East Cultural Centre, and improving hotel conditions in Gastown and Chinatown. The formation of the Social Planning Department also established sufficient validity and continuity to allow the department to expand its programming to include the sponsorship of a variety of arts and cultural initiatives.

In the 1970s, social planning in the region developed into several distinct streams. Social planners worked with other departments and community groups to strategically influence cultural planning, housing issues, social issues related to development, and community service

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es, like programs for people with disabilities, youth activities, and addictions services.

This type of work carried over into the 1980s and 1990s, when social planning organizations and projects proliferated across the region and began to take hold in other larger communities in B.C., like Kelowna and Victoria. These efforts fostered broad recognition that the processes of social planning were a fundamental aspect of planning for complete communities.

In fact, it can be argued that social sustainability—an increasingly popular model for social policy—can only be achieved and properly conceived of within a social planning framework. The region's path from the City of Vancouver running a day nursery in 1908, to forming the Social Issues Subcommittee of the GVRD in the 1990s is representative of not only the maturation of social policy across Canada over the same period, but also of the growing need for comprehensive, inclusive, and collaborative responses to social issues.

### **Social planning is a keystone of social sustainability**

Still, social planning faces many challenges. Increasing economic inequities, more restrictive and exclusionary global political and economic temperament, and rising costs of living mean that a concerted, organized local-level effort to improve quality of life is more difficult—and perhaps more important—than ever. Social planning organizations across North America are tackling a wide spectrum of social issues, including affordable housing, childcare, youth issues, homelessness, food policy, social exclusion, new-

comer integration, addiction services, senior care, and the vibrancy of social, cultural, and physical environments.

In many ways, the uptake of social planning by municipalities and community organizations demonstrates a commitment to a process by which to “restructure and refurbish” our communities. That citizens' groups and municipalities have embraced social planning in order to improve the quality of life for everyone in our communities indicates that Canadians still value community-level social policy. We must remain committed to the populist roots on which our nation was built and develop, through social planning, happier, healthier, and more sustainable communities. ■

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### **THE POLITICAL QUESTION WITH SOCIAL PLANNING**

As a footnote to this article, it is important to note that many elected councils are still uncomfortable with municipal involvement in social planning and with participating in local social service delivery programs. This is largely due to the continued perception that social services are the responsibility of senior-level governments. Further, while many communities recognize that they have a responsibility to ensure the development of sustainable and healthy communities, a dire need exists across Canada for the financial resources to assist municipalities in social service initiatives, particularly if current social planning efforts are to achieve the expected results of a decade of previous investments.

This debate has already begun in many municipalities and regions and is expected to last over the coming years. Many leaders are coming to realize that social capital and investment is an important building block for the creation of livable communities for today and the future.



Considerable inequities still exist for Canadian women and women around the world. Gender concerns need to be addressed by process in planning. **BY REBEKAH MAHAFFEY**

## Add women and stir?

### A young female planner looks to the future of gender in planning

AS A YOUNG FEMALE planner about to enter the field planning, I have been considering the role and ‘place’ of women within planning. What, how, and where do women plan? How are women’s needs and concerns addressed within planning? It has been my experience and observation that women, and women’s needs, are rarely explicitly considered in the planning processes or highlighted as worthy of particular attention. There is often the assumption that having ‘a’ woman on the team is sufficient to represent women’s needs, thereby ignoring the way in which process-related factors contribute to gender inequality in how programs, policies, and projects are both planned and implemented.

Gender Mainstreaming (GM) is a process-

based tool that seeks to address continuing gender inequality within planning. GM is defined by the United Nations as “a strategy for making women’s as well as men’s concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated.”<sup>1</sup> With an ultimate goal of complete gender equality,

GM is a planning tool that tackles gender inequality by changing the *processes* of how policies, programs, and projects are developed.

The term ‘Gender Mainstreaming’ was first used at the 1985 United Nations Third World

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**“There is often the assumption that having ‘a’ woman on the team is sufficient to represent women’s needs.”**

<sup>1</sup> United Nations (2002). *Gender Mainstreaming: An Overview*. New York: United Nations Press. p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Rai, Shirin M. (2003). “Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women,” In *Mainstreaming gender, democratizing the state?* Edited by Shirin M. Rai. Manchester: Manchester University Press. p. 15.

<sup>3</sup> Woodward, Allison. “European Gender Mainstreaming: Practices and Pitfalls of Transformative Policy.” *Review of Policy Research*. v. 20,1 (2003): p. 66.

continued from page 13

Conference on Women in Nairobi, Kenya, coalescing into the Beijing Platform for Action at the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China.<sup>2</sup>

As an approach, GM seeks to integrate gender as a key variable into the planning process.<sup>3</sup> It provides a matrix for these changes by stating that *all* programs, policies, and procedures should be analyzed for gender sensitivity at *all*

stages, including goal formation and evaluation. To this end, Clara Greed suggests a set of questions as a starting point:<sup>4</sup>

1. Who is doing the planning?
2. Who are perceived to be the planned?
3. How is information gathered and whom does it represent?
4. How is the staff team chosen and is it representative of men and women?
5. What are the key values, priorities, and objective of the plan?
6. Who is consulted and who is involved in the plan?
7. How is the plan evaluated and by whom?
8. How is the plan implemented, monitored, and managed?
9. Are adequate resources, funding, personnel, and priority given to the plan?

Countries such as Norway, Sweden, and Germany, as well as transnational organizations such as the European Union, have embraced GM as an approach to try and make their policies, programs, and projects more responsive to women.

GM is a potentially powerful method of achieving gender equality. However, if it is used without an acute awareness of power dynamics and difference, such as class, education, ethnicity, ability, orientation, and other modes of identity, *between* individual and groups of women, GM may actually reinforce rather than address existing inequalities. In practice, GM approaches

## THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN CANADA

- Women hold approximately 21% of local government positions.
- Even when employed full-time women earn on average 73% of men's salaries.
- Approximately 2.8 million women, 19% of the total female population, are living in low-income situations, compared with 16% of the total male population.
- On average, 56% of lone-parent female-headed families live below the poverty line.

