

**LISTENING FOR THE WORDS AND THE MUSIC:
LEARNING ABOUT COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT FROM LOW-INCOME
RESIDENTS OF VANCOUVER'S DOWNTOWN EASTSIDE STRATHCONA**

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis presents the story of what members of a low-income and marginalized community see as appropriate community development for them, an understanding of which involves appreciation of the words AND music of community development. In presenting this story, the thesis explores the role of community development in addressing social exclusion in inner-city areas and identifies how the knowledge and experiences of low-income communities can inform theory and practice.

Based on qualitative research undertaken in Downtown Eastside Strathcona, an inner-city neighbourhood in Vancouver, British Columbia, this thesis also endeavors to exemplify research that is situated in the practice of the researcher, in my own community practice. To achieve this, I, a practitioner-researcher, worked with a community group with which I was already involved to develop a guide to community development from their perspective. The guide, entitled *Getting the Words AND the Music*, and the conversations that informed the preparation of it, were analyzed to determine the contributions that are made to community development theory and practice.

In this research, I identified four key principles to which these residents of Downtown Eastside Strathcona make a unique and valuable contribution: community development needs to be inclusive of all community members, particularly the marginalized; resident involvement in decision-making should be promoted; social justice through the equitable distribution of goods and services should be pursued; and the contribution of residents and agencies working together to strengthen their community should be celebrated. While these principles are clearly evident in community development theory, the analysis suggests that fulfillment of these principles requires a commitment to resident-centred approaches, to

learning to listen to residents, to promoting the voice of the voiceless, to ensuring access to services to meet basic needs, and to redefining community to be inclusive of all.

I conclude this thesis by showing that, in the experience of this researcher, a commitment of this nature may require personal change and a comfort level with messy, unpredictable practice. This change, while at times uncomfortable, may also be a gift - an ability to discern the music of community development as understood by low-income communities.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	ii
LIST OF FIGURES	vi
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	vii
CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER TWO - <i>GETTING THE WORDS AND THE MUSIC</i> - A GUIDE TO COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN VANCOUVER'S DOWNTOWN EASTSIDE STRATHCONA	9
CHAPTER THREE - COMPILING THE GUIDE	82
The Beginning of an Idea.....	83
Emergence of an Opportunity	85
Community Directions - An Overview.....	87
Shaping and Sustaining a Collaborative Research Project	89
Research Challenges and Opportunities	108
CHAPTER FOUR - CONNECTING WITH THE COMMUNITY.....	116
The Community	117
Community Development Approaches.....	125
The Guide Itself	130
Changes Made to <i>Getting the Words AND the Music</i>	138
Summary of What Was Learned.....	139
CHAPTER FIVE - POLICY CONTEXT.....	142
Overview of the Context.....	143
Development of Policy Responses	145
The Downtown Eastside Revitalization Program	147
The Downtown Eastside Community Development Project	148
Emerging Issues with Respect to Community Development Theory and Practice	159

CHAPTER SIX - ASSESSING “THE WORDS”	164
Defining Community Development.....	165
Principles of Community Development	167
Viewing the Principles Holistically.....	182
Overview of Literature Relating to the Policy Themes	183
What Got Us in This Mess?	190
Gaps in Community Development Theory	197
CHAPTER SEVEN - HEARING “THE MUSIC”	201
Summary of Research.....	201
Implications for Theory	203
Implications for Practice.....	211
Getting the Music - A Process of Personal Change.....	217
REFERENCES.....	220
APPENDIX 1 - RESEARCH PROPOSAL SUBMITTED TO THE COMMUNITY..	228
APPENDIX 2 - LIST OF REPORTS REVIEWED BY THEME	230
APPENDIX 3 - COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT THEMES IDENTIFIED	234
APPENDIX 4 - SAMPLE INTERVIEW PROTOCOL	235
APPENDIX 5 - SAMPLE FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL.....	236

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 - Downtown Eastside Revitalization Program	147
Figure 2 - Program Components Policy Focus and Themes.....	160
Figure 3 - Resident-Centred Community Development.....	204

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I also received financial support that made a huge difference to me being able to complete this project. The City of Vancouver and the National Crime Prevention Centre paid for the desktop publishing and printing of *Getting the Words AND the Music* for public distribution. The University of British Columbia provided a Humanities and Social Sciences Grant to Dr. Shauna Butterwick that supported the data collection phase. A special thanks to Wendy Au, of the City of Vancouver, and to Dr. Butterwick for believing in this project.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Music is your own experience - your thoughts, your wisdom. If you don't live it, it won't come out of your horn (Charlie Parker quoted in Lotz, 1998, p. 93).

Community development is increasingly advocated as an important approach for helping communities around the world address issues such as poverty, illiteracy, violence, unemployment, crime, poor health conditions, and environmental degradation. This increasing emphasis on community development acknowledges the limited capacity of external agents to address community issues and the role of "development from within" as the foundation of long-term change. However, despite the fact that community development is historically deeply rooted in community knowledge and experiences, it is now often an approach to public intervention that is defined and driven externally rather than by the community itself. As such, it is often described as a partnership between community, government, and the private sector. As a community development practitioner in low-income communities for over ten years, I am struck by what appears to me to be an incongruity between the changing theory of community development and the experiences of low-income communities.

As I embarked on this doctoral research and began to look more closely at current trends in community development theory and practice, I became increasingly concerned that as it was embraced within public policy in the 80s and 90s, community development changed form and became a process that incorporated some of the language of the dominant discourse of our time, corporatism and globalization, inadvertently silencing the voices of those it is intended to serve. On one hand, community development as promoted in public policy

acknowledges and promotes, at least rhetorically, community values. At the same time, the language of community development in public policy is also consistent with the neo-liberal agenda that drives the dominant discourse. In fact, key themes of community development such as public/private partnership, entrepreneurship, and economic revitalization are virtually indistinguishable from the hegemony of corporatism and globalization. I believe that this way of doing community development defies many of the foundational precepts of community development including the advancement of the voice of the previously voiceless in democratic decision-making and the need to address systemic inequality in a meaningful way. Applying the wisdom of jazz musician Charlie Parker to this discussion, it seems that if the “music” of community development is to be fully heard, it is important that the lived experience, thoughts, and wisdom of community members be fully expressed.

My interest at this stage was to contribute to a counter discourse on community development, one that uses as its starting point the lived experience of social exclusion and one that allows for a vision of development that provides a place for low-income people to live in dignity. I wanted to hear what the residents in a particular low-income community had to say about community development because I had a sense that “when poor people express, share and analyse what they know, experience, need and want, they bring to light a dimension which normal professionals tend to miss or misperceive” (Chambers, 1997, p. 40). I therefore set out to identify the experience with and knowledge of community development among residents of Vancouver's Downtown Eastside Strathcona neighbourhood. My objectives in doing so were to:

- to explore the views of Downtown Eastside Strathcona residents and agencies on appropriate approaches to community development for their community

- to describe the appropriate approaches through a user friendly guide that can be used by residents and agencies to promote their views
- to identify the aspects of the community's experience that have implications for community development theory and practice as applied to marginalized inner-city areas.

As noted above, the community in which the research takes place is Downtown Eastside Strathcona¹, an inner-city, historic area of Vancouver, British Columbia, adjacent to Burrard Inlet and the city's downtown commercial core with a panoramic view of the Coastal Mountains. It is a community that also has a long, painful history of social exclusion. As will be described in the research that follows, Downtown Eastside Strathcona was, from its early history to the present day, composed to a large degree of low-income Canadians, single men working in resource industries, Chinese Canadians segregated by the Chinese Exclusion Act until 1949, immigrants seeking to live in multicultural areas, single mothers and their children needing affordable housing, and urban Aboriginal people who migrated here from reserves across Canada (Sommers, 2001). Essentially, the residents of this community were people who were marginalized by class, race, gender, ability, sexual orientation, and health issues.

These conditions of marginality continue to exist to the present day and are aggravated by changing economic and social relationships. Although the people of

¹ The name used to describe the Downtown Eastside is the subject of discussion at several levels. Some community members use it, others refer to the community as Downtown Eastside Strathcona comprised of two neighbourhoods. Others see this as revisionism, arguing that Strathcona, Chinatown and Gastown do not want to be considered part of the Downtown Eastside. For the purposes of this study, when I refer to Downtown

Downtown Eastside Strathcona are resident in a province that has the highest number of millionaires per capita in all of Canada (Vancouver Sun, August 14, 2000), they are faced on an ongoing basis with chronic unemployment and underemployment, homelessness, health epidemics, and a diminishing social safety net. In recent years, these conditions have been aggravated by a significant exodus of capital as businesses have moved to more profitable areas. Residents are victims of the global war on drugs as much as they are victims of a global drug trade (Gardner, 2000). These inhabitants of the poorest postal code in Canada experience hunger, pain, despair, and exclusion on a daily basis.

How are we as a broader community to respond to the human carnage of social exclusion in our midst? How do we expect governments here and elsewhere to act? How will basic human needs be met in thousands of similar communities around the world that are much like the Downtown Eastside? The response by governments, non-governmental agencies, and individual citizens will most certainly be mediated by how conditions are interpreted by the media, politicians, and policymakers, and their interpretation in turn will be influenced by the dominant discourse of our day. We need to ask ourselves if social exclusion that results in this human despair can be resolved through the conditions that created it, as though it is nothing more than a hangover. It seems to me that in addressing the impact of global conditions on low-income people, it is important that a counter discourse be promoted. It is important to recognize, to borrow a metaphor from the title of a book by alternative historian Howard Zinn (1994), that "You Can't Be Neutral On a Moving Train."

Eastside Strathcona, I am referring to the community encompassed by the vision described in the Guide. When I use the term Downtown Eastside and acronym DTES, I refer to the place that is the object of public policy.

The way in which conditions in Downtown Eastside Strathcona are interpreted is evident in the vernacular of the broader Vancouver community and in the texts provided by the media. For some, this is "skid row." It is the "crack capital" of Canada. It is an epidemic. It is homelessness and fleabag hotels. It is an urban reserve. The media is saturated with sensational, tragic accounts of life in this community such as "Slain Woman in Dumpster Led Life on Mean Streets" (Zacharias, Vancouver Sun, May 4, 2000), "A Tragic Timeline" (Vancouver Sun, November 20, 2000), and "A Fix for Sherry" (Vancouver Sun, November 18, 2000).

There are other stories of this community that depict other experiences, without which the portrait of the community is incomplete and without which the discourse is also incomplete. For many people who live and work in Downtown Eastside Strathcona, it is much, much, more than labels assigned to it. The faces of people in the Downtown Eastside Strathcona are faces of people from all communities in Canada. The people who live here are our sons and daughters, aunts and uncles, mothers and fathers, neighbours and colleagues. They have knowledge and skills, rights and obligations. They have deep feelings about things and have rich experiences to share. They have faith and anger, they love and hate, know joy and fear. Stripping aside the exigencies of drugs, alcohol, mental illness, and poverty, how much different are the people of Downtown Eastside Strathcona from other Canadians?

Within what are often viewed as dire conditions, the community is also a coming together of diverse, unique individuals, many in crisis, and untold numbers with courage and hope for a meaningful life, up against seemingly impossible odds. For many, it is home, their community. How the Downtown Eastside community (DTES) and the broader Vancouver

community respond to both the conditions facing the community and the human spirit present within has phenomenal implications for how we, as a society, maintain our humanity and wholeness in an increasing globalized world.

This research sets out to tell one story among many, a story of a community that is challenging the hegemony of the dominant discourse on community development² by setting up a project designed and implemented by residents. The project, entitled Community Directions, is a community organizing initiative that aims to ensure that the voices of low-income people are heard in revitalization discussions and the community is protected as a “low-income friendly” place, developed for and by residents. This is a story of resistance that has important implications for community development theory and practice. In particular, there are four aspects of community development practice in Downtown Eastside Strathcona community revealed in this story that resonated for me as particularly significant. These aspects are:

- the experience and knowledge of community members of what works in their community is unique and not available any other way than by communicating with residents and participating in the community
- there is ongoing concern about the impact of public sector disinvestment in social programs on residents living in poverty

² As will be shown in Chapter Six, a significant component of current community development literature, particularly in the policy domain, is concerned primarily with overall community improvement, general public participation, partnerships, and collaboration.

- this community has an ability to include people who are often excluded from decision-making in other places because they have addictions, mental health issues, criminal records or they draw their income from illegal activities, and
- despite being viewed as highly divided, the way in which residents and community organizations work together to share resources and link their activities is a continuous, broadly-based, pursuit.

This story is provided in a guide that describes Downtown Eastside Strathcona from the perspective of low-income residents and explores how low-income residents see community development as expressed through the Community Directions process. It attempts to show that there is more to community development than the words used to describe community development theory and practice. There is a “music” that can be discerned by listening closely to the people who are the subjects of community development practice, hence the title “Getting the Words AND the Music.” Because I want to analyze this story to show what low-income and marginalized communities have to contribute to community development theory and practice, I will start at the end of that journey, with the guide itself. I will then describe how it came to be prepared. This description will give a brief overview of the circuitous path followed to select this research project and some of the ideas about community development that are evident in documents produced for and by the community over the years.

I will also introduce Community Directions as the organizing process used to explicate the contribution that low income and marginalized residents make to community development. My role as a participant observer in the process is discussed. To ensure that

the voice of residents is clearly heard, I then present some of the conversations that I had when doing the research that I think contribute to a better sense of what the community has to teach us.

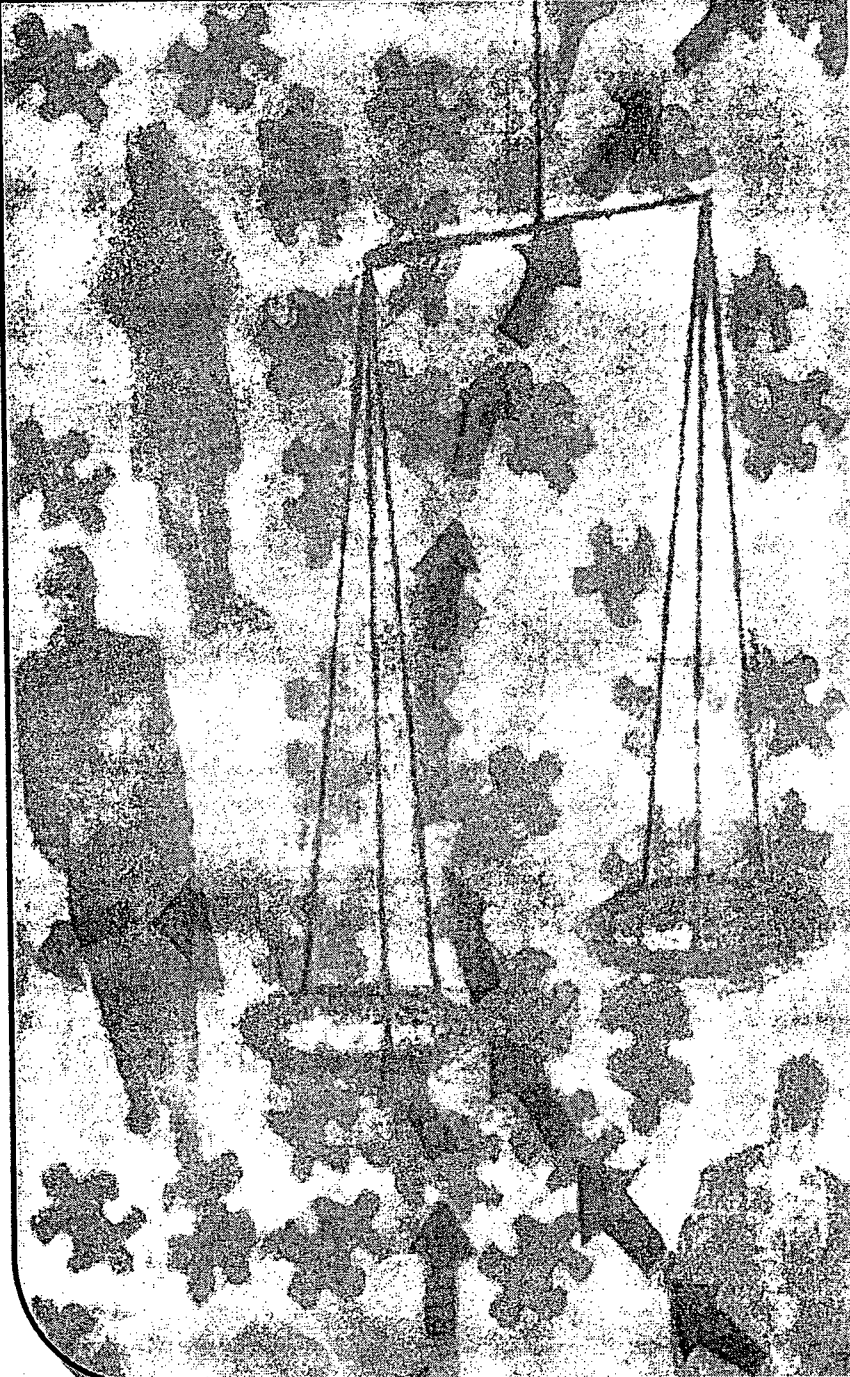
To allow a juxtaposition of the community's knowledge to current community development practice, I will describe the policy framework that supports the project. The theoretical concepts that underpin this policy framework will be unpacked -community development, revitalization, and crime prevention - to reveal that many terms are used very loosely without a full understanding of the impact on those who are marginalized.

Community development literature will be assessed to identify gaps in how theory and practice deal with issues that emerge in low-income communities. This research will close by bringing together the diverse discussions to show that the lived experience of people who are marginalized makes a unique and significant contribution to community development as revealed in *Getting the Words AND the Music*.

CHAPTER TWO

***GETTING THE WORDS AND THE MUSIC* - A GUIDE TO COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN VANCOUVER'S DOWNTOWN EASTSIDE STRATHCONA**

Getting the Words & the Music



A Guide for
Involvement in
Community-Based
Development
in Vancouver's
Downtown
Eastside
Strathcona



Acknowledgements

This 'Guide' reflects the collective wisdom of many Downtown Eastside Strathcona people gathered through meetings, interviews, focus groups, and informal discussions. I want to acknowledge and express my heartfelt appreciation to those who contributed to it.

Residents and representatives of community organizations contributed their time to have in-depth conversations with me about their views of community-based development in the Downtown Eastside Strathcona. Community Direction members warmly welcomed me to their meetings and patiently reviewed my work, providing valuable feedback throughout the process. A community advisory committee generously gave of their time and knowledge to read drafts, meet with me, and provide expert advice. Community Directions staff provided valuable analysis, printed information, and overall support.

I am very grateful to everyone who contributed and I sincerely hope that this document reflects the positive energy and insight contributed by so many people.

Kathy Coyne
Researcher

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	<i>i</i>
List of Maps and Figures	<i>iv</i>
Preface	<i>v</i>
 CHAPTER 1 A Collective Experience into Words	
This Guide Will... ..	1
Who Should Use It?	2
Based on the Community Directions Process	3
Included in this Guide	4
Community-based Training	5
Working Together	5
 Chapter 2 Our Community	
One Caring Community - Two Caring Neighbourhoods	7
The People of Our Community	9
A Glimpse of History	12
A Community Under Pressure	17
Downtown Eastside Strathcona as a Vision	21
 Chapter 3 Community-Based Development	
From the Inside - Out	24
Guiding Principles	25
Tools of Community-based Development	32
Working In and With the Community	38
 Chapter 4 Understanding the Issues	
Housing	41
Alcohol and Drug Abuse	45
Children and Youth	48
Safety and Wellbeing	50
Women's Issues	51
Community Economics	52
Addressing the Issues in a Holistic Way	56

Chapter 5 Ways We Work Together

Joint Planning	60
Forming Consortia to Deliver Services	61
Joint Programs	61
Community Organizing	62
Sharing Resources	63
Learning From Each Other	63
Creating a Caring Community Together	64

List of Figures

Map 1 Downtown Eastside Strathcona Neighbourhoods	8
Figure 1 Age Composition	
-Downtown Eastside Strathcona and Vancouver	10
Figure 2 Percent of Private Households with Low Income	11
Figure 3 Our Community - From the Inside Out	24
Figure 4 Continuum of Community Organizing Approaches	33
Figure 5 Low-income Housing in the Downtown Eastside	43
Figure 6 Labour Force Participation Rates	53
Figure 7 Percent of Population with less than Grade 9 Education ...	53

Preface

Residents and community organizations of the Downtown Eastside Strathcona are coming together in many different ways to create a healthy, safe and vibrant community in which all residents, including low-income people, are respected and valued. It is a vision of community-based development 'from within'. In fulfilling this vision, residents and community organizations want to work collaboratively and respectfully with all organizations and institutions who share this vision.