Source: *Women in Canada 2000: A Guide to Understanding the Changing Roles of Women and Men in Canada* (2000). Statistics Canada. Excerpts available online at: [www.statcan.ca/english/ads/89-503-XPE/hilites.htm](http://www.statcan.ca/english/ads/89-503-XPE/hilites.htm)

## THE GLOBAL STATUS OF WOMEN

- Women earn on average 78% of men's wages for equal work and with equal education.
- Women, especially alone with children, experience greater instances of poverty.
- Women hold approximately 14% of total representative government seats worldwide.

Source: *Progress of the World's Women 2000* (2000). United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM). [www.unifem.org/resources/item\\_detail.php?ProductID=9](http://www.unifem.org/resources/item_detail.php?ProductID=9)

often fail to properly analyze these existing power structures *between* women, thus ignoring the personalized side of gender inequality.<sup>5</sup> As a result, GM largely conceives of gender equality as an impersonal force that can be simply integrated into planning processes in order to increase the inclusion of women. GM, if it is to be an effective planning tool in incorporating a gender lens into planning processes, needs to be implemented within a difference-responsive framework.

Despite these critiques, however, GM is a comprehensive and theoretically viable approach for achieving gender equality within social planning.<sup>6</sup> GM is the only systemized planning tool in specific relation to gender that also addresses the *process* of planning. I believe it is important to address gender inequality within planning, particularly in *how* programs, policies, and projects are planned, not only because of the equity issues at stake but because it is also symptomatic of a larger problem within the profession. Further, contemporary planning processes remain largely unresponsive to differences of all kinds, including gender, particularly on aggregate scales. The planned are generally consid-

ered as a generic and undifferentiated group, where the effects of difference, inequality, discrimination, and race are ignored or unaddressed. Difference is seen as an exceptional cir-

**“It is my hope that ... planners will continue to work to pay increased attention to the way that *process* affects the incorporation of difference variables, such as gender, into an equitable planning process.”**

cumstance rather than the norm. GM, even though it addresses only one aspect of difference, is an attempt to integrate difference into social planning processes as the norm rather than the exception.

It is my hope that as I enter the world of professional planning practice, that planners will continue to work to pay increased attention to the way that *process* affects the incorporation of difference variables, such as gender, into an equitable planning process. We need to be able to recognize, and be willing to work with, variables of difference if our programs, policies, and projects are to be both responsive and genuinely helpful in the context of the social world in which they are implemented. ■

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4 Greed, Clara. “Gender Mainstreaming,” *Women & Currents International Magazine*. v. 62 (2004):p. 2.

5 Howard, Patricia L. “Beyond the ‘grim resisters’: towards more effective gender mainstreaming theory in stakeholder participation,” *Development in Practice*. v. 12,2 (2002). p 165.

6 True, Jacque. “Mainstreaming Gender in Global Public Policy,” *International Feminist Journal of Politics*. v. 5 no. 3. p. 368.

# A children's budget? You've got to be kidding

**Michael Goldberg**, SPARC BC's Research Director, writes his annual analysis of the BC Budget.

THE B.C. GOVERNMENT TOUTED the budget presented on February 21<sup>st</sup> as “a children's budget.” According to the press release accompanying the budget, Finance Minister Carol Taylor said: “Every budget is an opportunity for our province to take another step forward. The first budget in our renewed mandate focused on seniors. Today, I'm pleased to take another step forward with a budget designed to improve services for children.”

But is this really a budget that makes a big difference for *all* children? While it appears that “children at risk” matter, it seems as if no others do. There was no announced increase in the support or shelter allowances for families with children on income assistance, other than for the 26% of children in families classified as disabled. That leaves 22,895 children with no increase, where they have seen no change in income assistance

rates since the roll-backs in 2001.<sup>1</sup> Carole Taylor did mention that the school start-up supplement would double, but the amounts pale in comparison to the tax reductions also announced in the

budget. Nor was there any mention about a possible increase in the minimum wage that would greatly aid families who are struggling to make ends meet. Both income assistance rates and the minimum wage have declined in terms of their real purchasing power over the last five years.

Another disturbing trend is that most of the increases to social programs, such as those in the “children's budget” or the budget items concerning “improvements to communities” are “back-end loaded.” That is, almost 43% of the children's budget items and almost 50% of the community budget items will not go into effect until 2008/09.

Let's look more closely at some of the figures. The Finance Minister said, “*Balanced Budget 2006* provides an additional \$421 million to help ensure the well-being of vulnerable children, to

**“Is this really a budget that makes a big difference for all children? What about the 22,895 children with no increase at all, or any change in income assistance since the roll-backs in 2001.”**

<sup>1</sup> See *Left Behind: The Adequacy of Income Assistance Rates in BC* available on the SPARC BC web site <[www.sparc.bc.ca](http://www.sparc.bc.ca)>.

**Table 1. Programs for Children (in \$ millions)**

Program	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	Total
Children at risk		22	26	24	72
Additional children services		20	30	50	100
Child and youth mental health plan			17	17	34
Children and youth with special needs		7	13	16	36
Aboriginal governance of child and family services		5	13	13	31
Family Independence fund	30				30
Fight against crystal methamphetamines		0.5	0.5	1	2
Investment in the K-12 education system		27	28	57	112
School Start-up supplement		1	1	2	4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$30</b>	<b>\$82.5</b>	<b>\$128.5</b>	<b>\$180</b>	<b>\$421</b>

Source: Budget and Fiscal Plan 2006/07 to 2008/09, Table 1.5, page 14.

enhance services for children with special needs, and to better support caregivers and family members carrying for children and youth at risk.” These budget improvements are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 shows that almost 25% of the new funds are for “additional services to children” described in the budget as “including government’s response to the recommendations of the various external reviews of the child protection system.” One cannot help but wonder if the provincial government knows something that the rest of us do not at this stage. Nonetheless, being prepared for what will likely be “bad news” ahead of time could be beneficial.

Another 26% of these new funds are earmarked for investments in education, the specifics of which are not described in the budget. Other new funds are allocated to further improve mental health services for children and youth and to provided additional services to children and youth with special needs. Of course, it

is good to see that the government is restoring services that were reduced over the past five years.

The only funds mentioned in the budget that will go directly to the families of children on income assistance are the increases to school start-up supplement. According to the budget document:

*“The School Start-up supplement is provided to assist families on income assistance, with school-aged children, with the costs of a new school year. Beginning the 2006/07 school year, the Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance will increase the School Start-up supplement from \$42 to \$84 per year for children between the ages of 5 and 11 years and from \$58 to \$116 per year for children between the ages of 12 to 18 years. The School Start-up supplement was last increased in 1993. Approximately*

*continued on page 18*

2 BC Budget and Fiscal Plan 2006/07 to 2008/09, p. 16.

*continued from page 17*

**“While some prudence can be a virtue, excessive prudence means that our opportunity to do better is delayed. ”**


*29,000 children on income assistance will benefit and we calculate that the cost of doubling the supplement will be approximately \$1.5 million per year.”<sup>2</sup>*

But government always makes choices in their revenue and spending decisions. The budget speech announced further tax reductions of \$733 million, significantly more than the amount allocated to children *over three years* and almost 500 *times* larger than the school start-up funds allocated to children whose family is on income assistance. These tax reductions include \$309 million this fiscal year to improve the homeowners grant program. It is interesting that expensive tax reductions are mostly front-end loaded while the less expensive spending on social programs is back-end loaded. A cynic might conclude that the slow pace of implementing the new funding was designed with the next election in mind (May 2009). Those less cynical may suggest that the government was only being prudent in its spending choices.

While some prudence can be a virtue, excessive prudence means that our opportunity to do better is delayed. In this budget, the Minister of Finance has generated very conservative revenue estimates. Nonetheless, the budget shows a surplus of \$1.45 billion for 2006/07. The Minister

seems tentative, however, for while including a \$270 million contingency fund for programs spending she has also put aside \$850 million as a forecast allowance to reduce the stated surplus to \$600 million.

With so much money, one would have hoped that the provincial government would have created a “real children’s budget,” one that addressed the needs of *all* B.C. children. While some children will do better under this budget, for the poorest of children, this budget offers nothing but peanuts. ■



**Need  
direction  
on social  
issues in  
B.C.?**

**Join SPARC BC  
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See the inside back cover for membership details.

## What does it take to organize a local dialogue on community accessibility?

This piece is the first in SPARC BC's new series of short, practical articles on ways to support and increase accessibility and social inclusion in our communities.

THE FORMAL DIALOGUE PROCESS can be used in any community—urban or rural, big or small—to foster discussion on accessibility, build knowledge, and improve local services, resources, and participation.

Initiating a dialogue process in your community will require the sponsorship of a host agency or group of individuals who recognize the need for such an event. The community or host agency will need to coordinate the necessary resources, processes, and structure and be able to follow the project to completion.

When planning a dialogue consider three main questions: What is the goal and why should participants care? Who is going to attend and have we included everyone? What will participants be expected to do? Once those questions are answered and work gets underway on inviting attendees and finding an accessible venue, a host will still need to:

- Select and organize a diverse advisory committee, who in turn will help develop the agenda content, have specific input into format, and serve as expert consultants to the process.
- Find a dialogue moderator whose responsibility is to guide the overall dialogue process.
- Engage facilitators and note-takers to assist

the small-group work that takes place throughout the day.

- Select several attendees to be 'weavers': individuals who can accurately interpret and summarize the discussions that take place and identify the ideas generated throughout the dialogue. Weavers can present their insights and observations to the entire group so that everyone benefits from all of the discussions and to ensure that the most important aspects of the dialogue.

Naturally, to organize a dialogue event, you will need financial resources along with human resources. Your local community might be able to help. You will find that businesses, local services providers, community organizations, clubs, and private individuals are all concerned with and have an interest in making their communities accessible to the benefit of everyone. Ask them. Form partnerships. Share costs. Together, build an inclusive and inspiring project that everyone can get excited about. ■

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For further information on how to develop a dialogue on community accessibility in your community, please contact us at (604) 718-7733 or [info@sparc.bc.ca](mailto:info@sparc.bc.ca).

SPARC BC is hosting a dialogue event for the World Urban Forum in June. See the back cover for details.

# Income assistance rules exhaust women's resources

The employment requirements for income assistance leave many single mothers on the financial edge—with little hope of rescue, report **Silvia Vilches** and **Penny Gurstein**.

A TEAM OF RESEARCHERS has been working with 22 single mothers since 2004, 16 in urban Vancouver and six in the rural Bulkley Valley, to find out how the new employment requirements for income assistance recipients have impacted them.<sup>1</sup> We have also been investigating how the reductions in social assistance rates that were instituted at the same time as the new employment requirements have been affecting women with small children. One of the issues that has become obvious is that the decreased support has put the women and their children in very precarious financial situations, and when, inevitably, they do need aid, they are told by their social workers to rely on assistance from family and friends first, thereby depleting the resources in their social support networks.

**“When people like Andrea run out of money for groceries, they are put in an impossible ‘catch 22’ situation.”**

*“Well, later on when I do run out, and I am really stuck, [the government’s] position is use up what resources you have; friends, family. And when that is all gone then I can get a crisis grant for the month... So, I haven’t yet, but I will end up borrowing money from [my mom], which is tough...”*

—Andrea<sup>2</sup>

Andrea was not alone in talking about being told to turn to others, but many of the women described situations where either they had no one to turn to, or they themselves were the source of support for others in their family. When people like Andrea run out of money for groceries, they are put in an impossible “catch 22” situation by the policies as they attempt to access resources from their families. We are

<sup>1</sup> The Income Assistance Project, a study funded through CHILD, a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council Major Collaborative Research Initiative project, is a qualitative longitudinal study that investigates how low-income, lone-mother families are affected by provincial policy changes that have reduced social assistance and enforced paid work obligations for assistance recipients. The research team consists of Penny Gurstein (UBC); Michael Goldberg (SPARC BC); Jane Pulkingham (SFU); Jo-Anne Fiske (U. Lethbridge); Dara Culhane (SFU); Sylvia Fuller (UBC); Paul Kershaw (UBC); Silvia Vilches (UBC); Jillian Stockburger (UNBC); and Laverne Gervais (UNBC).

<sup>2</sup> All names used are pseudonyms.

finding that this works against the goals of the income assistance regulations, which aim to support movement to independence, and at the same time puts the health and well-being of the families at risk.