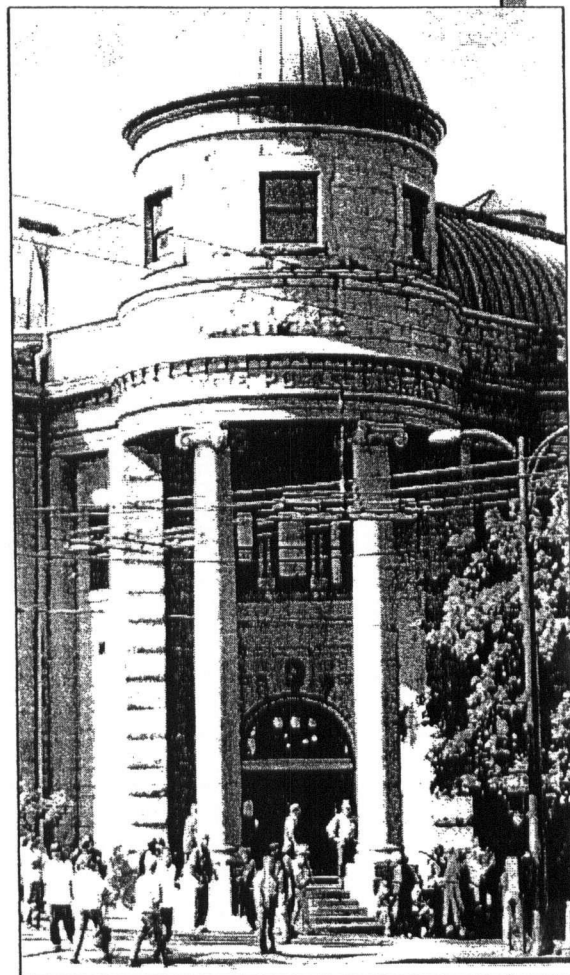
There is broad-based consensus on many aspects of this vision and less on others. This guide was written to describe the areas of general agreement and the ways in which people who do not live in this community can work with us to support this vision. It does not claim to represent all the views. Instead, it sets out to foster active discussion and dialogue about these important issues.

This guide was prepared through the Community Directions process during 2000, its first full year of community organizing. The writer was a community researcher and community development worker who prepared and tested the guide as part of a doctoral program at the University of British Columbia. The ideas presented in the guide are based on an extensive review of community documents, participation in the Community Directions process, interviews and focus groups with Community Directions members, and the writer's personal experience in community development in Downtown Eastside Strathcona.

The guide uses the first person plural, speaking as 'we' at the suggestion of Community Directions participants, because it expresses some of what residents and community organizations have been saying for many years. Pictures and poetry provide the words and images contributed by residents and agency representatives involved in this process. Quotes ensure Downtown Eastside Strathcona residents and agency representatives get the 'final word'.

The guide was written because participants in the Community Directions process feel that, if those making decisions about our community could understand our experience, they would be better able to work with us. We also want to respect each other's knowledge and expertise. When it comes to community-based development theory and practice, the residents and agencies of Downtown Eastside Strathcona are really the 'experts' and have much to teach 'professionals'. At the same time, many people who are not part of the community have knowledge and resources that can be very valuable to us in achieving our vision for the community.

This guide will describe some of the things resident and community organizations know about our community with the hopes of fostering meaningful dialogue and stronger relationships between all people and organizations who share our vision of a healthy, safe, and vibrant community.



Chapter 1 A Collective Experience into Words

The Downtown Eastside Strathcona is a very special community. It is a place of great diversity, unique talents, and a rich cultural heritage. Many people are working very hard to support and enhance these community strengths. In doing so, issues that are global in nature: poverty, discrimination, addictions, homelessness and unemployment, are being addressed. Resolving these issues is in everyone's interest. The Downtown Eastside becomes a better place for residents to live, and social justice is advanced in the larger community.

There are many organizations that make a significant contribution to the achievement of this vision. There are others who have a theoretical understanding of how to work in communities but do not understand the community reality and sometimes put up barriers in efforts to achieve the community vision. They 'get the words' of community development but miss the 'music'. Community Directions has compiled this guide to foster greater understanding and because so much more is accomplished when we understand each other and work 'in harmony'.

This Guide Will...

The guide is intended to be used by residents and community agencies to communicate some of our ideas about how community-based development can be undertaken. In achieving this overall purpose, the guide aims to:

- describe our community and a vision for the future
- teach others how to work in our community, and
- foster discussion so that we continually improve our ability to build community.

We think that in our story there are important lessons for other people and communities as well. We know from our own experience that you cannot live or work in Downtown Eastside Strathcona without learning about yourself and the society we live in, and thus being personally changed in some way.

Who Should Use It?

This guide is intended to be a tool to foster greater understanding between the Downtown Eastside Strathcona community and the larger 'community' including government, church groups, and non-profit agencies. Therefore, it is written to be used in several different ways.

Our Community

This guide is for us - the Downtown Eastside Strathcona community. Our community is comprised of residents, community associations, social service agencies and churches. We have worked together for many years, attended countless community meetings, and expressed our views in numerous plans and research projects. This guide will foster discussion in our community and can be used to articulate describe key aspects of the community's perspective.

Government Organizations

Although government policy is supportive of community-based approaches, many people working in government are not trained in community development, nor do they have knowledge of the day-to-day experiences of low-income people upon which to base their work. This guide, supported by training sessions, will help increase government's understanding of what community-based development means to the Downtown Eastside Strathcona community.

Non-profit Agencies

Non-profit groups and community agencies can use this guide to clarify their own directions in supporting the community. It can also be a training guide for new staff and board members.

The Final Word

*"I have a really important
message to give..."*

*...after being in so many
meetings through so
many decades here.*

You can say

I am an expert!"

Resident

Religious Organizations

There are many religious organizations that make huge contributions to the well-being of Downtown Eastside Strathcona residents. In fact, several are active and valued participants in Community Directions and other planning processes. But sometimes people who are motivated by benevolence can also do harm if they are not aware of the day-to-day realities of Downtown Eastside residents. This guide will help them better understand ways in which they can make their activities more community-based.

Institutions

Many institutions such as hospitals, schools, colleges, libraries, and public health organizations provide much needed services at the community level. However, institutional and community objectives sometimes are at odds. More dialogue between the two groups will contribute to more effective and accessible services.

Based on the Community Directions Process

Community Directions is a community-based planning process involving many community-based agencies and hundreds of residents. Community Directions was formed in the summer of 1999 through a lengthy community consultation and is supported by the City of Vancouver (The City), the National Crime Prevention Centre, Heritage Canada, and Status of Women Canada. During its formation, Community Directions worked with the City to achieve agreement on the principles that guide the process and to develop a work plan to support the work.

Community Directions is open and inclusive, taking steps to welcome all parts of the community. It organizes residents around issues important to them and provides community input into the way public resources should be used.

To support this work, Community Directions has formed working groups that coordinate planning on the different issues facing the community: alcohol and drugs, housing, health and safety, children and families, community economic development, and women's issues. Recognizing that these issues affect cultural groups differently, a First Nations Caucus, a Latino Working Group, and a

Chinese-speaking seniors discussion group, were also initiated. Like a fabric that weaves cultural perspectives and community issues, these groups are working on a planning process to address issues specific to them.

Many of the ideas introduced in this guide are based on the plans and discussion papers prepared by the issue working groups. The work of the culture-specific working groups is not yet included because they were just beginning their work when this guide was being prepared.

Included in this Guide

This Chapter provides an overview of whom the guide is written for and how it might be used. Chapter 2 introduces the Downtown Eastside Strathcona community, its strengths and challenges. In Chapter 3, community-based development is described and the principles explained. Chapter 4 summarizes the issues of concern to the community. Chapter 5 discusses how we work together to promote meaningful community development.

This guide is intended to engage readers in considering their views about the Downtown Eastside Strathcona community. To that end, each section ends by posing questions to help you reflect on and challenge your own ideas and views.

Community Directions Agreement

Both parties agree:

- *to address the root causes of crime such as drugs, alcohol, poverty, and homelessness*
- *to work together with respect, encouragement, support and training*
- *to work together for joint understanding and with respect for differences*
- *to make changes and undertake actions that make a difference in the lives of community members, particularly low-income residents*
- *to recognize the strengths, talents, and diversity within the area and to actively draw upon these qualities and resources in developing and implementing strategies that will create a healthier community*
- *that solutions must come from within the area and be directed, initiated, and, wherever possible, led by community people*
- *to welcome outside partners and resources which assist in meeting community goals and directions, and*
- *to establish a set of outcomes that will build a healthy and safe community.*

Community-based Training

This manual will be most effective if it is used as part of an interactive workshop delivered by residents because it is those who live in this community who are the best teachers about the experience of living in Downtown Eastside Strathcona. An interactive workshop that gives residents a chance to personally tell their story will ensure that the passion and the depth of understanding of residents is more effectively shared with outsiders. By taking this approach, we celebrate the skills and knowledge of this very dynamic community and contribute to community building from the inside-out.

Working Together

The fulfillment of the community vision cannot be achieved by residents and community agencies alone. Nor should it be. Downtown Eastside Strathcona is a vital part of our city, our province, and our country. We are all therefore part of the problem and we are all part of the solution. We invite people who support our vision to join us in this endeavor by sharing ideas, knowledge, skills, and resources as we build a community that fulfills its valuable role in the broader community.

Questions to Think About....

1. How are you involved in the Downtown Eastside Strathcona community and what have you learned about the community through that involvement? What are your sources of knowledge and information?
2. What ways does your organization work with Downtown Eastside Strathcona residents and community agencies? How does the way you work with the community affect how the community perceives your role?
3. Is communication with residents and agencies important in your work? What opportunities for honest and open communication do you see? What challenges to open communication do you experience?

Chapter 2 Our Community

The best place to begin thinking about community development 'from within' is with an understanding of the community itself. That understanding ensures that community development supports the community to be true to itself, to be authentic. While the best way to gain that understanding is by living and working in the community, an overview of key aspects of the community is useful for appreciating the role of community-based development in Downtown Eastside Strathcona.

This chapter describes Downtown Eastside Strathcona, providing a brief introduction to the people who live here and the history that has shaped it. It also shows that we are a community responding to change. The chapter will close by introducing a vision that the community is creating together, a vision of community-based development from within.



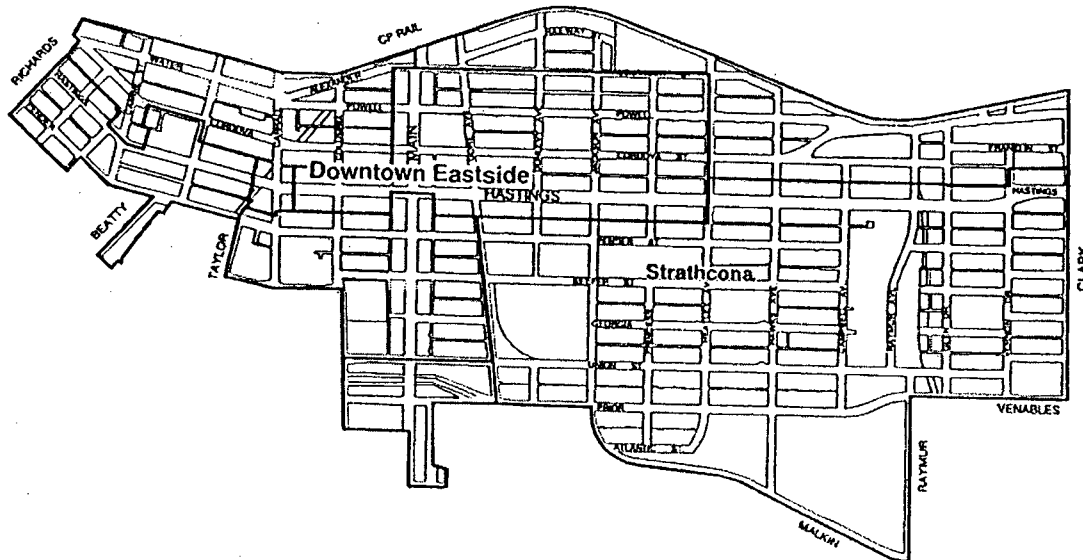
Photo: Colin Donovan

One Caring Community – Two Caring Neighbourhoods

Downtown Eastside Strathcona is a community of people who care. It is a place for low-income people to live close to the amenities of the city centre, where rents are affordable, and people know each other. It offers a streetscape that is rich in history and culture and extends a new home and new beginning for immigrants. It gives sanctuary for the homeless, and provides caring support services for those in need.

Downtown Eastside Strathcona is one of Vancouver's oldest districts, located in the very heart of the city. Map 2.1 shows that the Downtown Eastside Strathcona includes the area between Clark Drive on the East to Richards Street on the West and from the water to approximately Terminal Avenue.

From our perspective, there are two distinct neighbourhoods: Strathcona and Downtown Eastside. Although both neighbourhoods have very distinct characteristics, they are linked through history and shared experiences and generally work as one. Therefore, for the purposes of this guide, 'our community' refers to both.



Map 1 Downtown Eastside Strathcona Neighbourhoods

The People of Our Community

There are now approximately 16,000 people, primarily of low-income, living in Downtown Eastside Strathcona. The people who live here offer a wealth of skills, experience, and knowledge including:

- a sharing of First Nations' perspectives
- rich creativity expressed in music, art, writing, and performing arts
- diverse skills such as carpentry, furniture building, plantcare, public speaking, care-giving, facilitation, truck driving, accounting, planning, childcare, and much much more
- a rich and diverse bank of ideas and viewpoints
- skills in many languages and understanding of other cultures
- an ability to support others who are worse off than us
- a high degree of cooperation and communication among residents and community organizations, and
- skills to govern and manage community-based organizations that have a strong relationship with residents.

An overview of demographic characteristics of our community (age, gender, ethnic background, and income levels) shows that overall Downtown Eastside Strathcona is different from other Vancouver communities in terms of the age and gender makeup and diversity of the community and, most importantly, in terms of the experience of poverty.

The Final Word

*We are a small community but
we are rich in culture.*

Resident

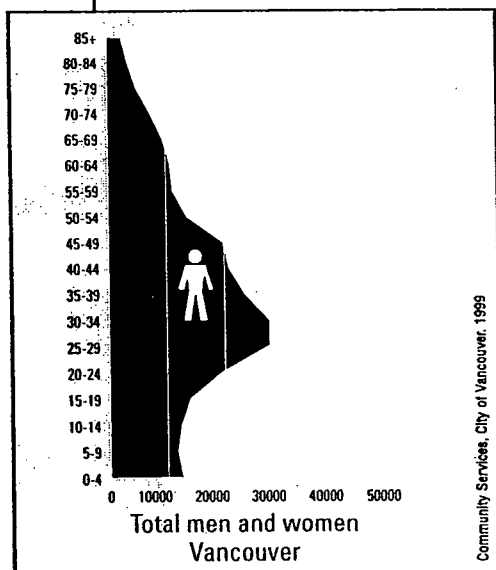
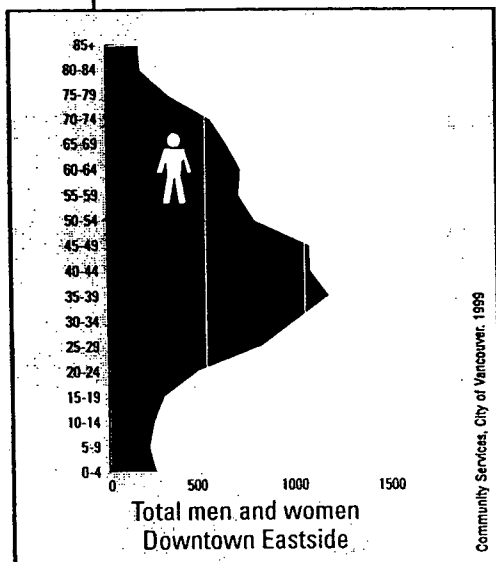


Figure 1

Age Composition

Figure 1 shows that the proportion of people in each age group is quite different from Vancouver as a whole, as is the number of men and women. Seniors comprise a large proportion of our population with about 27 percent of the population being over 65 while in the rest of Vancouver only 13 percent of the population are in this age group. The proportion of children and youth who live in our community (11 percent) is lower than other communities (19 percent in Vancouver). There are also more men than women. Among residents 35 – 70 years of age, 70 percent are male while in Greater Vancouver only 50 percent are male.

Diversity

Our community is very culturally diverse with 48 percent of the community representing visible minority groups. This diversity is further enhanced by people of different lifestyles. Our community is composed of:

- the residents of Chinatown, many of whose parents and grandparents helped to build this province
- a large number of First Nations people from many nations across this country
- many immigrants for whom our community is their first home in Canada

- many seniors who have raised families, served our country in major wars, and/or developed our resource industry
- low-income families, many of whom are supported by one parent
- gay, lesbian, heterosexual, bi-sexual, and transgendered men and women, and
- men and women who, for a wide range of social and economic reasons, are unable to work for wages at this time.

Income Levels

Figure 2 shows that income levels are also very different in the Downtown Eastside compared to the city as a whole. The average household income in our community is \$17,200, whereas in Vancouver it is \$48,087, close to three times

that of our community. These conditions of poverty are further accentuated for families. Thirty one percent of all two-parent families have no members active in the workforce. Twenty three percent of families are lone-parent families and, of those, 38 percent have no member of the household participating in the paid labour force.

These demographic characteristics suggest some of the issues that face our community and are of concern to Vancouver as a whole. However,

demographic data are often faceless, not reflecting the whole picture. Poverty can have a devastating affect on health and wellbeing and therefore demographic data should be interpreted to fully acknowledge this reality. Some aspects of the experience of poverty to keep in mind when considering this demographic profile are:

- because low-income people often age prematurely, the age at which community agencies consider a resident senior varies from 40 years of age and up, depending on the agency, and therefore, the proportion of seniors is actually higher than what can be discerned from the census data

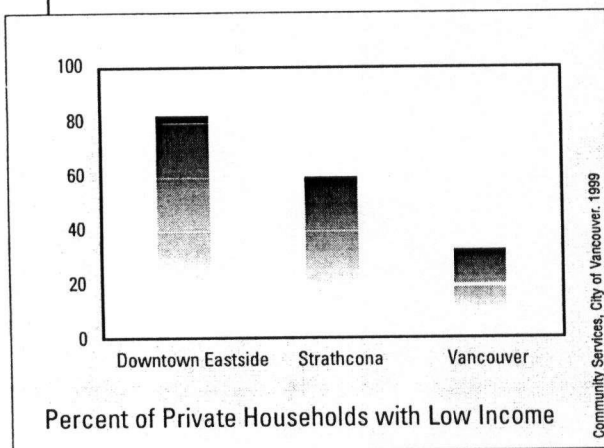


Figure 2

- despite the fact that the proportion of women is lower than other communities, women experience far more violence and abuse than other communities
- although the proportion of children and youth may be smaller than other parts of the city, far too many of the children of our community live in poverty and the experience of each child must be recognized, and
- while the proportion of youth reflected in census data appears low, in fact, the youth who gravitate to this community are highly transient and often 'at risk' and are generally not reflected in census data.

How did this community come to be a place that is so rich in culture and experience yet so economically impoverished? There are many factors at play and no simple answers.

A Glimpse of History

A glimpse of our history shows that the Downtown Eastside Strathcona, despite its rich cultural history, has a history of discrimination, poverty, and class struggle. This history shapes our community and must be understood when considering an appropriate future for our community.

First Nations

Like the entire lower Mainland area, the Downtown Eastside Strathcona area was historically part of Coast Salish territory. Stó:lo people call this territory 's'olhemexw', which in Halq'emeylem language means "our land" or "our world." After this area was colonized, the descendents of many original First Nations families continued to live here and others came from surrounding communities.

Over the years, many First Nations people moved here from reserves and urban areas across Canada bringing with them a rich foundation of culture, language, and traditions. They also brought with them a collective experience of injustice and discrimination through residential schools, loss of traditional lands, and cultural genocide.

A Working Class Area

The Downtown Eastside Strathcona, as we now know it, had its origin in 1867 as Stamp's Mill. The term "Skid Road" was originally assigned to Hastings Street as early as 1888 because loggers skidded logs down the Hastings strip towards the new Hastings Mill. This community was, in these very early years, a key residential area for the new port and mill town of Vancouver. As in many North American cities, when the street car system was introduced and mobility increased, families that could afford to moved to other areas of the city.

The Downtown Eastside Strathcona area continued as a working class neighbourhood.

As a port, this area became the landing area for much of the British Columbia resource economy including sawmills, mines, canneries, meat packing plants, and other industries. With this economic base, it was a natural focal point for union organizing and for protests by unemployed men during the Great Depression. The hotels in the area were, and continue to be, home to loggers, miners and fishermen who were either retired, on a disability, or out of work.



Photo: Robert Lemieux

New Immigrants

The Downtown Eastside Strathcona was historically the first home of many new Canadians. Many Japanese-Canadians lived in the Downtown Eastside neighbourhood, particularly the Oppenheimer area, which was the site of wholesale evacuation and internment in the early 1940s. Chinese-Canadians were also early settlers and, when the Chinese Immigration Exclusion Act was repealed after World War II, many more Chinese immigrants moved into the Strathcona neighbourhood. The area was home to a large black community who had moved here from the States in the early years of the City's history. In the 1970s and 1980s, Strathcona attracted many Vietnamese immigrants and the 1990s saw a significant influx of people from Hong Kong. Many of the

newcomers came to this area because they could find affordable housing and others because their families lived in the area.

Public Services

From very early on, Downtown Eastside Strathcona was disadvantaged in terms of public services. Historically, many people either did not vote or did not have a vote and the proportion of resident homeowners was less than other communities. As a result, the community did not get its share of public amenities. For example, we have a much lower proportion of park space than other communities and we do not have a public swimming pool. Housing was and continues to be substandard, with tenants in the hotels and rooming houses denied tenants rights until as late as 1989. Roads and alleys were, and continue to be, somewhat rundown and waterfront access is minimal.

Social Justice

In the post-war boom, the area became increasingly marginalized and service agencies providing food, clothing, and shelter were developed to help those in need. In this time period, churches such as First United Church, Saint James Anglican Church, the Salvation Army, Saint Paul's Catholic Church, and others played key roles, as they have up to the present day. In the early 70s, social justice movements began, in some cases out of church organizations in the area, intending to address the injustices and reverse the increasing trend of marginalization and victimization of low-income people in both communities. Many improvements were made and a network of community services developed to address identified needs.

The Downtown Eastside Residents Association (DERA) was formed in 1973 with the view to promoting community control in addressing conditions facing low-income people. The Downtown Eastside Women's Centre (DEWC) was formed by a group of community organizations in the mid-seventies to address the needs of local women. Residents of Strathcona formed SPOTA originally to stop redevelopment and promoted Strathcona as a neighbourhood for inner-city single family homes. Carnegie Community Centre, a history library built in 1903, was re-opened as a 'community living room' in 1980 following significant organizing by social activists in the community. Since that time, the DERA, DEWC, Carnegie Community Association, and many

other organizations built a rich history of social action and of working in partnerships with other community groups to create and support change.

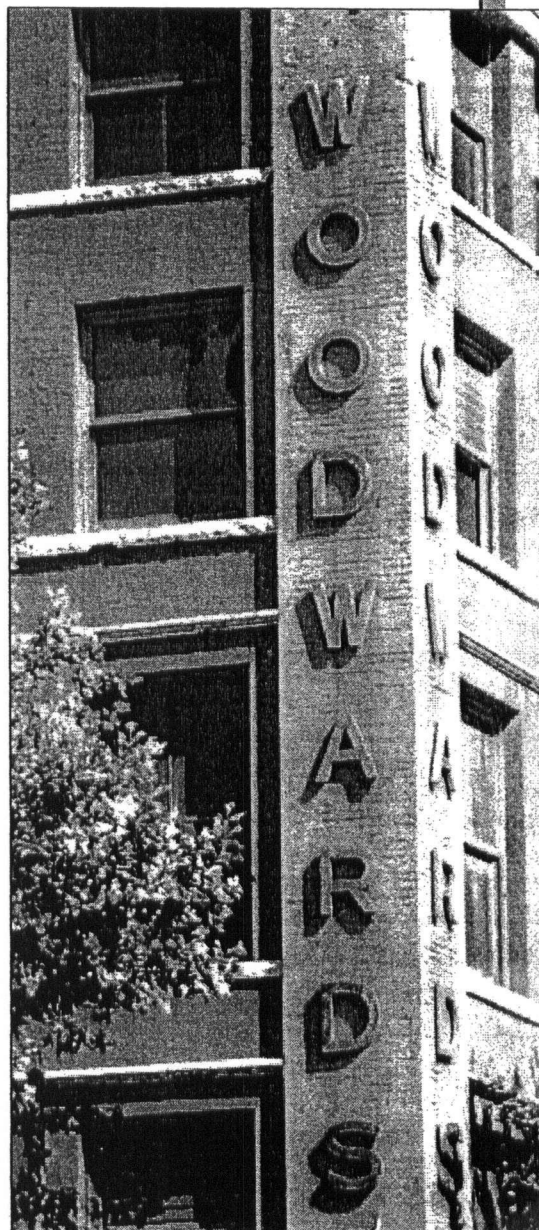
Economic Change

In the late 80s and early 90s, real estate prices throughout Vancouver were artificially inflated and buildings were bought by absentee landowners.

When the impact of the downturn in the Asian economy hit North America, buildings, owned by absentee landlords, could not be economically sold or developed. In the Downtown East Side, many businesses closed and the buildings were boarded up awaiting better economic times.

When Woodward's, a large department store at the hub of the community, could no longer compete in the global market, they also closed their doors. Services that our community counted on, such as the Food Floor, were no longer available. Other businesses that benefited from proximity to Woodward's, but which also directly served our community in important ways, soon followed suit. A trend of dis-investment had begun.

The local economy was also adversely affected by the continuing shift in British Columbia's labour market. Resource-based jobs like logging, mining, and millwork became fewer and fewer. The expanding labour market sectors were, and continue to be, the service and technology sectors. Many people in our community do not have the skills and education to compete



or jobs in the technology sector, therefore, the only jobs available are service-oriented, a relatively low paying sector. The combination of high cost of living and low wages exacerbated existing conditions of poverty.

Change in Drug Use

With the opening of borders and expansion of globalized trade in the early nineties, Vancouver became a port of call for the drug trade throughout North America. As a result, the local drug trade also accelerated, heroin and cocaine became very cheap and readily accessible. This change in drug use dramatically increased the infection rate for HIV/AIDs and Hepatitis C amongst intravenous drug users. And the use of heroin and crack cocaine became very visible in Downtown Eastside streets.

Gentrification

Economic and social change has been further aggravated by gentrification of our community. Gentrification occurs when people with money start buying houses and other real estate in a community with the belief that, if they invest in the property, land prices will inevitably increase. Over time, gentrification becomes an ongoing pressure for re-development, and as a result, rental costs increase, ethnic and economic diversity diminishes, and single room occupancy hotels become converted to tourist accommodation. Housing options for low-income people become further limited and conflict between some of the business and condominium owners and low-income residents occurs.

In our community, there is now pressure from landowners and business owners to 'clean-up the streets'. Some complain about 'unsavory' characters and lobby for a panhandlers by-law. Some also sometimes use their substantive political and economic clout to prevent much needed services from being provided arguing that the services impact on the business environment.

The Final Word

*"We do ourselves a disservice
by denying the global reality
of this phenomenon
— poverty is everywhere.*

Resident

A Cumulative History

This very brief overview of the history of our community shows that our strength is based on a cumulative history of diverse peoples who make this community home. It shows that poverty in the Downtown East Side cannot be blamed on any single factor, rather it is the result of a history of discrimination and economic disadvantage. It also suggests that there are economic pressures on the community over which the people who live here have very little control.

Remembering this history is crucial because it reflects back to us an important part of who we are and reminds us of our humanity in the midst of struggle. For us, as a community that wants to develop a healthy and safe community for all residents, including those on low-income, this history has created tensions in the community and pressures that influence our ability to achieve our goals.

A Community Under Pressure

Although the Downtown Eastside Strathcona is the poorest community in Canada, it is under constant pressure from many directions. The community feels that if this pressure continues, low-income people will, over time, lose their homes and be dispersed to other communities. People will lose connection with their friends, families, neighbours, and support structures. And it will be a great loss to our community and to Vancouver overall.

Because the community responds to this pressure, it is seen as a 'hotbed of political mobilization'. It is often said that Downtown Eastside Strathcona is very political and always engaged in 'in-fighting'. Some of us see this

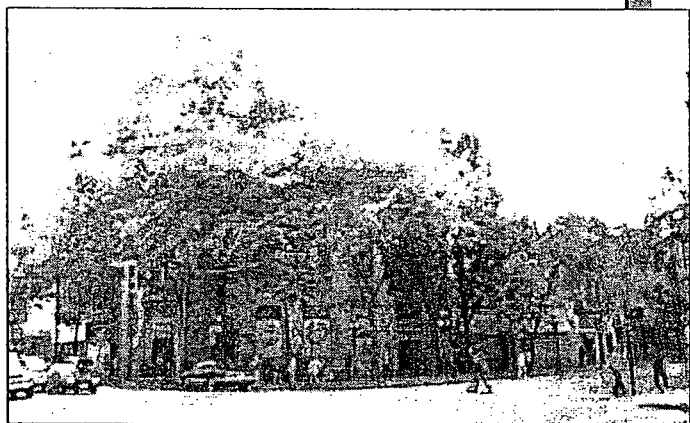
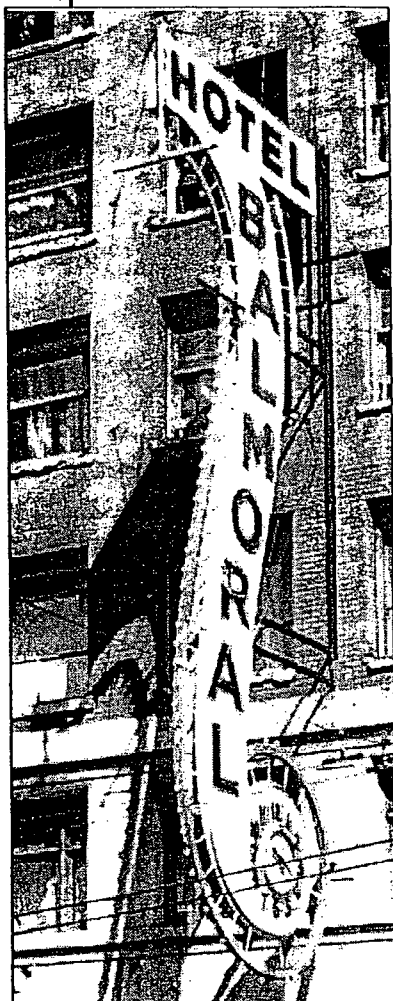


Photo: Robert Lemieux

as valid criticism, and others see difference in viewpoint as understandable given the pressures on the community. It is important, however, that this argument not be used as a way to silence low-income people or justify decisions being made without community input.



Difference in Views

In our struggle to be heard, there is diversity of views and of expression. This is a characteristic of any democracy, rich or poor. Because our community is very diverse, it is difficult, and often not even appropriate, to speak with only one voice. Difference in views is therefore healthy and encouraged.

With respect to internal conflict, we have no more and no less conflict than the private sector, other communities, or government departments. Conflict in our community, like in many other venues, is about resources. Most companies and government bodies have well understood processes for allocating resources. We do not. Very often decisions are made based on a single strong voice or on a very limited consultation in the community.

The issues that people in our community deal with are painful, life and death issues. When an organization's ability to address these issues are adversely affected, resolution understandably does not come easy. Unfortunately, because of the sensationalization of poverty and abuse in our

community, there is intense scrutiny focused on these conflicts. This scrutiny makes the conflict worse, impacting our ability to build community.

Being Silenced

It is our experience that low-income people are silenced in many ways. One of the most common ways is when 'professionals' with education and resources attend meetings to tell us what is right for us. With the power and money that comes with education and money, well-meaning people can easily be intimidating, and as a result, our voices are silenced.

As well, many residents do not speak English. Yet many public services and processes are only conducted in English, or when public documents are translated into Cantonese, Vietnamese or Spanish, this translation occurs long after the English version is released. As a result, many non-English speaking residents are silenced.

We are silenced by the lack of care about the well-being of people in our community. Women go missing but their disappearance does not result in the same attention a missing woman in another community would attract. Men and women are dying of drug overdoses in record numbers, deaths which could have been prevented. When residents seek drug and alcohol treatment, there are waiting lists. These conditions silence us because we feel that no one cares.

Some members of our community also feel silenced by other community members. Efforts by some residents to 'shame the johns' and harass sex-trade workers makes some women in our community feel unwelcome anywhere. These efforts result in women working in more isolated areas of the community where they are even more at risk of violence.

Lastly, the media plays a role in silencing people. Seldom does a week go by without a sensational Downtown Eastside story in the local press. Not only does the press focus attention on the negative parts of our community, they also neglect the positive aspects, particularly the significant contributions made to the community by many people in many, many venues. With conditions such as these, we cannot help but feel that our voice is meaningless.

The Final Word

"I have lived this life..

I have cleaned up...

I try to use my experience to

help others...I work hard

...but I still feel silenced and

feel like my ideas are ignored"

Resident

Being 'Done to'

As one of the most impoverished communities in Canada, we are now a focal point for government investment, private-sector development and university interest. The Downtown Eastside Strathcona attracts the interest of many well-intentioned politicians, university instructors, students, artists, churchgoers, public servants, and citywide social service agencies who want to 'improve our community'.

However, they often do not fully consult with the community, involve us in planning for much needed services and infrastructure, or use the knowledge we have built up over years of experience. Examples of situations where community members have felt 'done to' include:

- the urban redevelopment in Strathcona in the 60s and 70s resulting in the building of 'project' style housing units
- the renovation of Gastown in the late 60s
- the conversion of hotels for Expo 86
- the opening of the University of British Columbia (UBC) Downtown Eastside Initiative office without a full community-based planning process, and
- the Vancouver Agreement, a new intergovernmental commitment to "work with residents of Downtown Eastside Strathcona to develop a healthy, sustainable community" which has a limited role for the community compared to the role of other partners.

Many of these developments have resulted in a difference of views within the community and a silencing of voices of low-income people in the development of this

The Final Word

*"Everyone has their
community development
rhetoric and sometimes that
is all it seems to be
...they come here and they
don't consult, they lobby
segments of the community
to support whatever
their initiative is..."*

Agency Representative

community. The Community Directions process provides an opportunity to engaged this difference of viewpoint in a positive way by giving low-income people a voice and supporting residents to create a vision for this community.

Downtown Eastside Strathcona as a Vision

Many residents of Downtown Eastside Strathcona have a vision upon which to strengthen this community, a vision which builds on our very rich history and the strengths and diversity of residents, while at the same time energetically addressing the issues that face us.

We are proud of our role as a community where low-income people are welcome, respected, and seen as valued contributors. Our aim is to promote a 'poor-friendly' community in which we all work together to make this a better place for everyone to live. Downtown Eastside Strathcona offers an opportunity to address historic injustices and current social justice issues in a way that respects community history and contributes to the wellbeing of future generations. We hope to respond to this opportunity by developing and maintaining ongoing community-based processes for decision-making that are as inclusive of all parts of the community as possible.

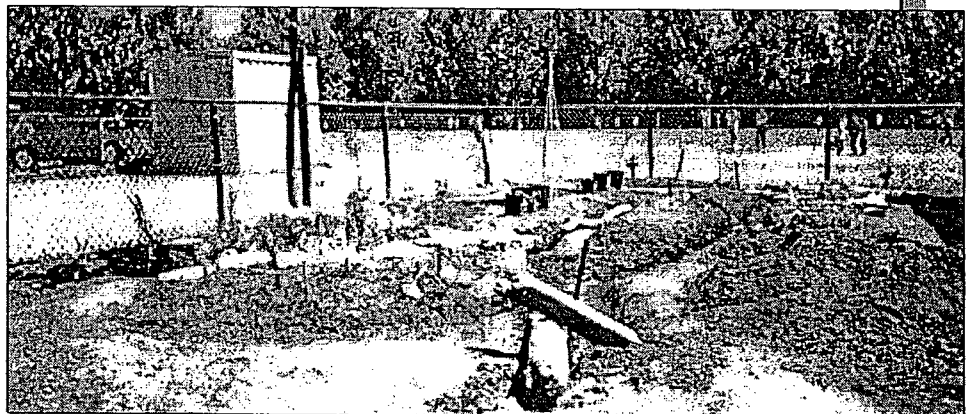


Photo: Haedy Mason

Questions to Think About....

1. How is Downtown Eastside Strathcona unique? How is this community different from other communities you have worked in? What do you see as its strengths and challenges?
2. What do you think is the role of collective history in understanding community?
3. How would your life be different if you were on social assistance or disability pension? What is the impact of poverty on your family and circle of friends? What impact does poverty have in communities and Canadian society overall?

Chapter 3 Community-Based Development

The Downtown Eastside Strathcona community believes that the best way to make this area a better place for all residents is to work together using a community-based development approach. Community-based development is what happens when a group of people comes together to make decisions and take action to build on their strengths, address issues that emerge in their community, and improve their community in the best way for them.

There are many different ways to approach community-based development. Because we have worked together for many years and on many difficult issues, we have a shared understanding of some of the principles and approaches that will foster meaningful change. This approach has similarities to community development in other places, but also has important differences.

Community-based development is from the inside out. It is based on a set of people-centred principles. There are also strategies and development tools to support these strategies. This Chapter will describe how the Downtown Eastside Strathcona community, expressed in the Community Directions process, sees community-based development.

The Final Word

*"It is a healthy community
when it has an opportunity to
lead itself and be itself."*

- John McKnight

From The Inside Out

This is our community, our home. And like any home, the people who live here are the heart of it and have many skills, abilities and knowledge to share with each other. As shown in Figure 3, we join together as a community in associations, groups, clubs and churches. Our home is further enhanced by linkages to the broader community through organizations such as schools, parks, colleges, businesses, hospitals, and libraries. Our foundation is comprised both of strengths to be celebrated and a painful history to be understood and addressed.

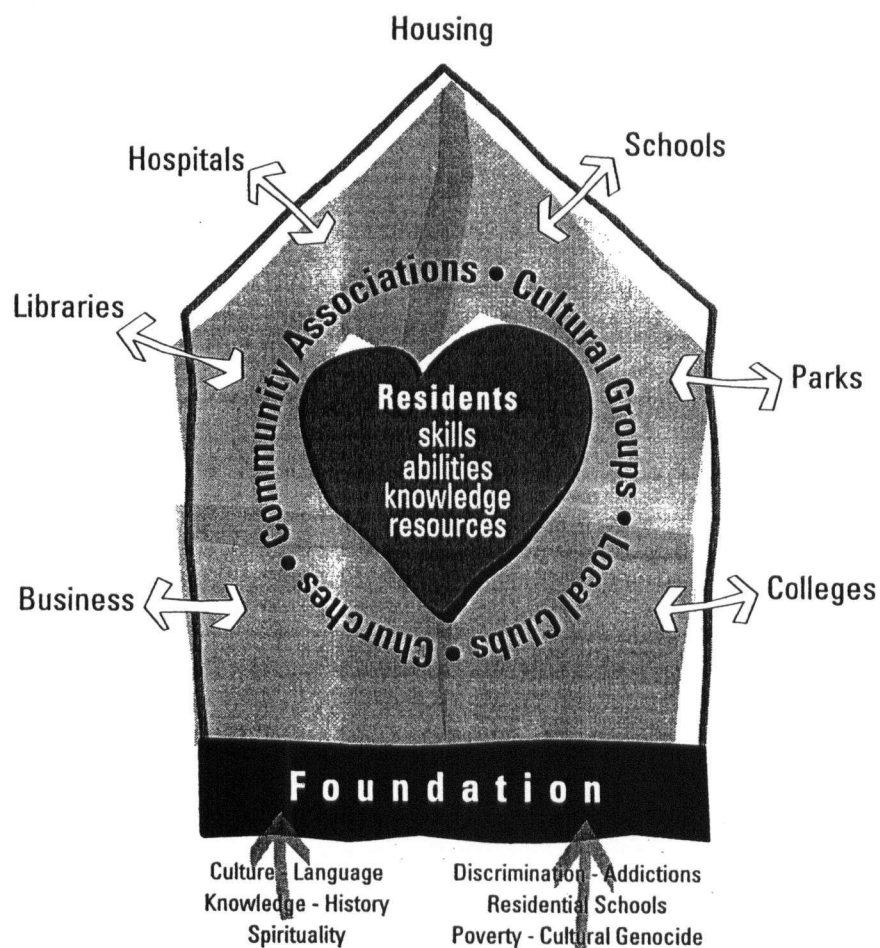


Figure 3 Our Community – From the Inside Out

Guiding Principles

The principles of appropriate community based development are:

- low-income people are welcome and have an equal right to live and feel accepted in our community.
- development empowers residents when it is based on assets rather than needs
- our community is stronger and everyone is better off if the root causes of poverty are understood and addressed
- the diversity of the community is valued and celebrated
- all residents must feel safe and be treated with respect
- the community is to be viewed as a whole, rather than as disparate people and issues,
- the voice of residents is the basis for decision-making, and
- much more is achieved when we are united and work collaboratively than when we are alone.

A deeper understanding of each of these principles shows that there are unique characteristics of our community that must be considered.

A Place for Lower Income People

As we showed in Chapter 2, early on in our history, Downtown Eastside Strathcona was primarily a community of low-income people. With the change in the housing demand and the increasing demand on the land in our community, there is an opportunity for 'gentrification' that the larger Vancouver community sees as progress.

We see progress differently. While we would like to see the housing stock in the community upgraded, we want to ensure that Downtown Eastside Strathcona is maintained as a place where low-income people can live, have access to affordable housing, and retain the sense of culture and history that makes us who we are.

Thinking of Assets Differently

In our community, everyone is viewed as having something very important to offer and as having the skills to contribute. However, when governments think about the assets of a community, they often list the roads, buildings, businesses, physical services, and tax base. They also focus on the problems, particularly in low-income areas. While these assets need to be counted and issues talked about, we think that the most important asset in our community is the people who live here. It is these assets that form the best foundation for development.

As shown in Chapter 2, the residents of Downtown Eastside Strathcona are tradespeople, artists, parents, activists, athletes, and more. We speak many languages and come from many, many cultures. We have great survival skills and we care a lot about each other. This is where we should start, not with our needs or deficits. We intend to build on the assets of all our residents, the skills, dreams, and strengths that we offer each other on a daily basis. These skills, dreams, and strengths are the basis of our strategies to create a healthier community.

Root Causes of Poverty

Very often low-income Canadians are blamed for poverty in our communities. This blame is then internalized to make each individual and family's struggle for day to day survival even more difficult. Community-based development helps people name the root causes of poverty so that internalized oppression is controlled, and we are all able to address the real issues of concern. The root cause of poverty for each person is unique but overall poverty is rooted in the following experiences:

- social and economic inequality
- overall societal unemployment
- insufficient education
- discrimination on the basis of color, gender, sexual orientation, and ability

- homelessness
- experience of addictions
- physical and sexual abuse
- mental and physical illness, and
- chronic depression and lack of inclusion.

These issues, un-addressed, lead to a never ending, multi-generational cycle which is very difficult to escape.

Support through shared understanding and common visions can make a difference, yet, creating a shared understanding and common vision is often challenging. It is often very difficult for low-income people to have the basic resources needed to work as volunteers on revitalization projects, consultation processes, advisory committees, or in community services. For many people living in poverty, time is spent keeping our bellies full and getting basic needs met. On income assistance, many of residents:

- spend time in food line-ups
- walk to appointments rather than take the bus
- live in inadequate housing where our sleep is disrupted by rats, vermin, criminal activity, and noise
- have low energy because of inadequate nutrition
- are treated disrespectfully by local businesses and some service agencies
- do not have sufficient access to health care and alcohol and drug treatment, and
- get depressed because our options are so limited.