The underlying rationale for asking women to turn to their own resources first is part of an overall government policy of encouraging people to take responsibility for themselves, of encouraging community members to help each other, and of lessening or “reducing” the size and role of government. In theory, this sounds promising and logical. In practice, some of the flaws in the government’s logic in creating their legislation are exposed. The idea that people get help from each other and benefit emotionally, socially, and in material ways, is called social support theory. There are many demonstrated benefits of giving and receiving social support, such as a feeling of belonging, as well of mattering to someone. However, social support requires the presence of social networks. This is not always the case for these lone parents. “Tina” has only one living relative in her entire extended family, someone she has not seen in years, and who she does not want to see. She is not only truly alone in being a single parent, but she also helps her children’s father, who is ill and whose own family is not in a position to help him.

Tina’s circumstances raise a second issue not foreseen by the income assistance regulations. The forms and questions are constructed in such

**“Women and their children are in very precarious financial situations, and when, inevitably, they do need aid, they are told by their social workers to rely on assistance from family and friends first, thereby depleting the resources in their social support networks.”**

a way that our cultural beliefs about the way families “ought” to be structured, as one or two parents with or without children, are the only way that people are allowed to claim entitlements. This means that the responsibilities of women in atypical family situations are not visible. For example, one of the women in the study, “Nancy,” took over supporting her younger siblings because their mother was no longer able to parent. Nancy is now both supporting her younger sister to finish high school and helping to parent her sister’s new baby, in addition to parenting her own children. The work that Nancy is doing is very important, both for society as well as for her own family. Do we want the younger sister to fail? We know that leaving school early will cost the teen in terms of opportunities, and that if she needs support later, the money will come out of the taxpayers’ pocket. The responsibility Nancy is shouldering is even consistent with the government’s own theme of helping to take care of those in our community. When Nancy needs help, though, she is asked to

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“turn to her family and friends” first.

We are finding that the consequences of the income assistance expectations that women will turn to families and friends also puts women and children at risk. Not only have the reductions in rates affected families, but the more

**“What is needed is a different vision of what constitutes care-giving and receiving within families and communities.”**

restrictive conditions for extra grants like the one for special dietary needs, or the requirement to turn to family and friends first before crisis grants can be given, have made the conditions of survival much more difficult. As a result, some of the mothers in our study have been forced to stay in contact with, and rely on, violent family or abusive ex-partners. In other cases, being required to ask friends or family for help, such as Andrea refers to, puts other family members at financial risk, or makes the social networks women have precarious. Who wants a “friend” that the law requires you to support? Friendships and networks rely on trust and reciprocity to function; being required to “draw on” the bank of friendship for help strains relationships and may leave women more isolated than before when a real emergency strikes.

The policies that ask women to turn to friends and family assume that these networks are available and can be a substitute for govern-

ment assistance. Instead, we have found that this requirement is making their networks, if they exist, more fragile. The question is, how can we support these women in their care-giving and strengthen networks so that single mothers can better help themselves? The women in our study

point to many practical small ways that this can be achieved. “Jemima” used the former volunteer credit program to build a reserve education fund. The government matched her volunteer hours, with cash, and she trained in the health care field, where she has now found

employment. “Cynthia” exchanges babysitting with a friend; she doesn’t feel comfortable to leave her developmentally delayed daughter with anyone else. If her friend could be paid as an informal caregiver, Cynthia could take the training program she wants, and work toward a job that would support her, preferably in the construction industry. In Nancy’s and Tina’s cases, they need to be recognized as people who have no family that can support them, and who are supporting others in our society. While the details of how to achieve this might be more complicated than can be outlined here, the outcome should support the strengthening of networks, not the depletion of them. What is needed is a different vision of what constitutes care-giving and receiving within families and communities. We need to recognize that welfare recipients may be financially dependent on the state, but are also people that others rely on for help and support. ■

# BC Healthy Communities

## Bringing the Healthy Communities approach to life

### A new start for B.C. communities

BC HEALTHY COMMUNITIES (BCHC) is a new initiative that aims to foster individual and collective health, well-being, and development by promoting the healthy communities approach in communities throughout the province. BCHC is sponsored by the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM), with funding from the BC Ministry of Health's ActNow BC health promotion program.

"Building on the successes of previous Healthy Communities initiatives during the 1980s and 1990s," says BCHC director Eric Kowalski, "BC will once again play a role in the international Healthy Communities / Healthy Cities movement, which is active in more than 80 countries around the globe. Our three-person central office is located in Victoria. In addition, starting in May, a part-time facilitator will be positioned in each of the North, Interior, Fraser Valley, Vancouver Coastal and Vancouver Island regions of B.C."

### The Healthy Communities approach

While there is no one way to simply create a healthy community, the experience of the healthy communities movement in Canada and internationally identifies four key cornerposts for creating healthy communities: 1) genuine citizen involvement; 2) existence of strong inter-sectoral partnerships; 3) local government com-

mitment to the approach; and, 4) public policy that supports the healthy communities approach.

The healthy communities approach calls for a holistic, systemic, "big picture" view, paying attention to *all* of the determinants that influence health, well-being and healthy human development.

- **Physical determinants:** physical activity, diet, substance use;
- **Environmental determinants:** healthy ecosystems, air and water quality, green space;
- **Economic determinants:** thriving local business, economic resilience, stable employment, family-friendly workplaces;
- **Social determinants:** public policy, education, affordable housing, child care, transportation, food security, neighbourhood design;
- **Psychological and spiritual determinants:** sense of belonging, sense of purpose, high self-esteem, self-actualization;
- **Cultural determinants:** community identity, shared vision of a healthy community, cultural values of inclusion, diversity, pride, and participation.

### Capacity building: At the heart of BC Healthy Communities

"Capacity building is the *essence* of our work at BC Healthy Communities" says Tam Lundy,

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### Figure 1: BC Healthy Communities Capacity Building Framework

Our purpose is to create communities that provide us with the social, environmental, economic, physical, psychological, spiritual, and cultural assets that promote health, well-being, and the capacity to develop to our full potential. Since human potential is unlimited, capacity building is an ongoing aspect of community life.

At BC Healthy Communities, we believe that capacity building is most effective and sustainable when we pay attention in each of the following areas:

- Community learning
- Community engagement
- Expanded community assets
- Community collaboration

#### 1. Learn

#### 3. Expand Assets

- Learn
- Engage
- Expand Assets
- Thinking
- Knowledge
- Commitment
- Relationships
- Resources
- Partnerships
- Activities

#### 2. Engage

#### 4. Collaborate

- How to reach a chosen future

Each step — learning, engaging, expanding resources, and collaborating — is an important building block, expanding individual, organizational, sectoral, and community capacity to address each determinant of health, well-being and healthy development.

Working within this framework helps to expand capacity in people, in organizations, and in the community-as-a-whole. The framework promotes a holistic approach, paying attention to:

- Individuals (interior and exterior experiences)
- The culture within which we live our day to day lives
- The systems and structures in which we carry out our activities

<b>Psychological and Spiritual Assets</b> (healthy mind, healthy spirit)	<b>Physical and Behavioral Assets</b> (healthy body and actions)
<b>Cultural Assets</b> (healthy cultural values, beliefs, attitudes, assumptions)	<b>Social and Ecological Assets</b> (healthy environment, economy, social systems, institutions, policies, services)

BCHC’s Education and Development Coordinator. “By focusing on capacity building,” she explains, “we believe we can make a bigger difference, a more sustainable difference, in our work to promote health, well-being, and healthy development in communities throughout the province.”

While there is lots of talk these days about capacity building, Tam notes, the term means different things to different people. “We see capacity building,” she explains, “as processes and activities that maximize human potential. A comprehensive, integrated approach to capacity building will nurture excellence, expansion, and positive change in *all* areas of human experience: social, environmental, economic, physical, psychological, spiritual, and cultural. In this way, our capacity building efforts reflect the complexity of people and the communities in which we live our lives.”

BC Healthy Communities has adopted an *integral*<sup>1</sup> capacity building approach, one that addresses the *whole person* within

<sup>1</sup> *Integral* means “inclusive, comprehensive, balanced ... not leaving anything out.”

the *whole community*. An integral lens helps us to see important interconnections among people, organizations, and sectors. And it helps us to address interconnections among the multiple determinants of health, well-being, and healthy development.

“This integral framework,” says Eric Kowalski “helps us to build our understanding of how we shape our communities and how they, in turn, shape us. As we broaden our understanding we enhance our ability to create the kinds of communities in which we want ourselves and our children to live.”

### **Collaborative capacity building: Integrating our thinking and actions**

One of the challenges facing BCHC and communities in general in B.C. is the range of “community building” initiatives currently underway in the province, whether under the banner of Healthy, Sustainable, Active, Learning, Vibrant, Safe, Green, Livable, Food Security, or other approaches. The sheer number of different initiatives underway is encouraging, and each of these initiatives incorporates one or more pieces of the Healthy Communities approach. However, we need to find ways to work more closely together to make the work we are doing more comprehensive and accessible at the community level. BCHC is committed to working with other community and provincial partners to ensure this type of coordination takes place.

“We know there is no ‘one size fits all’ approach to creating healthy communities,” says Eric Kowalski. “Each region and community in

the province has its own unique characteristics. What BCHC is committed to doing is to work with communities to figure out why, when so many of us share common goals around creating healthy, resilient, inclusive, and sustainable communities, we so often experience such difficulty in making progress toward achieving those goals. BCHC offers us an opportunity to create a province-wide learning network in which we can support, teach, learn from, and grow with each other.”

### **Support from BC Healthy Communities**

What can communities expect to see from BCHC over the next few months?

Beginning in May, the BCHC Regional Facilitators will be reaching out to communities in their regions to identify the many activities that are already underway. They will be looking for communities who may be interested in learning more about the Healthy Communities approach, as well as seeking input on how BCHC can support and help sustain community efforts. We will also be continuing to expand and improve our website, to provide communities with information and support in understanding and implementing a healthy communities approach. ■

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**For more information on BCHC, and to find out how your community can become involved, check out the BCHC website at <[www.bchealthycommunities.ca](http://www.bchealthycommunities.ca)>, email them at [bchc@civinet.bc.ca](mailto:bchc@civinet.bc.ca), or call them at (250) 356-0892.**

# SPARC BC celebrates forty years of social planning and community development in B.C.

WHAT WE NOW KNOW AS the Social Planning and Research Council of BC was incorporated in 1966 as the Voluntary Association for Health and Welfare of British Columbia. Deryck Thomson recalls that the idea of a creating a “provincial social planning organization that would raise public awareness and understanding of health and welfare issues and the need for appropriate services” was first discussed in 1961 at a brown-bag lunch on a spring day in Victoria. Deryck Thomson, Ernie Hill, and Gordon Selman were the trio at that meeting.

The name of the organization has changed over the years, and programs and projects have shifted in response to the needs and aspirations of communities in B.C. What has remained constant over the past forty years, however, is the organization’s commitment to empowering citizens and communities with information and analysis of current issues and policies, our role as

a liaison among groups throughout the province, and an ongoing, concerted effort awareness and knowledge of social issues.

We want you to celebrate this four-decade milestone with us! We could probably fill a stadium with all the volunteers, staff people, program participants, supporters, and members who have contributed to the work of SPARC BC through the past forty years. It is the commitment of everyone involved over the years that has made SPARC BC a success.

Come to the SPARC BC 40th Anniversary celebration on Friday June 2, 2006 at Van Dusen Gardens. (See the invitation on the next page—don’t forget to RSVP!)

Let’s take this opportunity to look back at our successes over the last forty years, build on our strengths and the lessons we’ve learned so we can continue to work with communities to build a just and healthy society for all!

## It’s your chance to share your memories and stories...

We want to hear your stories about SPARC BC. Do you have an anecdote, memory, or story about people or events connected to SPARC BC? Has SPARC BC had an impact on an organization you have been involved with?

We will gather these stories together and share them with others at the anniversary celebration, in future issues of *SPARC BC News*, and in other publications we are planning in conjunction with SPARC BC’s forty years

of social planning and community development.

You can send your stories to Matthew Beall, Editor and Publications Coordinator at SPARC BC, by:

Email: [mbeall@sparc.bc.ca](mailto:mbeall@sparc.bc.ca)

Fax: (604) 736-8697

Mail: 201–221 E. 10th Ave., Vancouver, BC V5T 4V3

Dear SPARC BC Members,



Please consider joining us to celebrate on June 2, 2006. Help us plan by contacting Gillian at (604) 718-7751 or [gtong@sparc.bc.ca](mailto:gtong@sparc.bc.ca) with your RSVP by May 12, 2006.