These conditions are a type of trauma that impact how we work together and make it hard so that its hard to feel part of society as a whole. Understanding of, and discussion about, this experience is important to healing and to working together.

The Final Word

*"My heart goes out to those less
fortunate than me down here.*

Resident

Celebrating Diversity

As a very heterogeneous community, our friends and neighbours are from many different ethnic backgrounds and speaking many different languages and are First Nations people representing nations across Canada and the Americas. We are also: single parents, parents with children 'in care', single men, single women and families, and young, middle-aged, old or old long before their time.

Additionally, our life experiences are diverse and these experiences contribute to the uniqueness of our community. Thus, we include people in our community who:

- live in many different types of conditions including hotels, houses and on the street
- have criminal records
- are addicts or recovering addicts
- have a mental illness, and
- make an income in many different ways, from doctors to lawyers to binnners to sex-trade workers.

We think is very important to be respectful and non-judgmental regardless of life circumstance. This diversity endows us with a phenomenal richness in arts and culture as can be seen in the community centres, cultural centres, and in the street. However it also presents challenges.

In building on diversity as a strength, how can we ensure people of different languages are always included and First Nations cultures are appropriately incorporated in our understanding of our community? What do we need to do differently so that people with a mental illness have sufficient opportunities to have their say, and those with addictions are always treated with

The Oppenheimer Park Totem Pole

It seems to me
that when someone dies
it is the responsibility
of those of us
who are left
to offer caring
for that life
for that death
in the intensity
of the love
that reaches out
from the unendurable loneliness
of our separation.

So did First Nations people,
with their friends and allies,
raise a totem pole
in Oppenheimer Park
on June 6, 1998;
to remember the community
of those who have died
in the Downtown Eastside,
and so rededicate themselves
to the struggle
for hope and for justice
from one generation to another.

Sandy Cameron 1998

respect? We do not have all the answers but we are working on it ...and we invite you to join us in making it work.

Respect and Safety for All

Traditionally, in Canadian society, respect has meant to 'treat others as you would like to be treated'. What would this mean in a community where your day-to-day experience is so unlike ours? Other ways to look at respect include:

- treating others the way you would like to be treated if you were in a similar situation
- trying to understand the day to day experience of others so that you can validate it in a meaningful way
- understanding the role each Canadian plays in keeping people poor in our country
- recognizing the power many people have over others just because they have more education, a job, more money and more contacts, and
- giving back power that is gained through unfair means.

Respect is demonstrated through communication. When people professionalize their communication, speak 'bureaucratese', and obviously do not feel comfortable in our community, barriers to communication are set up from the very beginning. All of us need to be able to be ourselves, speak from our hearts, and try to really hear what the community is saying even if it challenges us.

Respect is also demonstrated through caring. When people have been hurt through prejudice, abuse, violence or poverty, they feel emotionally tattered. Gentleness and acceptance is needed to help those who have been marginalized in this way to feel included and combat the loneliness of poverty. Sometimes as a result of personal experiences of violence, abuse, discrimination and neglect, people act in ways that negatively impact those around them. We can show we care while providing the supports needed to help people take responsibility for their own wellbeing.

Safety 'for all' means that not only is property crime reduced but as importantly, panhandlers are not hassled, sex trade workers are protected from violence, and violence of any sort, including police violence, is not tolerated.

Inclusion means that everyone is accepted for who they are and all voices are heard. Children and youth are nurtured and mentored. The involvement of people with barriers is supported. Everyone is welcomed and respected.

Recognizing the Whole Community

We are working to create a meaningful community agenda in which relationships between all aspects of our community are recognized and addressed holistically. In adopting this approach, we seek balanced development in which employment concerns are not separated from housing, nor health care from education. Similarly, the economic structures of the Downtown Eastside Strathcona are not improved without ensuring housing is provided for all low-income people. Nor is crime reduced without addressing the health issues in our community.

Promoting Inclusive Resident Involvement

The best way to ensure that we can continue to be a community for low-income people, and build our community from our strengths rather than our weaknesses, is through resident involvement. Through resident involvement, we access homegrown solutions, the collective wisdom of community residents, and ideas to which community members are committed. When residents make decisions about the future of the community, we are empowered with control over our lives. This experience of control is essential for human dignity and community development.

The Final Word

*"We need to accept that
everyone has information
... we don't gain the value
of everyone's contribution unless
we open up our pain ... to hold
on to our pain means we have
to be closed to others ideas...
we have to risk getting
past that".*

Resident

We strive to include all voices of the community in the best way possible. This means that:

- all parts of the community are represented
- diverse opportunities for input, other than just through meetings, are provided
- when possible, services are provided in the languages of people we serve
- those members of our community who, for whatever reason, have difficulty in having their voices heard will be supported
- barriers such as the need for transportation, childcare, translation and food will be addressed
- everyone will be treated as equals
- plain, everyday language will be used rather than jargon
- communication will be two-way
- residents time will be used effectively, and
- our voices will make a difference.

We recognize that to be inclusive is a lifelong endeavor for all of us, individually, and for our community as a whole. But a necessary one if we are to realize a society that is more inclusive of low-income and marginalized people.

The Final Word

*"When we listen to people,
it empowers them,
it builds leadership"*

Resident

Tools of Community-based Development

This community has built up a lot of experience over the years, put a lot of thought into the issues that face us, and undertaken our own research about how to fulfill these principles in the best way possible. Thus, we have compiled a toolkit to help us fulfill the principles of meaningful community-based development. This toolkit, aimed at ensuring residents promoting development 'from within', includes:

- community organizing to make sure community members are informed and involved
- conducting research and evaluation in a participatory way that reflects an understanding of our experience
- using community planning tools, such as asset inventories and community indicators, that build community rather than simply focus on needs
- developing collaborative organizational structures, and
- supporting community economic development.

In adopting these approaches, we are highly coordinated and increasingly united in our determination to have community residents heard.

Community Organizing

Community organizing has historically been one of the most effective tools to promote change on behalf of low-income people. It is a process whereby people without power learn about their own power and how to use it.

Community organizing involves the active mobilization of residents concerned about specific issues in order to generate social action and a collective voice with more power than a 'lone voice in the wilderness'. This is achieved

The Final Word

*"They say they are 'working
under a
time pressure'.
Tell me the time?
'Within a week'
No problem for me...
I will get a hundred people
within two days,
they come, they all come, they
spread the word
This is public consultation.
To send a representative, that's
a gesture of consulting the
public.
I don't like that..."*

through community forums, marches, protests, letter-writing campaigns, and other non-violent protest methods. As shown in Figure 4, our experience with community organizing is a continuum of approaches developed over time and, in that continuum, there is ongoing tension between political and social action, advocacy and community-based planning, development, and management.



Figure 4 Continuum of Community Organizing Approaches

We move back and forth along this continuum based on the degree to which residents are heard. Political and social action is sometimes viewed as the best way to ensure low-income communities are heard. Through many years of hard work, we have evolved to a point where we seek active involvement in community-based planning. When we are not heard, we understandably use the knowledge we have gained in political action in a very strategic way, protecting the role of residents to have a voice in community-based planning and decision-making.

Participatory Research and Evaluation

Most organizations need to do research to better understand issues or to evaluate programs. Traditionally, research is conducted to answer a question that either the researcher or an organization is interested in knowing something about. Evaluation is often required and undertaken by a funder to determine the degree to which objectives are met and whether the service will continue to be funded. In both approaches, the researcher or evaluator controls the research by setting the question, choosing the research method, selecting research subjects, collecting data in ways that work for them, analyzing the data based on their own knowledge, and reporting the data in a way that is accessible to other researchers.

In participatory research and participatory evaluation, the people being researched are the researchers. The process includes all voices, funder, clients, staff, organization, and community. As the researchers learn about the topics being explored, they take action to address the issues identified. The objective is not so much to measure the phenomena or to fulfil objectives but more to gather information and develop ideas that strengthen the program and better serve the residents. Very often the conclusions are different than with traditional research and, in many cases, much more useful to the information needs of the community.

Asset Inventories /Community Mapping

One way to clearly identify the strengths or assets of our community is through an asset inventory. An asset inventory is undertaken to bring people with common interests together. It also helps us to identify what is needed to support development from the inside-out. If we are to base development on our strengths, we need to know about the:

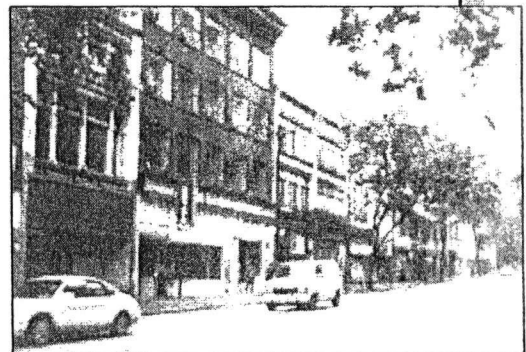
- skills of residents
- ways in which residents come together in informal groups and associations
- businesses that would like to be involved

- institutions that are in the community and what they have to offer and
- priorities that residents have for a community agenda.

Assets are identified through resident surveys and by mapping the information to see the relationships that exist and the relationships that can be built. Residents who participate in the asset inventory are then connected with others who share concerns or ideas for community projects they would like to undertake. The community has quite a few resources on this subject and many people have taken training in asset-based community development. These resources are available for loan to those people and organizations interested in supporting our work. As well, community organizations are available to provide training on this subject if required.

Community Indicators

In the past, health, safety, and economic well-being was measured by outsiders, setting 'objective' indicators and collecting data that showed whether these indicators improved or not. Community indicators are quality of life and sustainability indicators developed by the community in a process that selects relevant measures based on the community's values and life experience. One indicator of safety is the number of charges laid for assault. A community member may add to this the number of 'bad dates' submitted to the bad date sheet. The additional knowledge and experience ensures that the way of measuring changes in quality of life is fully reflective of the experience of all residents.



Developing Collaborative Organizational Structures

Our commitment is to build community and provide a continuum of support by working collaboratively. When we work together collaboratively, we achieve several community goals:

- the network of resources for community members is improved and referrals and supports are thus strengthened
- we avoid competing amongst ourselves which is destructive to community
- we are able to access a wider range of resources
- organizational capacity is increased
- community facilities and resources are used more efficiently
- accountability is shared and more broadly based, and
- our capacity for community building is enhanced.

There are many different structures for collaboration. It could simply be informally shared resources and space. One organization could sponsor a specific organization or initiative. A network or consortium could be formed to coordinate a specific set of services. Coalitions are particularly useful as a vehicle for community organizing. Finally, a group of organizations and residents may come together to form a separate organization such as a community development corporation to meet the community social and economic goals.

Collaboration, however, presents some challenges including:

- it takes a lot more time
- communication is very important and sometimes difficult to achieve
- incompatibilities in organizational procedures and policies of each organization must be addressed
- some organizations have more power than others in collaborative activities, and
- the funder often expects collaborative activities to save money rather than require additional resources.

Despite these challenges, by working together through the Community Directions and other community processes to achieve collective goals with mutual understanding and respect for differences, we build our collective strength.

Community Economic Development

Community economic development is undertaken when the community addresses underlying social and economic issues by assuming some control of economic structures. In its simplest terms, community economic development is the application of community development principles to the way in which land is owned, goods are produced, community infrastructure is established, people are employed, and money is exchanged. Community economic development is most effective when it:

- is broad-based and comprehensive
- provides strategies for strengthening ownership, increasing access to credit, providing for education, training and employment and building local capacity for planning and partnerships
- links social and economic goals
- empowers residents
- involves strategic planning and analysis
- applies solid financial management principles, and
- fulfills its roles through a community development corporation.

There are many ways to do that but the approach that our community is working on is the development of a community development corporation.

A community development corporation is a non-profit corporation that supports greater community ownership and creates community equity by planning and implementing comprehensive strategies to meet community social and economic goals. A community development corporation can get involved in housing development, employment and training development, investment, providing access credit for small businesses, and more. A community development corporation is governed by people from the community and usually involves strong partnerships with government, credit unions, other business, labour or others committed to the same vision.

Working In and With the Community

The Downtown Eastside Strathcona community welcomes people and groups from outside the community who wish to support us in making this community stronger and healthier. However, like anyone's home, you need to knock and be invited in. There are many ways to achieve this. Some ways that have worked for other people include:

- introducing themselves to a community organization by getting involved as a volunteer
- coming to community meetings to hear our issues, concerns, and needs
- respecting our right to invite them in immediately or staying on the doorstep for awhile until we feel comfortable
- supporting our right to make decisions about our own community
- offering their resources and support through an existing community agency rather than creating a new one, and
- doing their work in a way that respects community priorities.

Your work, when undertaken in this way, supportive of community development for and by the people of the community, is a highly valued contribution to achieving our goal of making the Downtown Eastside Strathcona a better place for everyone.

The Final Word

*"...some of these researchers
keep coming back...they would
never go into Martha's house
the way they have come into
this house, there would be a
whole lot more respect, and that
is because they give that person
respect...they haven't given
the community."*

Agency representative

Questions to Think About....

1. How are the principles of community-based development reflected in your work and in your life overall?
2. How can you ensure resident voices are heard?
3. How would your work be changed if you used community assets as a starting point?
4. How do you reflect the spirit of collaboration and partnership in your work?

Chapter 4 Understanding the Issues

Appropriate community-based development requires an in-depth understanding of the issues that affect residents and action to address these issues that is strategic and responsive. As mentioned, Community Directions set up six working groups to identify some of the issues residents are concerned about and to explore appropriate solutions for this community. This chapter describes some of the findings so far in each area and some of the things currently being planned to strengthen our community 'from within'. Keep in mind that, as we learn more about each issue, and especially as the First Nations Caucus, Latino Working Group, and Chinese-speaking Seniors Discussion Group have the opportunity to develop their ideas and plans, these issues and plans to address them will change.

Housing

It is our experience that society as a whole discriminates against low-income people through inadequate provision of livable and affordable housing. We are proud of the role Downtown Eastside residents and organizations play in calling attention to this issue. This work, aimed at ensuring that sufficient low-income housing is provided, is critical if our community is to continue to be a place where low-income people can live. Our ability to achieve our goals in this regard is strongly impacted by development pressure.

Housing Issues

Housing has been a key issue in our community for many, many, years. The main housing issues in our community are:

- homelessness
- unsafe and unhealthy housing conditions

Did you know that?

It was only in 1989, after much lobbying and picketing that the Residential Tenancy Act was amended to give residents of single room occupancy hotels the tenant protection enjoyed by other Canadians.

- conversion and demolition of low-income housing
- gentrification, and
- exploitation of residents by landlords.

While the number of homeless people is unknown, many are effectively homeless because of poor housing conditions. Many people live in single room occupancy hotels (SROs) with a shared washroom and kitchen. These rooms are considered 'affordable' at \$325 per month but a comparison of costs based on the square footage shows that the cost per square foot of an SRO is typically about \$3.25 while an average one bedroom apartment is \$1.15 per square foot.

Residents of the SROs speak of walking the streets because they are too afraid to sleep in their rooms because of cockroaches and rats. Landlords routinely evict people for having 'guests'. And other landlords simply buy rent cheques from people for a significant fee and then 'rent' out their room to multiple tenants.

While SROs are substandard, they do provide an option where often none other exists. However, this housing is also under threat. As shown in Table 1, the total number of units for low-income

Housing Crisis in the Downtown Eastside

*Old man
alone
in a basement room.
You've outlived your time, you say.
You hope that maybe sleep will come
to end your loneliness
It wasn't always so.
You traveled in our country coast to coast,
and built the bridges crossing wild rivers.
You sweated as a miner,
and like a meteor you came to town
shaken by the bleakness
of the northern camps*

*You found an old-time boarding house
near Main and Hastings,
and lived with friends
until that cunning pack of money makers
destroyed your home,
not caring where you went.
A few just died,
and solved the housing problem in that way.
Some left town.
You wondered to a basement room
alone.*

*I greet you, friend,
and wait to hear stories you have lived
Tell me our heritage
that is not found in school books.
Tell me of those who really built this nation.*

Sandy Cameron 1998

housing has decreased since 1991. The decline is directly related to closures and conversions of SRO hotels. In fact, SRO hotels are being converted at a much higher pace than social housing is being constructed.

Year	Non-market	SRO	Total
1991	3,609	5,809	9,418
1996	3,961	5,606	9,567
1999	4,132	5,268	9,400

Community Directions. 2001

Figure 5 Low-income Housing in the Downtown Eastside

As SROs are being converted and social housing built at a modest pace, condominium development is occurring at a rapid pace. At present, there are plans for 17,000 new housing units in the surrounding areas to the north, south and east of the Downtown Eastside. About 8,000 of these units have already been built. The development of housing for middle and upper income home buyers at this pace will change the nature of the community, making it a less welcoming place for low-income residents.

We are also concerned about appropriate housing for families. There are families in our community who have, in the past, been evicted from public housing. As a result, children have been forced to live in a hotel, a bus ride away from their neighbourhood, school, friends and recreation activities. One of the mandates of public housing is to provide housing for families who, for whatever reason, are hard to house. We want to see this mandate fully, equitably, and creatively implemented so that all children are living in a safe stable home.

The Final Word

*There are many, many people
out there on the streets,
it ain't because they are
homeless, they have rooms
but the rooms their rooms aren't
worth going back to.*

Resident

The Community Housing Plan

The Community Directions Housing Working Group has prepared a draft plan based on significant consultation with residents and community organizations. This new plan suggests eight important measures to address housing issues in Downtown Eastside Strathcona:

- the maintenance of Downtown Eastside Strathcona as a neighbourhood accessible to low-income residents
- the creation of a residential hotel conversion and demolition control by-law
- development of the Woodward's Building for affordable housing and community services
- the zoning of land in a way that supports community goals
- the creation of a land trust to build equity for affordable housing
- the promotion and enforcement of standards of management
- the maintenance of dwelling unit size standards and a commitment to relaxing this standard when test criteria are met, and
- the expansion of rent protection to SROs through public education and test cases.

The development of the Draft Downtown Eastside Housing Plan through a community process ensures that housing issues are understood, the community is involved in housing analysis, and resident input into housing and land-use planning is supported. It provides a good foundation for the next steps: more dialogue and discussion with the community and its partners and, ultimately, the implementation of this community-based plan.

Laurie's Poem

*You slowly crept into my life
Before I knew it
I couldn't keep away from you
You were there pretending to comfort my
pain and sorrow
You were the only one that mattered to me
I thought you were giving me life
But what I did not realize
You were sucking life out of me, inch by inch
I stayed and defended you with all my
friends
Not listening to them telling me that you
Are to destroy my life
Making me even blind to myself
You got me lying to my friends and family
And then when I decided to leave you
You made me hurt
Knowing that I'll come running back
Because no one or no thing has touched me
like you did
When I leave you, I am learning new things
But now and then you creep into my mind
Making me wanting and needing you
These secret rendez-vous are killing me
You hate the fact that our meetings are
becoming fewer and fewer
And that you no longer have that strong of a
hold on me no longer
But even through our 25 year relationship
You have taught me at least
one thing without you
knowing it
Was the learning respect for life and people
And that we can never be again.*

Alcohol and Drug Abuse

The community is very concerned about the impact of alcohol and drug abuse on residents and our community. There is particular concern that the number of drug overdose rose from 78 in 1997 to 116 in 1998 and is continuing to rise. There is clearly an urgency for action!

The Issues

We recognize that this is an issue with many layers. Residents are caught in a cycle of poverty in which often the only relief is self-medication through drug and alcohol abuse. As the centre for the drug trade, our community is a magnet for addicts from across the Lower Mainland and all of BC. At the same time, the rate of HIV+/AIDs and Hepatitis C infection is at epidemic proportions.

However well recognized these conditions are, services to meet the needs of intravenous drug users are wholly inadequate. Essentially, there are minimal drug and alcohol services for women and children. For men, there are more services, but the service delivery approach is based on a disease model rather than focusing on the underlying causes of addiction. As well, far more resources are spent on enforcement of existing drug laws than on harm reduction and treatment.

Our Plan

In a draft plan prepared by the Community Directions Alcohol and Drug Working Group, the community proposes that the four pillar approach be implemented in a coordinated and comprehensive way. This plan is community specific, was developed through a year-long process, and is currently being reviewed by the community.

The proposed four pillar approach is premised on a view that each pillar, prevention, treatment, harm reduction and enforcement, must receive equal focus. Actions recommended under the prevention pillar include:

- the development of a comprehensive targeted communication and media strategy
- development of a coordinated housing strategy
- increase in resident access to family support and recreation programs, and
- development and implementation of an education program that is comprehensive, realistic, honest, and community-based.

The harm reduction pillar involves "a set of attitudes, policies and programs that are directed towards decreasing adverse health, social, and economic consequences of alcohol and drug use without necessarily requiring a decrease in the use of alcohol and drugs".¹ Harm reduction recommendations include:

- the establishment of medically supervised safe injection sites for IV drug users in the Downtown Eastside Strathcona
- the development of a resource centre for drug and alcohol users
- increased access to and expansion of clean needle distribution and used needle recovery services
- establishment of a 24 hour sobering centre for people in immediate and acute alcohol and drug crisis
- development of a pilot alcohol exchange and maintenance program
- development of a comprehensive peer-based approach to respond to drug overdoses

¹ Community Directions Drug and Alcohol Working Group. 2001.

- development of a (low threshold) methadone maintenance access program
- expansion of the current (high threshold) methadone maintenance program
- implementation of a heroin maintenance program
- development of a pilot project to begin addressing the issue of cocaine use through stimulant maintenance or other programs, and
- implementation of a comprehensive strategy to increase access to high quality and nutritious food.