## ... and hopes and dreams for SPARC BC

We also want this 40th Anniversary to be about looking forward to the next forty years of social planning and community development in B.C. If you are just reading *SPARC BC News* for the first time, or have thought about becoming a member of SPARC BC, now is the time! When you sign up, send us a note with your thoughts about the next forty years of social planning in B.C. What are the issues that are going to be important to you, your family, and community from now until 2046?

## Official Notice

SOCIAL PLANNING  
AND RESEARCH  
COUNCIL OF BRITISH  
COLUMBIA

# ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

### WHEN

**June 2, 2006**

7:00 pm

### WHERE

Van Dusen Gardens  
Floral Hall  
5251 Oak Street  
Vancouver, BC

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Email [info@sparc.bc.ca](mailto:info@sparc.bc.ca)

### AGM BUSINESS

The business of the meeting will include the presentation and approval of the Society's audited financial statements and the election of the Society's directors.

Nominations to the Society's Board of Directors are encouraged and may be made by any member provided that such nominations are received by the Chair of the Nomination Committee and the Society's office 48 hours before the date of the Annual General Meeting and that they are accompanied by the written consent of the nominee.

# Community Development Education:

## Exploring the history, foundation, form, and aims

SPARC BC's commitment to building community development skills is long and has taken many forms, but every event and program, however, came from the same philosophical base, writes SPARC BC's community development educator **Scott Graham**.

OVER THE PAST 40 YEARS, SPARC BC has been committed to working with, providing educational resources for, and learning from communities across British Columbia. The range of educational initiatives undertaken by SPARC BC throughout its history is vast. Highlights from this list include: The Organizational Skills Project in 1978,<sup>1</sup> Community Education and Citizen Training Project for Physically Disabled Persons in 1981,<sup>2</sup> Community Economic Development Regional Workshops in 1986,<sup>3</sup> A New Vision for BC: Building our Social Future in 1992,<sup>4</sup> and the series of Community Development Institutes from 1995 to 2002.<sup>5</sup>

One of the most recent incarnations of SPARC BC's dedication to meeting the community development education needs of B.C. communities is the Community Development Education (CDE) program. Like any effective form of education, the CDE program is built on a philosophical foundation, is framed according to particular learning interests, and is guided by progressive aims.

The foundation of the CDE program is made up of three basic parts. The first part is the concept that community education and learning are integral to community development; without these there can be no consensus and no genuine

progress within a community. As such, the CDE program facilitates learning about a burgeoning or established community development initiative. The second element is the notion that the design and content of any community learning experience ought to be co-developed and co-delivered in partnership with local community leaders with a view to building on local capacities. The third piece of this foundation is the idea that a balance must be struck between the catalyzing effect of an educational community workshop and adequate follow-up and support. The CDE program seeks to be alive to this balance by planning for on-going support with communities that can assist them in taking on community development in a sustainable manner.

In an effort to harmonize the form of the CDE program with its philosophical foundation, we have employed a workshop model that is flexible enough to build on pre-existing capacities and, at the same time, is able to conform to the learning interests that are identified by local organiza-

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1 SPARC News, December 1978.

2 SPARC News, April 1981.

3 SPARC News, June 1986.

4 SPARC BC News, Winter 1992.

5 Community Development Institute Information Guides. 1995–2002.

tions. As such, the CDE program is comprised of a series of workshops designed to link local community leaders in a learning environment in which a diversity of perspectives, ideas, and opinions are expressed, listened to, and, where consensus exists, acted upon. In an effort to ensure the appropriateness of each workshop, SPARC BC works closely with local community organizations and provides research, curriculum development, and facilitation services with every CDE workshop.

Based on our research into the community development education needs in B.C., we learned that the strongest demand for community education opportunities exists in rural and Northern B.C.<sup>6</sup> As such, our free CDE program is only available to community-based organizations in rural and northern regions of B.C. that have the capacity to undertake a community development education initiative and the community support to do so. Each CDE workshop is created out of a combination of local knowledge and any one or mixture of the following workshop topics:

- Understanding and Using Social Planning in Our Community
- Building Social and Economic Security in Our Community
- Community Development through Partnerships
- Understanding Community Indicators and Mobilizing for Social Change
- Building Mutually Productive Partnerships

<sup>6</sup> *Report on Community Development Education Needs in BC.*  
SPARC BC CDE Task Force, November 2003.



**Energy + Enthusiasm:** Participants at the 1999 Community Development Institute, one of SPARC BC's many community development education events.

#### between Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Groups

- Integrating a Population Health Approach to Community Development

Although the specific aims of a given workshop depend on the local context, most CDE workshops share three general aims: 1) To build upon the experience and knowledge of participants and encourage respectful dialogue and learning across cultures, sectors, institutions, and personalities; 2) To facilitate collective analysis of local issues and assets; 3) To initiate or strengthen sustainable community visions, networks, comprehensive plans, and implementation strategies that address local issues.

A call for applications for the free CDE program will be featured on the SPARC BC web site and through various networks in June. Also, check out the SPARC BC web site in June for our new educational resource pages that will include material related to the CDE program as well as a wide range of other supplementary resources. ■

# Employment of Persons with Disabilities: Now is the time to put it on your agenda!

A remarkable number of persons with disabilities remain unemployed despite their willingness and ability to work. **Winston Leckie** looks for opportunities for change and articulates why now is a good time to re-think the issue.

LITTLE GOOD NEWS EXISTS about the current state of employment for persons with disabilities. Without entering into the debate about the definition of disability or quibbling over the decimal points on the statistics, let's look at some of the indicators of the how things are—and then look for opportunities to rethink the traditional exclusion of people with disabilities from employment.

The latest *Employment Equity Act of 2004* states “At 2.3%, the representation of persons with disabilities in the workforce under the Act in 2003 continued a declining trend that started in 1996, when representation of this group stood at 2.7%.” *The Recruitment and Retention of Persons with Disabilities in British Columbia Research Report* stated “Persons with disabilities in B.C. were 250 percent more likely to be unemployed than those without disabilities.”

In the United States, the employment rate for persons with disabilities has declined by 2%

since the Americans with Disabilities Act was put into effect in 1992. In B.C., the most generous estimates indicate that 56% of British Columbians with disabilities are unemployed, a number in stark contrast to the overall Canadian and B.C. unemployment rates of 6.4% and 4.8%, respectively.