Accessible and community based treatment for drug and alcohol misuse is a very important third pillar. The plan proposes that treatment services should be readily available flexible and client driven. With these principles in mind, the plan proposes the following actions:

- increase in the amount, availability, variety, and level of coordination of treatment
- development and implementation of a comprehensive strategy to provide complete access to services and resources to alcohol and drug users who also have mental disorders
- increase in the number and program capacity of recovery houses, and
- the development of a community medical short stay unit.

The last pillar, enforcement, should be undertaken in a way that supports the other pillars and through partnership with the community. Enforcement actions recommended include:

- the development of an enforcement unit that is community-based, based on a community-police partnership and that supports prevention, treatment and harm reduction values and approaches
- funding for drug courts and related services to be derived from new funds and not consist of re-allocation from existing or other planned harm reduction or treatment services, and
- increased collaboration between and coordination of services and resources.

The plan also proposes recommendations to link all pillars in a comprehensive and integrated way. These include actions to affirm a community-based model, support for an evaluation framework that ensures access to services by and accountability to alcohol and drug users, and the development of an advocacy system and program policies to ensure that all drug and alcohol users have access to all the services and resources they need.

Children and Youth

Many outsiders consider kids from our community 'disadvantaged'. In fact, children and families are our highest priority – each child is loved and valued by his or her parents, neighbours, and community. Together with parents, we work very hard to make this a safe and healthy place for children.

The Issues

Our community is comprised of many families who are very involved in their children's lives and provide supportive enriched environments for them. Many families do this with very limited resources. There are also parents who because of poverty, mental illness, or addictions are unable to provide basic needs and opportunities for their children. In some cases families, who are already in crisis, find themselves dealing with food, housing, health care, or other issues at a time when their resources to do so are limited.

Parents, overall, are very concerned about the impact of the high level of drug and alcohol use on their families and feel limited in their ability to provide the resources needed to support their kids. Children have also identified some of their concerns about violence, homelessness, crime, needles and condoms. They would really like to see all poverty addressed for everyone.

The Final Word

*"It became obvious to me that
not one of the professionals in
the room has ever actually met
the child ...and it is horrifying
to think ...that you would
plan someone's life without
actually talking to them
...they all had a paper
relationship with that child.. "*

Agency representative

We want to build on the strengths of the families in the community, supporting them to use their existing assets and helping them to recognize the important role they play in the community overall. And we want to do this in a holistic way, supporting families in creative and responsive ways to provide the best environment possible for the children of our community.

Developing a Plan

The Children and Youth Working Group has not yet developed a plan for services for Children and Youth. However, a review of plans prepared through other processes shows that some of the ways identified by the community in previous processes include:

- adopting a neighbourhood-based approach with accessible services
- taking an integrated case management approach supporting the 'whole' child
- supporting a prevention model rather than an intervention approach
- strengthening involvement of parents in all processes
- treating First Nation families with respect and include the family in discussions concerning the child or youth
- providing language support
- provide greater access to family therapy and counseling, and
- involve parents in designing and directing services.

As we work to improve services for children, youth and families, we must put families first, supporting them to give their children the greatest stability possible.

Children, youth, and parents have started organizing around issues of concern to them. They held a "Warming of the Hearts" celebration to bring children, youth, and families together to have fun and talk about what they like and do

The Final Word

*"We do ourselves a disservice
by denying the global reality
of this phenomenon
— poverty is everywhere.*

Resident

not like about the community, and what can be done to make it a safer and more fun place to live. They are now planning for a Parent Education/Peer Support Workshop Series that they hope will lead to the development of a parent manual, the formation of parent support groups, and increased understanding of the issues by parents, service providers, and the schools.

Safety and Wellbeing

One motivating factor for 'revitalization' is concern about perceived growth in crime and victimization. We share these concerns and are working to strengthen the community so that people living in and visiting our community to feel safe. We believe that by addressing the root causes of crime and victimization, safety and wellbeing issues will change significantly.

The Issues

At present, concerns from the general public include:

- open drug use on the street
- frequency of car break-ins and other petty theft
- 'unsavory characters' everywhere
- street violence, and
- visible drug trade.

Safety concerns for our community also include:

- harassment of panhandlers
- security violence
- regular infractions of the landlord-tenants act
- pedophiles from outside preying on street-involved youth
- safe, appropriate housing for children and families
- violence against women on the stroll, and
- outsiders coming to our community to buy drugs.

Our Approach

We would like to develop an approach to safety and wellbeing that addresses the issues of residents of the community as well as those of members of the general public. In working toward this, we cannot focus on the safety of one group while putting another at risk. Instead, we hope to achieve our goals with respect to safety and wellbeing through dialogue and community-based problem solving.

Community Directions established a Health and Safety Working Group to address these issues. However, with limited resources, Community Directions has not yet begun working on this area, focusing instead on those areas that are considered to be root causes of crime: housing, alcohol and drug issues, community economic development, and the needs of children and families.

Women's Issues

As in other places, women in our community often experience multiple forms of discrimination. Not only are they marginalized as women but they are also discriminated against as First Nations or women of color. Many women are further stereotyped for economic reasons, because they are sole parents with a low-income or because they work in the sex trade. Women who are HIV+, women with addictions, and women with mental illness are stigmatized and discriminated against for health reasons.

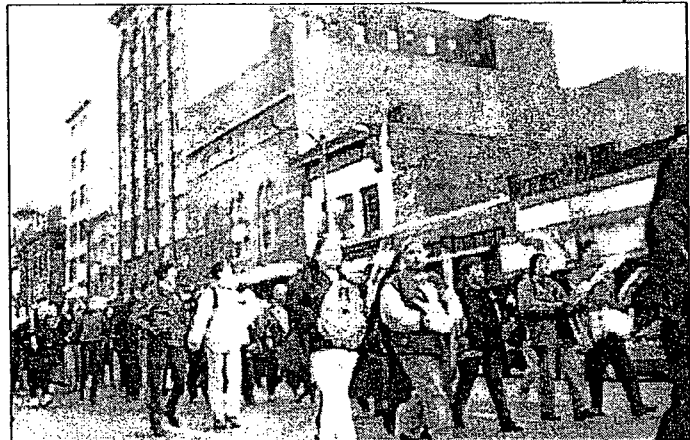


Photo: Colin Donovan

The Issues

The main issues that need to be addressed are:

- inadequate levels of services for addictions and mental illness
- some existing services use a disease model
- very limited housing for single women
- insufficient recognition that many women are also mothers and need services that also provide space for children
- violence against women in the sex trade, and
- lack of a mechanism for women's voices to be heard.

Possible Solutions

The Women's Issues Working Group has not yet initiated a community-based planning process to address issues of concern to women. At present, many women's organizations are engaged in building projects or organizational change, and have not yet been able to fully participate in community processes. Some of the solutions to these issues identified by the community in previous planning processes include:

- establishment of a women's healing centre
- holistic approaches to medical treatment, addictions treatment, counseling and family support
- strengthening of outreach services
- safe housing and emergency shelters
- training for service providers and police on provision of appropriate, respectful services for women, and
- increase the voice of women in decision-making processes.

Additional support is required to increase the voice of women in community-based decision-making and in getting these needs met.

Community Economics

Many government organizations want to revitalize the community and 'bring legitimate businesses back to the Hastings Corridor'. While we support appropriate small business development, we think that economic development should be linked to the fulfillment of other community goals. If we adopt a community economic development approach, we believe that we can foster economic activity that also meets social goals.

The Issues

There are three economic issues that are of primary concern to us:

- the ability of residents to make a living
- the viability of small businesses that serve our community, and
- the ownership of the land required to meet community objectives.

People in our community make a living in a wide range of ways. We work in the trades, services, and professions. Many are self-employed, some work part-time, others work in the home or as volunteers in community organizations. However, Figure 5 shows that the number of people who are not in the labour force is high compared with other parts of Vancouver.

Residents tell us that a major issue with respect to employment is the need for education and training. Figure 6 shows that the percent of the population with less than a grade 9 is very high compared with the city as a whole. However, many people who are unemployed feel that the existing education and training programs provide a revolving door into low-paying jobs. They would like to see programs that provide real training for real jobs.

With economic disinvestment in the area described in Chapter 2, small businesses have been adversely affected. However, the business sector in our community has a number of distinct elements, which have been affected in different ways. Chinatown, a designated historically site, is a very active culture-based economy that is dynamic and highly linked to the community of Strathcona. Business in Chinatown has declined in recent years as it has in other historic Chinatowns in North America. Gastown is also historic site that has a dynamic business area, drawing its customer base from the tourist trade

and other parts of Vancouver. Gastown merchants feel that tourism is impacted by the conditions in the community. The Hastings Corridor is different, experiencing significant 'dis-investment' in recent years whereby businesses leave because they are no longer making enough money from their investment. As a result, there are many, many boarded-up buildings.

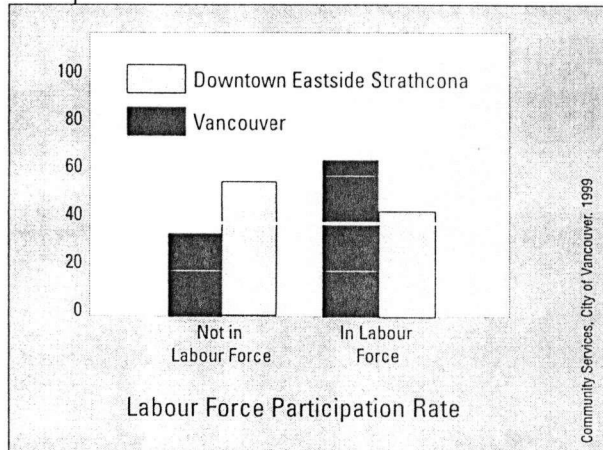


Figure 6

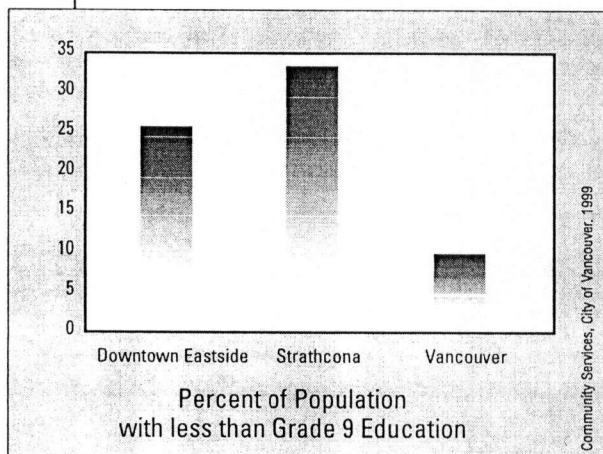


Figure 7

As a community, we are supportive of a diversified small business sector that provides needed services to low-income residents, as well as to tourists and people from outside the community. We particularly see a need for small businesses owned and or run by residents. A major difficulty in developing housing, employment and small business opportunities for residents is that land is not owned by the community. The consequence of this is that the community does not have equity upon which to leverage resources to help it achieve community goals.

We believe that these issues, unemployment, education, small business development, business vitality, and land ownership, can be addressed in a meaningful way through a community-based development process using a community development corporation as an engine of development.

A Community Economic Development Corporation

The Community Directions Community Economic Development Working Group has held many meetings and workshops on the local economy and is developing a plan to strengthen the local economy. One key element of the plan is to develop a Downtown Eastside Strathcona Community Development Corporation (CDC).

The CDC, to be governed by a community board on which residents have the majority of seats, will undertake a comprehensive community economic development process that involves the full community and includes sector representation. It will facilitate and support ventures and partnerships and initiate project development and ownership when appropriate. To achieve this, our planning, research, and advocacy goals are to:

- coordinate community wide strategic planning
- facilitate communication and collaboration
- analyze and disseminate research information, and
- advocate for policy, legislation and programs to support community economic development

Our goals in terms of economic and employment development are to promote, initiate and support:

- strong core of locally owned small businesses
- local businesses that serve the full range of residents' daily needs
- social enterprise, cooperatives, and community businesses
- commitment to community capital, keeping money in the community
- employment training and opportunities for the full range of residents
- entrepreneurial opportunities for residents, and
- recognition of social capital in the community.

Housing and land use goals are to promote, initiate and support:

- community control of land use and development
- long term low-income housing availability
- trusteeship over private property

- equity for residents
- resident participation, and
- activities that prevent displacement.

Addressing the Issues in a Holistic Way

It is clear that housing, alcohol and drug, health and safety, children and family, women and community economic development issues are inter-related. Without appropriate housing, individuals and families cannot remain stable and individuals do not feel safe. Drug and alcohol issues affect residents' feeling of safety in their homes. Drug and alcohol abuse leads to phenomenal health and social issues. Without adequate housing, a resident cannot find and keep a job. This vicious cycle leads to feelings of hopelessness and despair. But at the same time, understanding the linkages between issues is important to identifying solutions together as a community.

That is why the Downtown Eastside Strathcona community decided to work together through Community Directions to stimulate discussion about these issues and to grow community-based solutions in which these linkages are understood. However, these issues are not finite and measurable. The issues change all the time and the people they affect are constantly changing. It is important that the dialogue be ongoing and responsive. It is also essential that residents and community organizations work together with those who support our vision for development 'from within'.

Draft CDC Mission

The mission of the CDC is to create opportunities that make the neighbourhood more liveable for residents, especially those on low-incomes. The CDC will build on the community's history, diversity, and the potentials of the people who live here.

To achieve its mission, the DES/Strathcona CDC will use a range of business, labour market, housing, and organizing tools that:

- improve the social, economic and environmental well-being of the neighbourhood, and
- give residents a greater influence over decisions that affect their own future and the future of the community.

Questions to Think About....

1. How are the issues in Downtown Eastside Strathcona different from your community?
2. Why are there such significant economic and political differences between communities in Vancouver ?
3. How does the community's view of these issues compare with that of the media and outside agencies?
4. What is your role in supporting the community to address these issues?

Chapter 5 Ways We Work Together

To achieve our goals of community-based development and to address the issues identified in the previous chapter in the most effective way possible, it is important that we work closely with everyone with a mandate to support our community. The Downtown Eastside Strathcona community has a long history of working together to ensure the voices of people in our community are heard. We invite everyone who supports community-based development 'from within' to join with us working in concert for a caring and inclusive community.

To appreciate how we currently work together very successfully, it is useful to look at some existing collaborative initiatives. This Chapter provides some examples of how residents and community organizations presently work together. But an exhaustive account of all instances of community collaboration would require a manual of its own. So there are many examples of people working together that are unfortunately not included here.

The ways that we work together can be grouped into five categories:

- planning together
- community organizing
- sharing resources
- joint programming
- forming consortia to deliver services

When all this ways of working together are considered as a whole, we are a pretty cohesive community.

Joint Planning

We are striving to undertake comprehensive planning and decision-making together. Planning is undertaken at both a neighbourhood level and a community level. Decisions are made with both agency and resident involvement. Government representatives work with each community to ensure program objectives are met and accountability mechanisms are in place.

Some examples of community planning processes that have been undertaken in recent years include:

- Community Directions, which is a community-based process, involving many residents, community organizations, the City of Vancouver, and the Vancouver Foundation, provides community input into the way public resources are to be allocated under the Vancouver Agreement
- the Downtown Eastside Strathcona Coalition, a coalition of residents and agencies established by residents in 1995, serves as a place where neighbourhood decisions are made about the Community Services Fund which itself is a community-based initiative to provide appropriate employment-oriented training for multi-barriered residents, and
- Windows of Opportunity, a coalition of fifty-five community and public child, youth, and family serving agencies, developed a children and youth services plan intended to increase school readiness and high school completion.

Forming Consortia to Deliver Services

We also form consortia to deliver services in a way that combines the talents and resources of several organizations. Example of consortia to deliver much needed services include:

- the Network 2 Community Services Society through which the Ministry of Children and Families contracts with community organizations to offer services that support families in providing safe healthy environments for their children; by doing so, children and families are cared for in the community supported by people who know something about their experience, and are linked to existing community services, and
- through the Food Providers Coalition food organizations work together very effectively to ensure that food gets to the people who need it.

Joint Programs

Many, many services are strengthened because organizations put their heads together and offer a service together. Some examples are:

- Strathcona Skills Connection provides employment services to residents through DEYAS, First United Church, and Crabtree Corner
- Sheway is a collaborative partnership between Vancouver Native Health, the YWCA and Vancouver Richmond Health Board which provides support to pregnant women and young mothers with a particular emphasis on the needs of aboriginal women
- Carnegie Community Association has a partnership with Capilano College to provide literacy programming at the Carnegie Learning Centre
- PRIDE Centre works with United We Can to provide the training needed to support specific employment initiatives
- Pride Centre and Tradeworks work with Vancouver Community College to offer technology training programs, and
- Watari, in partnership with Douglas College and Tradeworks, offers a "Working with Street Youth with a Mental Health Specialty".

Community Organizing

Community organizing involves broad-based action to ensure the voices of residents and community groups are heard. The specific initiatives in which we have achieved success include:

- the community organizing to stop the casinos from being built next to Crab Park
- community action to ensure that the commitment of government to provide social housing in the Woodward's building is met
- Vandu, an association of drug users, raises awareness about the need for accessible services for intravenous drug users so that no more residents die from drug overdose, and
- the Carnegie Action Project generates awareness about housing conditions and to gets residents involved in action to address the issues.

We are also organizing based on community assets. An asset inventory of the skills, abilities and interests of people living in SROs and in housing projects in Strathcona was undertaken by Community Directions, with support from the Vancouver Foundation and the City of Vancouver. Through this process, residents learn more about themselves and their communities and can take

charge of areas of interest to them to build the kind of community they want. The next step is an asset inventory of children and families so that children and families know that they too have the skills, abilities and resources to make this a better place.



Photo: Colin Donovan

Sharing Resources

Organizations regular help each other by contributing much needed resources. There are daily examples of this type of sharing but a few examples highlight how resource sharing can make a difference:

- when the number of women using the WISH Drop-In Centre increased dramatically within a very short time, DEYAS responded by contributing food money and providing administrative
- First United Church contributes space to many organizations so that services can be provided with limited resources.
- organizations that collect and distribute food such as the Food Bank, Quest, and Food Runners work closely with the community groups that offer free food to ensure they have good quality food as cheaply as possible.

The Final Word

You do things outside of the box, if someone comes through the door and their need doesn't fit, they get something anyway.

This community is rich with those groups.

Resident

Learning From Each Other

Through these initiatives, we have learned many important things about working together. We think that this knowledge is fundamental for anyone working in our community and is necessary for the success of collaboration. Some of the things we have learned are that:

- no one group can speak for the community
- broad-based support is needed for a 'community initiative' to succeed
- a relationship with residents and community-based organizations is critical
- anything that gives a benefit to one group of residents should not take away from another group
- all community issues are related and efforts to address issues should be wholistic
- residents know their own strengths and needs best
- there are creative options that are not going to cost any extra

- no one collaborative initiative precludes others
- in working together we often wearing many hats, group/regroup and facilitate informal exchange
- we already have most of the skills and ideas that we need in our community, and
- no one resident or organization can do it alone.

We have also learned that when we work together we build an interconnected web of community support that allows us to:

- provide services in each neighbourhood
- reach more people than by doing it alone
- ensure a continuum of services
- use resources more efficiently, and
- do things we could not otherwise do.

Create a Caring Community Together

By working together in this way, we are building a caring community, a community that works to include all people and that recognizes the impact of poverty on all of us.

In this guide, we have described our community, what community development means to us, the issues the community is concerned about and the ways we currently work together. From this, we hope you, the reader, will better understand how we are working to achieve community goals.

The Final Word

"Would the decision-makers

really buy that?"

Resident

We hope you will be motivated to adapt how you work in our community to better support community-based development in a way that is consistent with our goals. And when you see negative press about our community, you will be aware that there are other parts to the story.

We look forward to working with you in this spirit and we invite you always to talk with us about your questions, experiences and ideas. Together, we can create understanding of poverty, of the work that need to be done to ensure fundamental rights for all, and of the need to protect the rights of low income people to full participation in Canadian society. Together, we will create a caring community.

Questions to Think About....

1. What Downtown Eastside initiative are you most aware of? Why?
2. Is the way the community sees itself as working together the same or different than that portrayed in the media? Why is that?
3. How can your organization support the community in working together?
4. What would an integrated, partnership approach with your organization look like? What steps can be taken to create this approach?
5. If you are already involved with an existing collaborative initiative, what have you done to strengthen the network? What more would you like to do?

APPENDIX 1 Process Followed

Research Steering Committee Members

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Joanna Russell

Joseph Thibideaux

Sr. Vikki Marie

Laurie Pelletier

Interviews

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Carole Brown, RayCam

Nigel Mah, Strathcona Community Centre

Michelle Fortin, Watari Research

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Karen Duddy, WISH Drop-In Centre Society

Ian McCrae, Downtown Eastside Residents Association

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Margaret Green, Community Directions

Deb Mearns, Downtown Eastside Neighbourhood Safety Office

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Jimmy Wu

Robert Lamieux

Haedy Mason

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CHAPTER THREE

COMPILING THE GUIDE

You have just read one version of the Downtown Eastside Strathcona story and have been introduced to some of the music of community development in this low-income community. It is clearly a very different story from that presented in the media. You may be skeptical, have questions, or just wonder why it is relevant. This story has also stimulated much discussion amongst residents and agency representatives evoking comments like: "What a gift to the community," "it expresses so many things that I have thought about before," "it makes you feel good about the community," and "the part about everyone getting along is bullshit." These observations reflect how this story came to be written, a process that was positive, evocative, and honest. I would like now to describe the research process followed to prepare *Getting the Words AND the Music* to show that it was a somewhat different from most forms of research. In fact, it was, and continues to be, more of a journey.