**“While many espouse economic independence and security as the primary reasons for employment—and there is indeed merit in that—another perspective exists: the cost of being unemployed.”**

Taking a step back, why is it so important to people that they have a job? While many espouse economic independence and security as the primary reasons for employment—and there is indeed merit in that—another perspective exists: the cost of being unemployed. When a

group of researchers investigating human happiness at the University of British Columbia asked people to assign either positive or negative income-equivalent dollar values to life events the response was dramatic. Having a job that makes good use of your skills was worth a positive \$70,000, while being unemployed rated a negative \$200,000.

Now is a good time to re-think the exclusion of people with disabilities from the work force. A number of current factors exist that could provide, with the right effort, significant employment opportunities:

- **Skill shortage:** From the skilled trades, to the hospitality and tourism, to management, it does not seem to matter: experts predict a skill shortage.
- **Aging workforce:** An aging workforce and declining birth rate means insufficient capacity to fill “replacement” jobs, let alone the needs of an expanding economy.
- **Strong economy:** The economy appears robust and fuelled by major development activities. Forty-five percent of employers expect to hire within the next three months. Where will those new employees come from?
- **Low unemployment:** As previously mentioned, B.C.’s unemployment rate of 4.8% leaves an increasingly smaller labour pool to address the factors above without increasing the number of entrants to the labour market.

Combine the above with an increasing awareness that the cost of accommodation should not be seen as a barrier. The BC Chamber of Commerce report *Closing the Skills Gap* found “90% of those with disabilities who are under 35 have ‘mild to moderate’ conditions [and] fewer than 20% require any accommodation in the work place.” The majority of workplace accommodations cost less than \$500 and makes the workplace better for not only other employees, but customers and clients as well.

However, in the Conference Board of Canada report *Tapping the Talents of Persons with Disabilities*, 80% of respondents indicated that strategic direction from top management was important; however, only 40% felt they had sufficient resources to be effective.

**“Resources need to be allocated to achieve the employment goals, not just with job placement but with supports for a continuum of capacity.”**

The labour market has to address why people with disabilities have not played an equitable part in labour force development. What’s missing is commitment, resources, and accountability at all levels of the development process. Commitment in specific terms of where employers want to be rather than how they want to be perceived. You do not see adequate levels of government support, training programs, or public education. Nor do you see employers saying things like “we will increase the representation of people with disabilities in the workforce by 2% every year.” Resources need to be allocated to achieve the goals—not simply resources for job placement, but for training and disability supports, so as to provide a continuum of capacity. Accountability structures and consequences need to be put in place to ensure goals are achieved.

Now is the time of opportunity. We need to put employment of persons with disabilities on everyone’s agenda—if we do not, everyone’s glass will remain half full. ■

# In the proper hands:

## The SPARC BC pilot project on knowledge transfer on affordable housing and homelessness

In an effort to put more of the results of research in the hands of those who can put it to use, writes **Ren Thomas**, SPARC BC has undertaken to develop a knowledge transfer model that does so effectively.

SPARC BC GAINS VALUABLE KNOWLEDGE in the course of its research that could be very useful to community workers in direct service delivery. Currently, our research is not always distributed in a way that makes the knowledge accessible and useful—or even known about—at the community-level. With this in mind, we set out to develop a project by which to re-package and distribute the knowledge accumulated on affordable housing and homelessness in the course of our research. This project will test a model for translating the knowledge developed through our work in these areas.

The Knowledge Transfer Project on Affordable Housing and Homelessness involves the development of a format, coordination of content, and distribution of the results. The project will also evaluate the effectiveness of the knowledge transfer and consider the viability of establishing an ongoing process for distribution of our accumulated research knowledge.

We have focused on the content in income security-related core projects and housing-relat-

ed consulting projects, including:

- *Left Behind: A comparison of living costs and employment assistance rates in British Columbia* (SPARC BC, December 2005)
- *Living with a Disability on Income Assistance* (SPARC BC, December 2005 draft)
- *Family Homelessness: Causes and Solutions* (CMHC/SPARC BC, February 2003)
- *Homelessness, Housing and Harm Reduction: Stable Housing for Homeless People with Substance Use Issues* (CMHC/SPARC BC, September 2005)
- *Issues and Strategies for Shared Accommodation* (CMHC/SPARC BC, June 2005)
- *Regional Homelessness Plan* (Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness, 2001)
- *Regional Homelessness Plan Update* (SPARC BC, November 2003)
- *On our streets and in our shelters... Results of the 2005 Greater Vancouver Homeless Count* (SPARC BC, September 2005)
- *City of North Vancouver Affordable Housing Task Force Final Report* (October 1998)

SPARC BC's research clearly demonstrates that affordable housing remains a major challenge in the region, particularly for low-income renters. Very few rental or affordable housing projects have been built in the past decade, the existing stock of affordable housing is being lost through conversion and gentrification, and there are long waiting lists for affordable housing. The growing income gap and rapidly rising cost of housing are also significant challenges.

Changes to the BC Employment Assistance Act in 2002 have shifted the focus towards getting people off welfare and into paid employment. Many income assistance recipients receive inadequate benefits that do not acknowledge the high rents and high cost of living in the region. A significant prevalence of health conditions and addictions exists in the homeless population, resulting in increased pressure on municipalities in the GVRD to provide shelter and support services. The supply of shelters and transitional housing in the region is inadequate, particularly for youth. The number of homeless in the GVRD has increased dramatically and includes a significant number of families with children. Housing, in every form, is very significant in the lives of low-income people, the homeless, and those at risk of homelessness. SPARC BC continues to support the '3 Ways to Home': enabling people to have an adequate income, providing a range of support services, and creating a continuum of housing.

In preparing the format of the knowledge transfer for this project, we contacted our networks to determine the information and delivery method that would help them most. We sent out a questionnaire to key informants in order to

**"This project will test a model for translating the knowledge developed through our work on affordable housing and homelessness."**

find out what type of information was useful to them, what format they preferred, and how they would like to see our publication distributed. The majority of respondents preferred a mixture of text, tables, and statistics in a fact sheet format (4–6 pages), delivered in a printable PDF. Based on these results, we will be producing a series of five Housing Affordability and Homelessness Fact Sheets in the near future.

The fact sheets will be distributed to existing networks and contacts and made available to everyone on our web site. A distribution plan relevant to the subject area of affordable housing will be developed and will include service providers, government, advocates, and funders.