The journey began with me as a practitioner concerned about how community development is implemented in low-income communities. At that time, I was also a researcher who, having experience working in low-income and marginalized communities, wanted to explore what low-income communities can teach practitioners. In 1999, a unique research opportunity serendipitously emerged; residents and agency representatives in Downtown Eastside Strathcona community successfully negotiated support for a community development process that would mobilize and build capacity amongst low-income residents. I entered into conversations with those involved in the process and reached an agreement about how I would participate in the process and document the story of what they were doing. The process of doing so has presented many challenges making it somewhat of an

epic journey. This chapter will describe the journey, highlighting the context in which the research ideas emerged, the challenges encountered, and some of the ways in which the challenges were resolved.

The Beginning of an Idea

The research project was first conceived in discussions between me, at that time a doctoral student in search of a meaningful dissertation, and various community members and agency representatives that I had come to know over the previous five years working in and with the community. At the time, I was also the manager of the Vancouver East Community Skills Connection (VECSC) involved in developing and implementing a community development approach to the delivery of adult education, training and employment services in East Vancouver. That role involved discussions with residents and agency representatives about their view of community development for the education, training, and employment sector and their analysis of the experience of other community development initiatives undertaken in the previous decade. I increasingly felt that there was a highly evolved understanding of community development in East Vancouver, particularly in Downtown Eastside Strathcona, and that this understanding affects how the community interacts, at least initially, with new processes that government attempts to initiate.

The discussions with residents and agency representatives brought to light the history of social action in the community and evidence of a coherent understanding of how community development approaches might advance the needs of the community and specifically marginalized groups. Taken as a whole, what emerged was a self-portrait of a community with decades of experience combating oppression, discrimination, and exclusion of low-income people, First Nations, Chinese-Canadians, single mothers, people with

disabilities, and other marginalized groups. Because of this history of social action, the community is often viewed as highly conflicted. But it was evident to me from these discussions that the community also works in a highly collaborative manner, forming consortia, organizing lobbying efforts, jointly implementing projects, and sharing ideas, resources, and people.

In recent years, the Downtown Eastside Strathcona community has endeavored to build on its strengths in this regard by supporting community-based planning, exploring opportunities for comprehensive approaches, and working together on collaborative projects. It became involved in several initiatives to advance this way of working together. In 1994, the community formed the Downtown Eastside Strathcona Coalition (DTESC), to build on this collaborative spirit and bring residents and agencies together at one table to develop a unified plan to address community issues, build consensus, and seek necessary support. The following year, the VECSC, another collaborative initiative, was formed to address poverty and unemployment in East Vancouver through more effective and collaborative delivery of education, training and employment services at the community level³. In 1999, the Ministry of Children and Families initiated a community consultation about how contracted services ought to be delivered in various parts of Vancouver which in Downtown Eastside Strathcona resulted in the formation of Network 2 Community Services Society, a community-based

³ The VECSC was formed as a consortium of community-based agencies, educational institutions, for-profit and not-for-profit training organizations, and immigrant serving organizations that, in keeping with its role as a 'Connection', did not itself deliver services. Rather the VECSC played a significant role in facilitating partnership development, developing collaborative programs, and providing a shared venue for the delivery of education and training services by consortium members.

consortium, aimed at coordinating comprehensive community services⁴. Now, more than five years later, none of these initiatives exist in the way originally envisioned.

Despite these well articulated aspirations for community-based development on the part of the residents and agency representatives, governments seemed to continue in the ensuing years to impose their own views of appropriate development, setting aside experience and knowledge developed at the local level, seemingly the antithesis of community development.⁵ In my conversations with them, residents and agency representatives provided a litany of examples of efforts to promote a community-based approach to development and service delivery with only marginal success. Our discussion led to the idea of documenting the knowledge and experience built up in the community so that it can be readily communicated to "outsiders."

Emergence of an Opportunity

An opportunity to document this knowledge and experience based on a specific story soon emerged, as well as a set of relationships in which the story would be useful. In 1999, the City of Vancouver announced a multi-level partnership to undertake a community mobilization and capacity building initiative aimed at revitalizing the DTES, supported for five years with a budget of approximately \$1M per year. The City, in the beginning, had a detailed plan of how this would be undertaken and set out to install an office in the community to coordinate the initiative. The announcement also corresponded with attention

⁴ The Network 2 Community Services Society now coordinates the delivery of home support services to families in the community and plays an important role in planning for services for children and families.

⁵ The rationale for government programs is further explored in Chapter Five and Six.

from other major institutions, particularly the University of British Columbia (UBC), which announced the establishment of a DTES initiative.

Residents and agency representatives, feeling that the community was experiencing intrusion from several levels at the same time, rallied against the proposed implementation, and began a negotiation process for a more community-based approach. These negotiations, much to the surprise of the community, were successful and resulted in the formation of what came to be known as Community Directions. At the time these negotiations were taking place, I was involved in the Community Directions process as an observer on behalf of my employer, the VECSC. I was also, as noted above, seeking a relevant research project for my doctoral dissertation. The process that was unfolding started to attract my attention as a possible focus of research because it struck me at the time as an interesting illustration of this community's view of appropriate community development.

I was interested for several reasons. First, Community Directions was designed as a community mobilization and organizing process specifically for low-income residents, building on the community's experience with other public consultation processes. The fact that Community Directions hoped to achieve resident involvement was of particular interest to me because my own experience as a practitioner was that ongoing involvement of marginalized groups is very difficult to sustain. Another reason for selecting this process was that the project was clearly intended to build capacity in the low-income community, strengthening residents' abilities to implement activities needed to promote community development. Lastly, although the work undertaken by the community was proving to be highly demanding and time consuming, those involved seemed highly committed to making it work. In sum, at this stage, I felt that Community Directions, as a possible focus of

research, could provide a valuable opportunity for me to explore a low-income community's approach to community development.

Community Directions - An Overview

Community Directions, a process that began with a small group of residents and agency representatives raising concerns about a proposed City project, became in a very short time a community-based coalition composed of over fifty-four community groups and more than 200 residents. Although the way in which it is described changes with the development of the process itself, its overall role is to undertake community-based planning for programs and services to assist low-income people in Downtown Eastside Strathcona. In doing so, it fosters discussion and community-decision-making that best suits the culture and needs of residents, and ensures that low-income resident voices are heard clearly in public sector planning for the community.

The primary vehicle for community organizing, the expression of the views of low-income residents, and decision-making is monthly General Meetings, promoting direct participation. These General Meetings provide a venue for open discussion on proposed action to address issues impacting residents, providing opportunities to be heard, and in some cases a venue for taking collective specific action in response. Day to day guidance to staff is provided by an elected Steering Committee, composed solely of residents. There are also three paid community organizers, two full-time and one part-time. One of the full-time organizers is bilingual with Cantonese language skills; the part-time organizer is a long time activist in the First Nations community in Downtown Eastside Strathcona.

In order to support planning in particular areas of concern to residents, theme-based working groups were established in the following key areas: alcohol and drugs, housing,

community economic development, children, youth, and families, health and safety, and women's issues. The role of these working groups is to identify key priorities and actions in those areas of focus and to bring these back to the General Meetings for discussion and approval. Community mobilization among specific cultural populations is supported by culture-based working groups with the view to enhancing the maximum participation of cultural groups such as Aboriginal people, Chinese-Canadians, and Hispanic-Canadians.

Those involved in designing the process recognized that dissent would be continually present, however, they wanted to make sure that the process would not be mired in conflict. Believing that there were more areas of agreement than disagreement, Community Directions originally set out to create a process that would promote in-depth discussion and action based on the areas of agreement or what the original organizers of Community Directions referred to as areas of "broad-based consent." An example of such an area is the need for improved access to treatment. The areas in which there is broad-based consent are considered to be priorities; areas where there is significant dissent are sent back to the working groups for more discussion and negotiation.

In the early stages, training and skill building sessions were held with respect to asset based community development, human resources planning and management, governance, community economic development, public relations, and more. These capacity-building activities provided the foundation to undertake some significant planning and organizational development. In addition to the community organizing and community capacity building components, participants also celebrate the uniqueness of the community through community events such as baseball games and picnics. These events seem to play an important role in creating a sense of belonging and building community.

Overall, Community Directions, as it was being designed, appeared to present an opportunity to illustrate a principle-based approach to community development and planning that grapples in an ongoing way with emerging issues and recognizes the importance of community building. It provided a unique opportunity to highlight approaches to community development that are identified as particularly relevant to low income communities but that may also be germane to community development practice overall. But in order to document this knowledge in a way that is consistent with the principles of the process being examined and does not negatively impact it in doing so, it was important to implement an approach to research that reflected as much as possible the principles of community development.

Shaping and Sustaining a Collaborative Research Project

At this particular point, I had a research idea and a possible example to illustrate the community development concepts I wanted to explore. This research idea, which had begun with conversations with residents and agency representatives to identify a useful research project, had already garnered interest and support in many quarters. The next step was to negotiate what a research project might look like. My expectation was that the research would involve nine distinct stages: a negotiation of the method, community input and the solicitation of their support for the use of the Community Directions process as an illustration, participation in the Community Directions process, a document review, guide preparation, data collection, collective reflection, revision and refining of *Getting the Words AND the Music*, approval by Community Directions, and thesis preparation. This section will describe each of those stages in greater detail to show some of the opportunities and challenges that emerged.

Selecting and Negotiating a Research Method

Initially, I had planned to examine several community processes to identify commonalities between community processes. As the project unfolded, I chose to focus solely on Community Directions because it seemed to build on previous Downtown Eastside Strathcona experiences and was being designed by the community at the time my research was to be undertaken. I discussed the idea with my research supervisory committee who assisted me in developing a methodology.

At this point, it seemed important that the methodology adopted for the research reflect the principles of community development. Thus, I expected that I would be undertaking a participatory research project, the characteristics which Verna St Denis (1992), a First Nations planner discussing appropriate community development for Aboriginal communities, suggests includes:

- the community is intended to be the beneficiary
- the members of the community are active participants in the research process
- the analysis of the data collected is conducted with the community, and
- the research findings are intended to be used to further community goals.

In its fullest sense, participatory action research involves active participation of community members in design, data collection and analysis. However, in this case, the process under study, Community Directions, also involves community participation. I was concerned that, if I were to fully adopt a participatory action research method, the research might inevitably conflict with the process being examined and create confusion in both processes. I therefore selected an adapted version of participatory research, better referred to as collaborative research. The difference between the two approaches is that although the

community would continue to be an active participant in guiding the research, I, an outside researcher, would collect the data and write up the results instead of having community co-researchers play a lead role in analyzing and documenting the story.

I proposed a research method that had several stages, all of which overlapped. First, I would discuss the research with the Community Directions membership and proceed if they were in agreement with the proposed research process. Next, I would participate in the Community Directions process and review documents about previous community consultation and planning processes. A draft guide to community development would then be prepared to express what had been said in previous processes and what Community Directions members discussed as appropriate community development from their perspective. I would then test my understanding of what the community was saying in both instances; this would be achieved through focus groups and key respondent interviews. In selecting focus groups and key respondents, I would attempt to engage both the low-income resident and agency representatives perspective, a task that was somewhat difficult as many represented both. The differentiation acknowledges that community agencies in low-income communities often serve as a conduit for the voices of marginalized people.

At this stage the ideas raised in the key respondent interviews and focus groups would be incorporated in another draft of *Getting the Words AND the Music*. The guide would be brought back to the community for approval before being published. This preliminary research methodology was supported by my research committee and some members of the Community Directions process and the next stage was to seek broader community support.

Seeking Community Support

My purpose at this stage was to seek formal support from the membership for my use of their process for research purposes and to begin discussion about this way of doing research. To do this, I attended a general meeting in September 1999, verbally outlined what I wanted, and presented a brief written summary of the research project (Appendix 1). The concept of a "guide" that describes how Community Directions participants see community development was introduced and a commitment was made that *Getting the Words AND the Music* would become a document owned by the community, to be used as they choose.

At the first meeting, the group agreed that a decision should be deferred to the next meeting to allow members an opportunity to read what I had given them. The research project was again described at the General Meeting in October 1999 because there were new faces around the table and a motion supporting this research project was approved.

It was agreed that ongoing guidance in the development of the guide would be provided by a Community Advisory Committee composed of three to four Community Directions members⁶ and that I would report back to the membership on a regular basis. I made a commitment that, when the guide was completed, sufficient copies would be printed and made available for Community Directions members. I also agreed to provide an electronic version so that it could be updated as the community evolves and to provide a copy of the entire thesis upon completion.

⁶ A list of Community Advisory Committee members is provided in Appendix 1 of the Guide.

Participation in the Community Directions Process

At this point, participants in the Community Directions process had given approval, shown considerable interest, and assigned a Community Advisory Committee. However, this research project was fairly minor in relation to the scope of activities the participants were beginning to get involved in and therefore it soon became clear that "my" research project was not viewed as an overall priority. My research activities thus had to be inserted into a complex community process in as unobtrusive a way as possible. The main way that I did this was by attending monthly general meetings as a participant observer to clarify my sense of how the community sees community development and to ensure that the research drew specifically from the Community Directions process. General Meetings were a very important component of the research because the discussions provided important ideas for inclusion in the guide. It is useful at this stage to describe my involvement and the process that evolved.

The Community Directions process began originally in May 1999 and was formalized in August of that year. My initial involvement with Community Directions was as a community practitioner who had been invited to co-facilitate the first meeting to get things started. The first meeting was highly contentious and provided a venue for residents and agencies to voice their concerns about government and about the community. Because there was a fair degree of acrimony present, a group of residents and agency representatives who were committed to supporting the community to work together met for two months with

various individuals and groups. Their task was to achieve agreement on a process that would focus on "areas of broad-based consent" rather than on areas of disagreement⁷.

At that point, my role as a practitioner was very minor in that I attended meetings and provided support where requested. In October 1999, with the approval by Community Directions of this research process, I became a researcher/practitioner which at times confused me and the community members. In November of 2000, I was hired by the City of Vancouver to be the researcher/evaluator for the project that again changed and confused my role. Overall, the multiple roles meant that neither the community nor I could be certain at any given point what role I was expected to fulfill. As a result, some negotiation around specific roles occurred from time to time.

From May of 1999 to August of 2001, there were approximately twenty-six General Meetings to which all residents and community agencies were invited, the majority of which I attended. Smaller task-oriented meetings were also held. Early on in the process, these meetings involved discussions with various community groups and negotiations with the City of Vancouver. Later, these task meetings began to focus on specific skills development such as governance structures and hiring processes. These task meetings became Working Groups charged with developing positions and plans on specific community issues.

To ensure maximum participation, the meetings are held on a set day, alternating bi-monthly between a Thursday afternoon and Saturday morning. Later, the meetings were held on Saturday morning because they found that resident attendance was larger on that day. The

⁷ This did not mean that areas of disagreement would be ignored. It means instead that they would focus on areas of agreement as a starting point because it was their experience that it is the areas of disagreement that have paralyzed the community in the past.

number of people who attended meetings varied, but overall a typical meeting had about thirty-five participants with slightly more men than women. Visible minorities comprised approximately 20 - 25 % of the meetings. On average, 70 – 80 % of the participants were residents.

In these meetings, I generally played the role of participant observer, however, on two occasions I also facilitated discussions - one of the very first meetings and one of the first community economic development working group meetings. Because I was endeavoring to be non-intrusive in these meetings, I used the community's methods of collecting information. For example, they circulated sign-in sheets to get a record of who attended. Because the meetings were very fluid with people coming and going, there was no one set of people there at any one time. I therefore estimated participation levels. I collected meeting minutes when available and also took my own notes during or after the event.

A review of my notes on my participation in this process showed that although it developed organically based on the interests of the group, several stages could be identified. These stages are a useful way to group some of the key themes that emerged.

The first stage in the community process involved establishing the structure of the process in which Community Directions focused on setting its own terms of reference. A central issue was what role it would play in the community as illustrated in the question that emerged at one meeting: "Is Community Directions going to become an administrative body?" The main concern was that Community Directions not become another agency, that if it did, it might lose the capacity for community organizing, as its attention would necessarily shift to agency management. Because of the perceived imperative to organize residents, there was agreement that it would be a community development process, grassroots

in nature that focuses on organizing and building partnerships with existing organizations.

At this stage, the issue about honorariums for involvement also emerged. There was a belief that Community Directions needed to support people to volunteer because the day-to-day lives of people in poverty are constrained by the need to seek food on an ongoing basis.

In the next stage of discussions, perhaps driven by an asset inventory (Kretzman & McKnight, 1993; McKnight, 1992) that was being conducted at the time, discussions seemed to centre on perceptions of the community. Residents talked about how they like that it is a friendly place, that having grown up in a poor community, it feels like home. They like the way people come together, are concerned about their community and are involved. Diversity was seen as a very important strength. The view that the community is giving and inclusive of everyone was expressed. Housing was described as inexpensive and there is a sense of community and of acceptance. Noteworthy in the list of community strengths was a big emphasis on community caring.

But there are also things residents indicated that they would like to change. These included the way government perceives the community. They felt that many outsiders “identify with problems of the community rather than its strengths” and that funding agencies “need to do some trust building and take chances on what the community can do.” There was also concern about the need for change from within Downtown Eastside Strathcona as a community. Residents felt that as a community, they sometimes work against each other, by focusing on the negative. Concerns about crime were also expressed, about people leaving their needles and condoms around, and the quality and conditions of housing. They felt there is a significant need for more drug and alcohol services, improved housing, and better access

to recreation and jobs. Overall, the sentiment was that “we don’t need to be fixed - we are a great community AND we do need help.”

The third stage seemed to focus on building a vision. The vision that was articulated was that of a poor-friendly community, one in which there is “no stigma to being poor” and where you can “get two cups of coffee for 80 cents.” This stage included discussion about how much “development” can there be without “downgrading the nature of the community” and having “community life taken away.” People wanted some security around the notion of a “low-income friendly community” that would be inclusive of all, particularly people with addictions and mental health issues. There was a strong view that the development of Woodward’s, an abandoned department store, for affordable housing was a key element of that vision. There was also an interest in creating meaningful employment for people with health barriers and limited employment histories.

The fourth stage could best be described as a planning stage in which Community Directions began to educate itself about governance, economic development, housing, and alcohol and drug issues and consider the directions it wanted to take with regard to each. The learning achieved in this stage merged into a planning process; draft plans were developed and taken out to the community in a major outreach process involving meetings in hotels, community centres, seniors residents, and drop-in centres. This process seemed to make Community Directions participants noticeably proud of what they achieved, as there were now tangible products of their work. The fifth stage, just beginning when this research was being completed, would focus on building partnerships with other community and government agencies to implement these plans.

Participation in the community meetings provided an opportunity for residents to get to know me and to develop a trust in my role. It also ensured that the community process would not be examined at a single point in time but would inform the research through all stages of the research process. Overall, regular attendance and involvement in the community process meant that the research was a continuum of learning both for me, as the researcher, and for the community, a continuum that began before the research was even conceived and continues after the research is completed.

Document Review

The document review was undertaken because many people told me "that we have said it all before on many occasions" and I wanted to see if what had been said before could form a good starting point for this research. The document review had two key elements: a community document assessment and a literature review.

In the first instance, I reviewed 45 documents, primarily looking at the recommendations of each report to determine what was said about community development (Appendix 2). The documents were identified by Community Directions participants and included documents that they or their agency had prepared, that documented community processes, or were good examples of recommendations supported by the community. To select the documents, I contacted representatives of each of the working groups as well as anyone else they referred me to. These representatives gave me the documents they had in their possession that they thought would be useful. I then photocopied two copies of each at my work place, and Community Directions volunteers cerloxed and catalogued these documents for use by the working groups.

At this point, Community Directions had just begun a community asset inventory. One aspect of that inventory was a database of community reports on research and planning undertaken in the past, intended to allow the Asset Inventory team and the Working Groups to draw on the results of previous research where appropriate and avoid "recreating the wheel." This seemed like an opportunity where I could use my research to contribute to what the group that was the subject of the research was actually doing.

I therefore developed a database that summarized the recommendations contained within each report. A matrix was then developed for each theme that showed which reports made recommendations with respect to that theme. Many reports made recommendations with respect to several themes. These matrices showed that within each theme, key concepts in community development emerged. I then combined related concepts and developed a table to show the frequency of appearance in the documents of the combined concepts. Copies of the reports, the database and the matrices were then provided to the community for their use.

Because the starting point for this research was what the community had said about community development on previous occasions, I extrapolated the data from the matrices to develop a table of key community development themes discernable in the reports. Appendix 3 summarizes these themes and shows how often each emerged and in what context. It illustrates that certain community development themes emerged repeatedly in different documents that the community either wrote or contributed to. These themes provide specific guidance on how to do community development in several sectors and can be grouped in three broad categories: principles, focus, and process. However, the data presented in the table cannot be used to compare or rate different themes, rather it simply lists what was previously said. Thus, it is useful as a point of reference and a place to start.

Because the purpose of the research was to move toward an understanding of community development practices that are specifically useful to Downtown Eastside Strathcona and other low-income, inner-city areas, these practices also need to be understood in the context of community issues. Thus, general directions with respect to services required were also examined. This review showed that there is an articulated need for a broad range of services to meet the needs of marginalized people in the community and suggested that the role of services in community development must be closely examined.

Development of a Draft Guide

While reviewing previous documents and participating in the Community Directions process, I began to compile a draft plain language guide that described what I thought I heard residents and agency representatives discussing in the Community Directions meetings. I used the lists of identified themes to gauge the completeness of the draft. The draft guide provided a first interpretation of what I, as both a community worker and academic, thought I was hearing and what I had gathered from my review of the documents.

However, all of this information was filtered through a personal lens of community development practice in this community and others and was not necessarily representative of the community perspective. Thus, it was important to engage the residents and agency representatives in discussions about the ideas raised in the draft guide in order to change, clarify, enhance, and validate the guide consonant with the community perspective. I asked four colleagues working at the community level to do an initial review. Based on their input, I adapted the guide and then distributed the revised guide to the advisory committee. Once adaptations to the document requested by the Community Advisory Committee were made, a

draft was submitted to a Community Directions General Meeting for residents and agency representatives to review and comment on.

Collective Reflection through Community Processes

Residents and agency representatives then had the opportunity to review the draft manual to both establish the validity of the ideas, change the ideas as they saw appropriate, and add examples, pictures and quotations. This was achieved through interviews with agency representatives and focus groups with residents. The interview guide for each group was purposefully different. The key respondent guide asked about community development from the perspective of a practitioner (Appendix 4). The focus group guide promoted discussion amongst members of a community and sought input about a process from the perspective of the subjects of that process (Appendix 5).

Interviews

An interview format was chosen as an appropriate method for validating the guide with key respondents because it allows in-depth exploration of issues with people who have given these ideas a lot of thought over many years. Fourteen organizational representatives involved with services in Downtown Eastside Strathcona such as Community Directions, community centres, non-profit agencies, groups serving immigrants and visible minorities, government agencies, and with political representatives as appropriate were interviewed. Interviews were conducted in person and at a time and place convenient to the participants. The interviewees were given copies of *Getting the Words AND the Music* in advance. The interview format was designed to both elicit comments on the guide and on community development in the community generally. The interviews took place in offices, restaurants and public areas of community centres. Most places were noisy and several interviews were

interrupted by colleagues or centre users. Interviewees were given the opportunity to have the conversation audiotaped or recorded with handwritten notes. Two decided not to be audiotaped because they felt the location was too noisy and they wanted to have a conversation unimpeded by the tape recorder. On one occasion, the tape was too noisy to transcribe.

Interviewees were selected in a purposeful way using pre-identified criteria (Merriam, 1998). These criteria include: location in the community, participation in community processes, and degree of representativeness of the broad cross-section of service sectors. Accordingly, I attempted to achieve balance in gender, ethnic origin, and length of time in Downtown Eastside Strathcona. In the end, six were male and eight female, five were people of color, two of which were First Nations and two Chinese Canadian. Five currently live in the DTES and the majority have a long-term involvement in the community. Three were elected representatives of community-based organizations, while eleven worked for community-based organizations. A list of organizational representatives interviewed is provided in the guide.

Focus Groups

Focus groups were also conducted in order to involve more residents than might be achieved through interviews. A focus group approach was selected for this group because it provides a less threatening environment than can be achieved through one-on-one interviews. It also promotes collective dialogue leading in many cases to a deeper exploration of the issues. Because I was using a specific community process – Community Directions - as the basis for the research, I needed to have focus groups that were familiar with that process. I therefore selected Community Directions Working Groups as appropriate existing groups, a

list of which is also provided at the back of the guide. Specific Working Groups were selected based on the degree of resident membership, as well as whether it met within the timeframe of the research, had the interest in being involved, and an agenda that permitted the time for in-depth discussion. Focus groups were facilitated with the Community Economic Development, Housing, the Latino, and the Asset Inventory Working Groups.

The Community Economic Development Working Group generally involves residents and agency representatives with a strong knowledge of and interest in community-based economic development. They had been involved in several community economic development forums on asset inventories, community economic development generally, community development corporations, and community employment strategies. Several Community Economic Development Working Group members were also involved in other economic development initiatives and brought that knowledge to the table.

The Housing Working Group is composed of many residents and agencies representatives who have been working in housing provision and advocacy for many years. Using a Housing Plan developed by the Carnegie Action Project several years ago as the basis, this Working Group has developed a housing plan that focuses on retaining access to housing for low-income residents.

The Asset Inventory Working Group was composed of residents who worked as volunteers conducting the asset inventory in single room occupancy (SROs) and in community social housing projects. Because several members of this Working Group were also seeking paid employment at the time, attendance was low. As well, a Working Group member came to the focus group but left without participating because of a belief that involvement should be compensated.

The Hispanic Community Working Group, which at the time the research began was a fledgling group, asked if they could also participate. I agreed and a focus group session was held at their next meeting. Although they were not that familiar with Community Directions itself, several members were quite familiar with community development and social action based on their experience in their country of origin. This focus group, instead of focusing on Community Directions, directed their discussion to the strengths and needs of the Hispanic community and their vision of how the strengths can be utilized and the needs addressed.

I also contacted the Alcohol and Drug Working Group, established a date for a focus group, and sent out documents and notices in advance to the ad hoc chair of the committee. However, because of work constraints, the documents were not circulated in advance and the meeting agenda itself was changed to accommodate a police department representative working on alcohol and drug issues. This focus group was not re-scheduled because several members had already been interviewed individually.

In the end, at least eighteen of the twenty-two focus group participants were either residents at some point in the course of the research or represented specific target groups. I recorded each focus group with notes and by audiotaping and transcribing the tapes. The tape recording of the Community Economic Development Working Group was unsuccessful therefore I relied primarily on notes.

The results of the interviews and focus groups, as well as notes from the General Meetings, were used as the basis for narratives presented in the guide and in this thesis. Narratives helped me test my hearing of community, gave voice to the experiences of low-income and marginalized individuals and groups, and assisted in giving legitimacy to "silenced voices" in the community. The focus groups provided a way of adding examples

based on community experiences and of wording ideas in a way that reflects the community culture. It also allowed me to check my interpretation and description with that of the experts on this subject, community members themselves. An important limitation of the research is that focus group sessions were not held with the Children and Families, Women's Issues, First Nation's, and Health and Safety Working Groups because these groups were not active at that time.

Revision and Expansion of Manual to Include Community Voice

The draft guide was revised to reflect what people told me in interviews and focus groups. In the revision process I was able to add examples of community experiences, descriptions of the community from residents' own perspectives, pictures of the area, and ideas developed by the people who know Downtown Eastside Strathcona best. Quotations and poems were selected only from people involved in the Community Directions process. This limitation was self-imposed because I was concerned that this research is quite removed from the day to day lives of many residents and thus there was no way for me to ensure that they were sufficiently aware of how their words would be used to give informed consent.

To select relevant photos, Research Advisory Group members and asset inventory volunteers were given disposable cameras to take pictures for the guide - pictures that to them say something about the community. Although the selection of the individual photos for the guide was based on representative themes, some photos were not selected because individual residents could be identified and permission had not been received.

Overall, the Community Directions process made three main contributions to *Getting the Words AND the Music*. First, the membership gave permission to the development of the idea based on their own recognition that yes, they had said it before and yes, they do know

what they want for their community. Next, although the key themes were drawn from the documents and my previous experience in the community, some of the specific examples and details were based on what Community Directions members said in meetings. Community Direction members also regularly reviewed the document and made specific suggestions for improvement.

Approval by Community Directions

A semi-final draft was submitted to the General Membership for review in January 2001. At the next meeting, the semi-final draft was again presented and the General Membership was asked to approve the document in principle. I also asked specifically for residents to tell me how they felt about the use of the first person plural in the document, essentially speaking in the voice of the community. All responses were positive, expressing views that the document does actually say what they might say. They voted to approve the use of the first person plural, accepting this document as a collective voice. Volunteers were invited to participate in the Advisory Committee to review the final draft. A final draft was then prepared and reviewed by the Advisory Committee. The process of desktop publishing took longer than expected in part because of the ongoing changes in the project and subsequent changes in the document to reflect these changes. As a result, new decisions of the Working Groups were added and were not vetted by the Advisory Committee. This was considered a reasonable approach because the decisions themselves were approved by the Community Directions membership.

Thesis Preparation

Parallel to the guide preparation and participation in the community was an ongoing process of assessing this knowledge in terms of current community development theory and

practice. The last stage then was to insert the guide into a doctoral thesis in a way that would honor the knowledge of the community but also allow it to be analyzed in an academic discourse. In my first attempt, I used a conventional thesis format beginning with the research methods, a literature review, a data summary, and conclusions. In this attempt, *Getting the Words AND the Music* was an appendix. I also wrote in the third person, using the voice of third party researcher, attempting to ascribe some level of objectivity to the research analysis and report.

This way of organizing the thesis presented several concerns. First, the story of community development put forward through the ideas of residents was to be seen as an information source referenced in an appendix rather than substantive body of knowledge central to the thesis. Second, the thesis was being prepared as part of a doctoral degree that is concerned about leadership in practice. To relegate this description of community leadership in practice to an appendix seemed in opposition to the purpose of the degree. Third, *Getting the Words AND the Music* contains a significant amount of information about the community that is necessary for analysis but would otherwise need to be repeated, creating significant redundancy.

The use of a third person, objective researcher voice also seemed out of synch with the purpose of both the degree and the results of the research. It did not seem to provide the capacity to speak from the heart nor to portray the experiences and ideas of low-income residents in the spirit they were offered. The voice of the dissertation was incompatible with the voice of *Getting the Words AND the Music*.

After much discussion, the research supervisory committee suggested a format that placed *Getting the Words AND the Music* front and centre. This format would mean that the

thesis would for the most part begin at the end of the research project and work back to describe and analyze what the findings might mean for community development theory and practice. They also encouraged me to use a personal voice, to use the voice of practice and to acknowledge that the research project was a personal “journey” that would significantly influence my view of leadership in practice.

Research Challenges and Opportunities

This research journey involved many methodological challenges and opportunities. The description of it sounds like a linear progression of tasks; it was everything but. Community Directions members came and went, opportunities for conversations emerged informally, and my practice and the research overlapped. It was difficult to keep roles and processes clear. The ideas for *Getting the Words AND the Music* were simultaneously collected from both a document review and participation in the process, thus the analysis of each can only be artificially separated one from the other. Each step however presented new and unique opportunities for collecting, clarifying, and re-considering ideas and ways of approaching issues.

Foremost amongst the challenges was the previous experiences of the community with research, experiences which created an environment of distrust. This distrust was mediated by the perspective and bias I as a researcher brought to the process and articulated as a participant. However, the issue of who is entitled to speak for the community was an underlying concern that had to be addressed throughout the research.

Distrust of Research

Concern about how research overall is conducted in the community was a persistent theme in preliminary discussions and throughout the research. The DTES is a marginalized community that often feels victimized by outsiders such as researchers, bureaucrats, and “do-gooders” and therefore has significant distrust of researchers. It has, over the years, been the subject of numerous research projects and consultation processes under the broad rubric of community development. Residents and agency representatives of Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside Strathcona community have expressed concerns that, in many of these processes, they have been a “means” to an institutional end, an end that reflects the interests of those outside the community. To be respectful of the community, it was important to be aware of the undercurrent of distrust about research and researchers and to plan the research in a way that addressed these issues at the outset.

If my research was to be useful to residents and agencies, I had to ensure that the process did not victimize them further. Community members and agency representatives indicated that they were not interested in dedicating their time and resources to a research project that primarily benefited the researcher and the university. If they were going to participate, it was important that the research not draw down on their ability to work on critical day-to-day issues and benefit the community in some way.

This distrust also presented opportunities. Communities and community development practice are complex and have many layers. Relationships between people and organizations, as well as the activities that are currently going on in a community, affect the way in which community development practice, and indeed research on community development practice, can be implemented. I therefore looked for a research method that was non-intrusive and trust-building, leaves something useful in the community, was consistent with community

development practice, and was robust enough to be successful in an environment of highly complex relationships.

A Personal Lens

Another challenge in undertaking this research project was to recognize the impact of my own lived experience on the research. As Usher, Bryant and Johnson (1997, p. 213) suggest when they advise that “reflexive research is a practice which embodies a critique of its own situatedness,” it is important that this experience be considered in a critical and transparent way. While my purpose was to give voice to the lived knowledge and experience of residents and agencies with respect to community development, it was not possible to achieve this without influencing the narrative in some way. The research seeks to privilege the voices of residents and agencies, but it is also clearly imbedded with the researcher’s voice - my voice, and is part of a “personal trajectory of understanding” (Usher et al, 1997, p. 218). Thus, it is important to describe how my personal history and previous experience in low-income communities influenced how I approached the research and how I as a practitioner changed as a result of this research.

My personal history gave me a consciousness about experiences shared by many people in the community. I grew up in a working class family in an isolated northern community. As a child, I had several foster and adopted brothers and sisters and there was a residential school that comprised part of the school I attended. Family members and friends were and continue to be affected by addictions, racism, and cultural genocide in ways similar to many residents of Downtown Eastside Strathcona. There remain many unresolved childhood questions about inequality and injustice and these questions are reflected in my day-to-day practice. As an adult, I was a single parent for several years, depending on more

than one occasion on the social safety net to put food in my children's bellies. This background means that I have some understanding of what people go through on a daily basis trying to make ends meet, and I brought this understanding to the research through a general knowledge of issues facing low-income people.

However, I have also experienced privilege. I am a Caucasian woman who has not experienced discrimination based on the color of my skin, nor, as a child, did I personally experience addictions and abuse in my home. I was able to get a post-secondary education and have not experienced multi-generational poverty. I cannot know the day-to-day despair of having seemingly limited options. People in the community know I am "not from here" and that creates some barriers that had to be recognized in this research process. Fortunately, I did not have to identify these barriers on my own. Residents seemed willing to point out when my language or approach presented barriers. Also, both Community Directions and the research processes provided opportunities for those members who had experienced significant racism and classism to share that experience and raise the awareness of these issues in the entire group.

My previous experience in community development also influenced my involvement and subsequent analysis of this research project. Prior to coming to Downtown Eastside Strathcona, I returned to my hometown in the Northwest Territories to work for three years with Aurora College. There I discovered that full participation in governance on the part of Aboriginal people makes a huge impact on the types of policies implemented by government. No longer do Aboriginal people live at one end of town, no longer are all public roles occupied by Caucasians. Childhood friends and neighbours introduced me to the multitude of ways northern Aboriginal people are working to "heal" their communities through the

incorporation of traditional knowledge in development, governance, and public policy. This experience demonstrated the significant contribution that Aboriginal people are making to discussions on these subjects.

I first became involved in Downtown Eastside Strathcona about five years ago when I accepted the position of manager of the Vancouver East Community Skills Connection. In this role, I helped the Downtown Eastside Strathcona community establish community-based literacy programs, appropriate employment services, and innovative skill development projects and I was asked to be the community's facilitator for consultations with the Ministries of Children and Families and Education, Skills and Labour. Working with Carnegie Community Centre to establish a community-based literacy program, I experienced both the suspicion of external institutions and the potential for innovation when the capacity for negotiation and flexibility is present. For two years, I also volunteered as board member and then chair of the WISH Drop In Centre Society, a centre serving women in the sex trade. I work now for the City of Vancouver as the researcher evaluator with the DTES Community Revitalization/Crime Prevention Project, the overall community mobilization and capacity building project which Community Directions is part of.

My work in each of these instances was based on an articulated commitment to social justice principles and to the value of community decision-making in program planning and service delivery. Each involvement with this community entailed an invitation and ongoing guidance through community advisory committees. I adopted an approach to my work intended to contribute to the work of existing community initiatives rather than to competition between groups. I also strived to include residents in meaningful ways. In working with the WISH Drop-In Centre Society, I worked with other board members to

develop strategies to help the organization move toward a sex-trade worker run organization and to develop programs aimed at increasing the capacity of women to better participate in community initiatives. Lastly, my work was guided by a commitment to low-income people rather than driven by the requirements of public policy. Overall, the experiences that residents shared with me helped me to better understand that the painful experiences of anyone in our community cannot be ignored without diminishing the whole community in some way. This understanding influenced the lens through which *Getting the Words AND the Music* was written.

Voices of the Community

The third challenge in conducting this research arose in some ways from the first two. There was significant distrust of researchers and there was a practitioner researcher with a previously articulated perspective on community development. How possible is it then to adequately express the voices of the community? In this research, a specific process that involves residents and agency representatives was used as a basis for identifying the views of low-income and marginalized group. Does that process include all people in this group that live the community? Clearly it does not. However, the process is open to all residents, with a particular invitation to low-income and marginalized residents to be involved.

The changing membership that results from an open process such as this presented other quandaries, particularly the seemingly unending and somewhat unstructured nature of the data collection. A corresponding challenge was in identifying when there is sufficient agreement on a specific theme. I responded to this challenge in two ways: First, I followed the decision process agreed to by the general membership and double-checked with them in the final stages through a question at a General Meeting to ensure this was still acceptable.

Second, I trusted my experience that once a written document is out in the public realm, it does not take long before problematic items to begin to generate a response. Thus I waited for a few weeks to print the final version and in that time no specific problems were identified.

Another important challenge is the issue of voice. According to Chambers (1997, p. 39), "a person who is not poor, who pronounces on what matters to those who are poor is in a trap." In *Getting the Words AND the Music*, I transcribe what I understand participants in the process to be saying, so I am not pronouncing but rather I am recording. Participants then had the opportunity to review it and ask for changes which were subsequently made. I then asked participants whether the guide should speak as "we" or "they." The membership asked that the first person plural be used.

It is also important to ask who was included in the process and who is not. This research does not claim to be describing the views of all low-income residents, just the ones involved in this process. Community Directions is an open process to which any resident or community agency can belong. It is targeted to low-income residents, so some who are not low-income may not feel accepted. A related problem is who is entitled to speak for low-income residents. This is a community where many agency representatives are residents, are members of marginalized communities, or share experiences of low-income residents, so it is almost impossible to differentiate entitlement to speak.

The issues of trust, personal bias, and voice are very important issues to qualitative research, particularly in low-income communities. I responded to issues that emerged with openness, seeking guidance from the Community Directions process and the advisory

committee when required. Ideally, the subject of research and voice will form areas of ongoing discussion between researchers and the community.

In summary, this chapter provided an overview of a collaborative research approach in which I, as the researcher, set out to explicitly privilege the voices of low-income people in community development. The research method was designed to give credit to residents for their knowledge about their own community and community development theory and practice, knowledge that is expressed in previous reports, in the community process being examined, and in what residents and agency representatives have to say about community development for their community. However, this knowledge was also an eclectic, ever-changing dialogue with no beginning and no end. This characteristic speaks to the nature of this community and of community development. The next chapter presents additional stories that residents and organizational representatives shared in order to further illustrate the concepts introduced in *Getting the Words AND the Music* and offer yet another place where resident voices are reflected in this research.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONNECTING WITH THE COMMUNITY

Up to this point, you have been introduced to a view of community development from the perspective of a low-income inner-city community and a description of the process to articulate and validate this. But how are you to know if the voices of the low-income community are actually reflected in the final version of *Getting the Words AND the Music*? What parts of the conversations were included and what were excluded? How was the interpretation informed by my own experience in the community? This chapter presents excerpts from the conversations showing that those participating in the research made valuable contributions to the development of *Getting the Words AND the Music* and that Downtown Eastside Strathcona community has a unique understanding and knowledge about community development theory and practice in marginalized communities.

With the hopes of giving order to what was often a free-flowing conversation, I will use the guiding questions from the interview and focus group format as the themes to organize this chapter. These themes are grouped into three categories: 1.) the community, including the role of community organizations, the way organizations work together, the importance of the voice of low-income people, and community issues, 2.) community development practices, those that work and those that do not, and 3.) the guide, its strengths and limitations, the opportunities and risks of using it, and potential users. A description of the changes made to incorporate specific ideas raised will be woven through the discussion followed by a section on general changes made. The chapter will close with a summary of what was learned through the research process.

The Community

The questions about the community itself centred on the participants' views of how the community is described in the guide, how the voices of low-income residents are incorporated in community processes, the role of community organization, and how organizations work together or not. This section will also include responses with respect to how community issues were described.

Describing the Community

Overall, the vast majority of residents and agency representatives who participated in the development of *Getting the Words AND the Music* supported the description of the community and the portrayal of the community as a place for low-income people. They supported the argument that this low-income community deserves to be recognized and protected from threats to the community through prejudice, classism, and being treated as a pathology. They felt that the guide presents the perspective of residents who want to be recognized for their capacities as the members of the community, not just for their needs. In doing so, it successfully addresses many tough issues and includes the perspectives of people who are traditionally excluded.

In particular, participants seemed to appreciate the emphasis on the need for respect for the community:

I think that is really clear and important. I think if people come with respect, and with acknowledgement that people have skills and abilities and capacities to build on those abilities ... then the way they address the community will be very different.

According to this participant, respect involves humility and a capacity to accept people for who they are: "Instead of trying to change people's perceptions, there is a need to have a conversation about what we can all do as citizens to help each other feel safer."

Research participants appreciated the way in which low-income people are described as a tremendous untapped resource. In the words of one respondent:

just thinking about the strengths of people that live down here...there are some that have had wonderful jobs, really significant work in their lives...and then they...because now their pension or whatever does not meet their physical needs and that ...the only thing they can get free is food...these are people who have worked all their lives....

It was also mentioned that there are enormous amounts of frustration that people cannot express themselves and enrich their lives because they live in poverty. It was suggested that a human face be put on this guide by putting more personal stories into the text. This was achieved through inclusion of specific quotes from residents and agency representatives who participated in the research and with poetry written by poets who live or have been historically highly involved in the community.

The description of the history of the community was seen as valuable. One respondent articulated this view:

this is also a very stable neighbourhood in terms of people who move here and stay here, and what contributes to the neighbourhood is a strong sense of history and a strong sense of...if you want to find out what a building was used for you pretty much just ask around and you can get a history of a the building ...I think that is a sense of history.