We hope that the methods and results of this pilot knowledge transfer project will prove the approach as an effective one for supporting and re-enforcing community efforts to tackle social issues. If so, we look forward to using the model in the future. ■

# Celebrations!

Aside from a opportunity to relax and recharge, the celebration of a community development achievement can be event that honours, motivates, and builds relationships.

ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT things about community development is celebrating! Celebrations are a way to mark milestones, honour achievements, and acknowledge contributions. They are motivating for those involved, and infectious for those who aren't—yet.

Why are celebrations particularly important in community development work? Because it is slow work. And complex. And challenging. It can be discouraging, and it is sometimes very hard to observe progress. Searching for that discernable transformation or advancement of the vision is sometimes best attempted in a group celebration of the work itself!

Be inclusive in the celebration. If we're celebrating community development, we need to model its best practices. Spread the celebration around as much as possible, as that also helps in working up enthusiasm about the process, the people, and the event.

Recognition doesn't have to be expensive or engraved—it really is the thought that counts. The recognition gift often gets filed away, but what is remembered and treasured by recipients is the appreciation that is expressed in the act of recognition itself. Telling someone what you're

thankful for and appreciate about their actions, describing how they have made a difference, is the part most likely to be remembered.

Remember why you're celebrating and make that the focus. Multi-tasking is a way of life, especially in the community sector, but don't be

tempted to create multi-purpose celebrations. Fundraising events are different from celebrations: they should be specifically geared to be attractive to contributors and designed to inspire gifts. Keep your

celebration focused on community development and the people involved—they're what counts.

Remember the ABC's of event planning and hosting and you'll be able to relax and enjoy at your event: **A**nticipate as much as possible: start early in your planning, check the equipment, take time to do a site visit, remember that what can go wrong, might go wrong if you haven't anticipated the possibility. **B**ack-up Plans are essential to deal with those things that do go wrong. If you follow the first two, you'll not need the step of **C**risis Management. If it comes, take a breath and remember that it's all part of the community development process, and at some future point, you can celebrate your successful management of it! ■

**“Celebrations honour and motivate. In community development, where opportunities are scarce and long-coming, celebrate when you can!”**

Please join us in building a just and healthy society for all!

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

FIRST NAME \_\_\_\_\_

LAST NAME \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE NUMBER \_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL ADDRESS (optional) \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_

POSTAL CODE \_\_\_\_\_

## 1 Join

I will renew my SPARC BC Annual Membership

\$25 Individual     \$60 Organization

Low income membership available — contact us for more information.

## 2 Make a donation

I will further support SPARC BC's programs and services

\$75     \$50     \$35     \$ \_\_\_\_\_

## Payment

I would like to pay by:

Cheque

VISA

MASTERCARD

\$ \_\_\_\_\_  
TOTAL AMOUNT

\_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_  
CREDIT CARD NUMBER

EXPIRY DATE

\_\_\_\_\_  
SIGNATURE

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE

## 3 Become a sustaining member

I would like to show my commitment to the work of SPARC BC by becoming a sustaining member and making a **monthly pre-authorized donation in the amount of**

\$20     \$15     \$10     \$ \_\_\_\_\_

I understand I will receive one tax receipt for my entire donation within a calendar year, and that I may change my donation any time by sending written notice to SPARC BC of my new donation amount.

**I prefer to pay by cheque.**

I authorize SPARC BC to withdraw from my chequing account on the \_\_\_\_ day of each month, beginning \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_\_, for the amount indicated above. (I have included a cheque marked void).

\_\_\_\_\_  
SIGNATURE

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE

**I prefer to pay by credit card.**

I authorize SPARC BC to charge my: (check one)     VISA     MASTERCARD

on the \_\_\_\_ day of each month, beginning \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_\_, for the amount indicated above.

\_\_\_\_\_-\_\_\_\_\_-\_\_\_\_\_-\_\_\_\_\_-\_\_\_\_\_  
ACCOUNT NUMBER

\_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_  
EXPIRY DATE

\_\_\_\_\_  
SIGNATURE

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE

SPARC BC collects certain personal information from our members and donors during the course of your financial support of the organization in order to manage our relationship with you. For example, as a federally registered charity we collect your name, telephone number and address in order to issue you a tax receipt. Additionally, SPARC BC uses that information to contact you for future donations to support our programs, renew membership, and issue copies of SPARC BC News. The submission of this form constitutes your consent to the collection and use of information for the purposes described above. You may withdraw or change your consent at any time, in respect of your personal information and in respect of any of the purposes described above, by contacting SPARC BC by email [info@sparc.bc.ca](mailto:info@sparc.bc.ca) or phone at (604) 718-7734.

Additionally, on approval of SPARC BC's Board of Directors, SPARC BC may periodically share your contact information with other charitable organizations within BC, so that they may contact you about their local programs. In all cases these organizations would have goals and charitable purposes similar to SPARC BC. No financial information will ever be shared. If you do not wish to have your information used in this manner please contact us by email

• **Parking permit holders: membership in SPARC BC does not affect your permit status.**

• **To update your contact information please: print corrections on the letter address label, call 604-718-7733 or email [info@sparc.bc.ca](mailto:info@sparc.bc.ca)**

• **Please return this form with payment to:**

**SPARC BC**  
**201-221 East 10th Ave.**  
**Vancouver, BC V5T 4V3**



# Accessible Urban Space

## A Facilitated Discussion on Inclusive Communities

AN OFFICIAL NETWORKING EVENT OF THE THIRD UNITED NATIONS WORLD URBAN FORUM



Summer will be even better this year, with Vancouver hosting the third **UN World Urban Forum, June 19 – 23**. More than 6,000 participants from 150 countries will take part in discussions on urban sustainability and the critical problems facing cities around the world.

As a part of the program, SPARC BC is excited to offer a networking event, **“Accessible Urban Space: A Facilitated Discussion on Inclusive Communities”**. The event will explore the ways in which urban planning affects social

inclusion in different cultural and economic contexts.

Don't miss this opportunity to exchange ideas, share best practices, learn from high-profile speakers, and experience all that Vancouver has to offer. **Secure your space today!**

Registration in SPARC BC's event, and the World Urban Forum, is free and open to everyone.

For more information visit:

- [www.unhabitat.org/wuf](http://www.unhabitat.org/wuf)
- [www.wuf3-fum3.ca](http://www.wuf3-fum3.ca)