One respondent mentioned that he liked the description of Strathcona as part of an overall Downtown Eastside Strathcona community. In his view, "we come from the same low-income background, just different styles of living." He noted that, in his view, it is important to speak as one community and to recognize that not everyone in Strathcona owns

their own homes: "Walking through Strathcona, it looks like a funky little community, but poor people actually live there."

Participants expressed a feeling that *Getting the Words AND the Music* successfully counters the negative image of the community presented in the media. Some points raised include: "reporters consistently use the term skid row even though they have been told it keeps people down.... this city needs a boogey man...and we are it" and "when a new housing project is built, they never say, 'because of the great cooperation among the many organizations down here, there are good things happening'." They highlighted the article on the New Portland Hotel entitled "Welcome to Arthur Erickson's flophouse" (Vancouver Sun, May 6, 2000) as an example of how the media shows even the positive in a negative light.

Discussion also was introduced about the nature of poverty. In the view of several respondents, if we understand poverty, we know that it does not just happen in our community, it is a global issue. When other communities do not recognize and address poverty in their midst, it is that much harder for individuals who find themselves without a job. In this view, if we work together on issues of poverty and unemployment, it is that much easier for those of us who later have the same experience.

• There were many strong feelings about the issue of conflict in the community. According to one interviewee, "money has caused most divisions." Others suggested that here is an unrealistic expectation of unanimity or as one key respondent indicated: "excuse me, do all you people agree? Why do we have to have one voice?" There was also a view that external agencies and government contribute to conflict by duplicating community processes or services. It also suggested that conflict emerges when external organizations offer community partnerships and then do not fulfill the promise or make decisions

unilaterally. Others indicated that the divisiveness in the community is made too much of in the media: “we don’t always agree on everything, but on the basics, there is a very united community, on the broad issues we do consult, we don’t always get along.” *Getting the Words AND the Music* was seen as helping to address the one-sidedness of this portrayal. I worked with the text of the guide to ensure these views are reflected. These suggestions were added to subsequent drafts.

Listening and Hearing the Voices of Low-Income Residents

When residents were asked in the focus group sessions how they get their ideas heard, it was noted that as a community, “we manage to listen to people” and that “everyone tries to support that person even though what he comes out with as totally irrelevant, at least he got his blurb.” Others felt that it is about reaching for the common ground, “it’s watching where these big triangles land and where they intersect.”

An important aspect of supporting people to be heard is facilitation: “That is actually a facilitation rule down here ... that when you hold any kind of community meeting it is really important for people to just have their say.” The role of the facilitator in supporting people to have their say is to “create a level of safety that would allow people to say I don’t give a --- what your opinion is, this is mine.” They also have their say through the use of brainstorming techniques: “it is the wild and crazy and that works for the atmosphere, you have to be heard even if you chuckle about ...to have the atmosphere free of ridicule opens up the whole process and you can really get the ‘brain’ storming.”

Letting people have their say was viewed as an important component of building the capacity to work together:

Most people want to talk about their experience and there is an understanding that experience is larger than life and so if you just let them have their

moment in time then and only then can you move on. If you stop people from sharing their experience that is where you get stuck. Groups that get stuck always cut people off and they don't let them just share their experience. There is a rule down here, you don't actually do any work the first three times you meet. You just get to know each other and then...

One focus group participant described her view of the importance of low-income voices being heard: "When we listen to people, it empowers them, it builds leadership."

Although key respondents were not specifically asked about how to ensure the voices of low-income residents are heard, many of the responses speak to this issue. According to one interviewee, anyone working in community development should "never dis-empower, always validate, like laying out criticisms or truth is different, that doesn't mean you have to rip someone's heart out, validation is difficult." Although it is important to not dis-empower, this respondent cautioned that it is also important to be "sensitive to all ensuing roles of power, of how power is identified, given, allocated, to whom and by whom" and to know if "you are clear on the ensuing responsibilities." This respondent felt that "all of those things are really crucial for all the individuals and groups that have [authority] given to them or that take it."

Another warned that in doing so, "it is important to check assumptions and take the necessary time to involve people." It is also important to put personal opinions aside, "to get the rhythm and be open-minded." Although ways of ensuring voices are heard were described, it was also acknowledged that "we haven't figured out how to turn things over to the residents." The need for more training and support in this area was identified.

Role of Community Organizations

Agency representatives involved in the key respondents interviews were asked about the role of their specific organizations in community development. Overall, the responses

indicated that community organizations play a fundamental role in community development in the DTES. According to one respondent, “the role of all the community based organizations is to support the residents in achieving what they want.” They do that by providing administrative support, facilitation and coordination, and direct involvement in community development initiatives.

In providing administrative support, community organizations act to some degree like the community living room. They provide a place to leave messages and use a computer or photocopier, supporting residents with resources they often need for community involvement but do not have in their own homes. In their facilitation and coordination role, they facilitate the involvement of their members in community development processes within their own organizations or in the broader Downtown Eastside Strathcona community. They provide training where required and a sounding board for residents to express ideas, drawing attention to principles of community development while supporting capacity building to occur. At other times, representatives of community organizations recognize that committee work is often highly demanding of time and resources, both barriers to full resident involvement. Because they represent community-based organizations that provide a venue for residents to participate in discussions about their community, organization representatives can play a role in linking the views of residents to community decision-making processes.

In fulfilling these roles, community organizations enhance the potential for continuity of community processes. However, this carries with it some responsibility as well: “If Community Directions is a format that is going to evolve and carry on, then we have a responsibility to stay involved, to not just give up when it is no longer the flavour of the

month.” By staying involved, community organizations play an important role in ensuring that community development is ongoing.

How Organizations Work Together

When those involved in the focus groups were asked what they would like to have said about how organizations work together, the responses were broad. One participant noted that if she were to plot how organizations work together in an integrated way, what would emerge is a dense web. Another felt that the way in which organizations work together through Community Directions provides an opportunity for individual residents to be heard and have their input viewed as valuable. Another indicated that at times Community Directions is viewed as too process oriented, but this participant felt that if processes are too outcome oriented, residents will not be truly listened to or heard.

Others talked about the way organizations take chances and believe in people. One focus group participant stated that “We know how it's done, just do as we tell you. Stop asking. We told you just do it, take a chance, get gutsy.” Another noted that “People will only come forward if they think they are able. If they think they are able, then the rest of it is up to me as a facilitator and them to declare that this we can do and this you need to teach me. I found the most amazing people through this process and it really was just about being willing to accept people’s word.”

Participants felt that the way the community works together contributes to the democratization of community services. Residents and community groups work together in both formal and informal ways. Formally, consortiums, collaborations and partnerships are formed. Informally they work together by wearing many hats, by grouping/regrouping, through informal exchange, and by supporting rather than blocking specific initiatives. Focus

group participants noted that there are so many ways of working together that it may be a good idea to group them under themes. Ways of working together also change over time. Initiatives start as a partnership response to an issue and some are eventually so successful that they become an independent organization.

Community Issues

Although the issue section was generally seen as well structured and complete, there were some parts that needed correction and others that required “beefing up.” Specifically, the following changes were suggested and made:

- the economic development section should be expanded significantly
- the description of mental health issues should be more detailed
- case management and harm reduction should be described as cornerstones to the community approach
- the analysis of the drug and alcohol issues should not imply that we are not looking at the all these services to be in the DTES and should articulate the need for education training and employment opportunities to help people make transitions
- the Chinese speaking community’s concern about the alcohol and drug strategies should be openly discussed, and
- more statistical data should be added to the description of housing issues.

It was suggested that *Getting the Words AND the Music* needs to emphasize that the work on community issues is changing and evolving. The document should not imply that the issues are finite and quantifiable, rather it should show that the issues and opportunities in the community are in a constant state of flux. As well, it was suggested that the integration

and complexity of issues be strengthened. This section was significantly changed to respond to these concerns.

Community Development Approaches

In order to determine whether the approach to community development described in the guide is consistent with the views of the low-income community, I asked very general questions about what in their view works or does not work. This section provides an overview of their responses, showing that there are some clear expectations of community development for their community.

Community Development Approaches and Practices That Work Best

Overall, it was suggested that it is important to recognize the years and years of experience of residents and community agencies. According to one interviewee “it may not fit the mold and people may not speak the same language” but the knowledge built up in the community is central to shaping an understanding effective community development for Downtown Eastside Strathcona.

Key respondents and focus group participants indicated that it is very important to start where people are at. Residents who have skills and abilities should move community-based activities forward so that others, who are not able to participate at the time, can benefit. One respondent described this approach in the following way: “We tapped into something that people can understand - the popcan economy - and we worked on building capacity at elementary stuff. We worked around the edges on what we could do – action oriented on doable things.” In taking this approach, every step of the process contributes to people.

Passion and willingness to invest is also really important as often times change happens because it “started from one dedicated guy.”

Good community development involves flexibility. This approach was expressed in this way: “If someone comes through the door and their need doesn’t fit, it doesn’t matter, they get something anyway.” Taken at a community level, flexibility means recognition that “community development is not one thing that can happen, there are a hundred things on the go at different times, you look at the opportunities to develop capacity to take on things. And the more things that the community can take on that you don’t need to pay for, the more things you can develop.”

Capacity building involves having a vision of supporting residents to work into paid positions. According to one respondent, “people come into the programs to use them and then we get the people and make them part of the delivery...then as part of the delivery, they build their skills sets and take training and do all these things ...” which in many cases meant people eventually moved into paid positions with that organization.

Community development also means being people-centred. An example was used of a government agency that focused on its own policies and procedures, housing at risk families in hotels away from schools and community services, all to the detriment of the resident and at a cost to government. Being people-centred means community processes with culturally-based outreach strategies to draw in the voice of the Chinese speaking, Vietnamese speaking, Spanish speaking and First Nations communities into the process.

Participants identified some issues that need to be considered if a community process is to fully draw in the diverse cultures of the community. First, some residents who are new to Canada have much different experiences with democratic processes, others have limited

experience with democratic processes, and yet others have endured trauma at the hands of government authorities in their country of origin. These experiences may limit their understanding and interest in community processes. Second, language is understandably a barrier and even more so if there are not sufficient resources for translation. According to one interviewee, a representative does not mean the same thing in all cultures and "in many cultures no one speaks for others, they can only speak for themselves." It was specifically suggested that if you want to consult with the Chinese speaking community, it is not appropriate to ask for representatives. Instead a community development practitioner should go out and talk to the community. On the other hand, in some cultures there is also the view that if you do not have an education, you should not speak on community matters. Third, some new Canadians do not feel comfortable talking about problems openly, it is more private and considered shameful. Thus, low-income people in that culture would not talk about poverty or families or about drug issues affecting their children. Finding ways to talk about these issues without being disrespectful to cultural ways is very important.

Last of all, there are different approaches to community involvement that should be considered. When doing the asset inventory in the Chinese speaking community, people did not think of their skills as anything special. In their view, Chinese cooking or tai chi are very ordinary and something the community shares; it is not something they get paid for. They feel that if they have something to give, they give it, they do not want to do it in an organized way. It is important to honor people for what they give and how they give it. As well, in the country of origin, people may not get involved in making community decisions in the same way. When a building or park is being designed, many Downtown Eastside Strathcona residents want to be involved in the very early stages of design. However, some Chinese-

speaking residents have said that they would prefer it if a some preliminary design work is done by a professional designer who would then bring something concrete to them for input. A community development process should respect both ways of providing input, providing opportunities for different ways of being heard and for ways to link these voices together in a meaningful way.

Community ownership of resources was also an important issue in community development that works. This issue was explained in the following way:

We own Bruce Erickson Place across the way, we own the building free and clear, but we do not own the land ...what that means is we don't have any equity so you can't go to the table with a developer with money essentially so you are always dependent on the various levels of government to provide funds for this kind of thing of course that varies with the political stock of government.. If the community controlled the land, then we could have a measure of control and initiative on their own housing that is difficult for us to have... I think community ownership of housing and land has to be critical to give us the leverage.

Overall, community development has to be supported in an ongoing way as suggested in the following thoughts:

...unless there is somebody or some group who is able to do this, then we all stand out here isolated... or like the DTES Strath Coalition...people trying to do things as part of their everyday work...to make it truly successful, to make it really work, to make a difference, it really has to be supported....couldn't devote enough time to housing without support

Community development is thus long-term. To support this, government "has to understand that development is an elongated process and that it is just about 100 % process... very seldom are you going to get a process that you say we have achieved it, this is it ...fold up your desks, let's go...there has to be a commitment to the nature of development, the ethics of it."

Community Development Approaches and Practices That Do Not Work

The key respondents were asked for their views on which community development approaches do not work. One interviewee stated, "It does not work if government simply announces and if they do not have the resources to do the necessary work." She suggested that for community development to work, there needs to be an issue of concern to the community, a belief within the community that involvement will make a difference, and sufficient resources for education and translation.

Community development that does not work is expert driven, top down, and telling people what to do rather than listening. One way this happens is that meetings are called, a workshop style format that generates solutions is used, and then the experts secure funding, rather than the community itself. According to one respondent "it becomes a staff working plan...it never is owned by the community." According to another: "everyone has to have a voice – it does not work to be autocratic" which is what it feels like to marginalized people when it is primarily staff at the table. Overall, when projects are intended to build capacity, it "doesn't work to do capacity building as job creation or to do community development with accountability measures and project management...should use action-reflection model instead."

Often processes that are professionally-based have "elevated ideas of what success is and no input brought in from other parts of the community about whether it is a good idea or not...they are not developing a process, it is just community located, not community driven, lack of consensus building." In many instances "people are assigned an area and not enough disclosure about work that is involved and resources assigned, [there is a] lack of planning and openness." Guidelines are predetermined and "when specific issues are outside set guidelines, there is too rigid a framework."

The Guide Itself

In order to determine whether *Getting the Words AND the Music* would be a useful way to describe the experiences and ideas of the low-income community with respect to community development, I asked several questions with respect to the guide and how it could be used.

Strengths of the Guide

Research participants were first asked to consider the strengths of the first draft of *Getting the Words AND the Music*. Generally, respondents felt that the guide provides a good overview of the community and does a good job of presenting the community in a positive light. According to one respondent, it showed that the DTES is a:

community which is struggling politically to make things better, there is also a community, I feel, of people who relate to each other...it reflected so well on the collaboration of Community Directions really here in the community...I don't know if anyone else has done this...real community organizing...broad working together.

Participants also indicated that the ideas contained within the guide are explained simply and in a way that is respectful to the community. They claimed that it is very readable, accessible and coherent, and has a very good layout and structure. It breaks things down well and in an understandable way. It is written in plain language and shows the depth that can be achieved with plain language. Several participants indicated that they thought *Getting the Words AND the Music* would be a valuable tool to share the community perspective with outsiders as shown in the following response:

what really works is the way that you have highlighted the whole aspect of inclusiveness that everyone has a right to be here. I think right away, if you are from the outside looking in the DTES especially with all the media you immediately get the sense that gentrification is the way to go, I mean

obviously, clean up the streets right... I think here you have said no, that is not the case, that is not what the community wants, you make it very clear.

Another respondent liked the graphic that showed the community at the heart of the community development process and the foundation as both strengths and vulnerabilities. The way the principles were separated out and the difference between local and outside perceptions was also viewed positively.

The tone was highlighted as a strength by the majority of respondents. It was generally viewed as respectful and inclusive with several respondents commenting that "this doesn't talk down, it talks to." Another noted that the writer seems to understand the community: "it feels like it was written by a member of the community." Yet another talked about how she had lived this life, experienced being silenced and continues to feel silenced even though she works so hard to lead a contributing life. She felt that *Getting the Words AND the Music* gave her a feeling of being heard. Generally respondents liked the use of "we," a specific comment was that "it shows that you can't just come in and change these people, there is a definite community view, a definite opinion and voice."

This guide was also identified as useful in setting the record straight on the notion that the community is so divided that nothing can get accomplished. In the view of one respondent, this way of viewing the community is used as an excuse for not getting involved and that:

You can really tell when people don't have any relationship with this community when they keep talking about the politics and how everyone is at each other's backs and all that stuff over and over that justifies them treating everyone in the community with disrespect...it's an excuse to not really work with the community and it is just so obvious that they have no relationship.

Another respondent noted that in *Getting the Words AND the Music*, "there is a focus on things being quite positive and solution focused –one of the things that happens in our

community is we get mired in all the dilemmas, often forgetting that if we don't look for the light at the end of the tunnel, we won't see it." A guide such as this would contribute to greater understanding about how the community can work together.

Getting the Words AND the Music and the process used to develop it was described as an unique and worthwhile approach to research for this community. Surprise and appreciation were expressed when members of Community Directions were advised that the guide will be given over to the community to use as they see fit.

Limitations of the Guide

The limitations of the guide identified by key respondents and focus group participants can be grouped in three categories: layout and tone, specific gaps, and general content. In terms of the layout, the main critique was that it is too long and the layout is too dense for some readers. Some suggestions included: adding some little "did you know" boxes with people's stories, informational items, or interesting quotes. One suggestion was that length can be dealt with by reducing redundancy and by writing the chapters so that they can be separated out for specific use. Effort was made in subsequent drafts to make these changes.

With respect to tone, concern was expressed that the tone is not "objective," that it has an obvious emotional attachment to the community and because it speaks about strength, it will be discredited. "I do not think other communities are ready for us to be as strong or as together and as wise as we are. They want us to be victims." Along a similar vein, it was suggested that the guide also needs to show that the community speaks a very different language from that of government and that body language is important. Opportunities for

readers to reflect on the strength of the community and the differences in language were provided through provocative questions at the end of each chapter.

The main gaps that were identified included the need for references to the role of arts and culture, the history of Aboriginal people in the area, the impact of the changing economic environment, and the range of incomes in the community. Specifically, one respondent noted that the role Carnegie Community Centre plays in supporting cultural, artistic and musical events should be highlighted. He noted that this is only possible because there is a wealth of talent, diversity of cultures, and a resident commitment to connecting with others. There was a suggestion that we also add a reference to the services the community offers to support people of different languages and cultures. Although description of history and culture provided was identified by many respondents as a strength, there was a need for more discussion of the history of First Nations in the area. As well, it was suggested that something about the impact of Woodward's closing and the change in the drug trade be added to the history section. It was also noted that the levels of poverty vary in the community and that not everyone lives in poverty. Specific mention was made of the need to recognize that condo owners and middle-income families in Strathcona are also part of our community. These changes were made.

Participants indicated that this document should give voice to the community by highlighting the special stories that show the positive things that happen. This could be individual or organizational. According to one participant, "I think we are more progressive than just about any community I have seen." In view of this suggestion, additional quotes and experiences were added to the document.

One point that was identified as missing was a discussion of the arrogance of some approaches, how disrespectful, and how almost maliciously they turn out when, in the interests of professionalization, people disregard the feelings of the people they are working with. The view was expressed that this approach results in some residents feeling devalued because professionals do not even give them the time of day. Instead they give residents answers and start implementing their decisions without involving the resident or their community.

With respect to overall content, some respondents felt that a limitation of *Getting the Words AND the Music* was that it did not address inequalities in access to resources. One participant felt that the guide should encourage decision-makers to recognize the divisions and allocate resources fairly. Some felt that there should have been more discussion about why sometimes people do not trust government, how people are tired of being consulted without any action.

As well, concern was raised that the guide does not reflect the positive role of churches in providing food, clothing, shelter, drug and alcohol services, and welfare and housing advocacy. According to one respondent "a lot of them [churches] are very self effacing, but they do have major part in people's lives, especially in the distribution of food and clothing." These members, however, did not want the guide to be uncritical of the role of churches; rather they felt that there is some positive work being done that should not be universally condemned. This change was made and reviewed with the concerned members to ensure it reflected what they were trying to say.

The issue of how the boundaries are defined was raised. The first version used the City of Vancouver map that divides up the DTES into communities. One respondent noted

that “we have had issues about the ways the City attempts to balkanize the neighbourhood by chopping it up into bits that don’t represent people’s experience.” The map was then revised to show the community as one community with two neighbourhoods.

Concern was also expressed that the community ought to show openness to outside ideas and be honest with itself about the division and the competitiveness in the community. This respondent felt that it is important to avoid an “us and them” situation. A concern was expressed that *Getting the Words AND the Music* implies that the community does not need to learn from others:

people get set up to be perceived as having all the answers - we can start by becoming willing to let go and recognizing that maybe we don’t have all the answers...we need to learn from others, understanding of how they see our community – if we don’t tap into them, we will stay poor... . We need to accept that everyone has information – we don’t gain the value of everyone’s contribution unless we open up our pain – to hold on to our pain means we have to be closed to others ideas...we have to risk getting past that.

This respondent felt that *Getting the Words AND the Music* should show how we, both residents and non-residents, are all connected, all part of the same thing and all need to work together. As a result of this conversation, the introduction to the guide was changed to highlight its value as a starting point for conversations between the many individuals and groups seeking to make a contribution to the community.

Opportunities for Using the Guide

Overall, *Getting the Words AND the Music* was seen as a good starting point for discussions with many different groups in that it “helps us deal with the complexity of doing things in a collaborative way.” It provides a macro background and is a useful resource for informing the media and funders about the complexity of issues facing the community.

Getting the Words AND the Music needs to be supplemented with training that helps people

to experience the concepts at a real emotional level. This will expose people to the assumptions that inform how they act.

Getting the Words AND the Music could provide a framework for training so that when people come to the DTES they are sensitized and understand what the boundaries are so that they do not do harm through ignorance. The training should involve real people with real examples so people have an understanding of how disempowering and harmful some types of benevolence can be. It was suggested that residents give the training and that some components of the guide be made into a video and a skit. If this kind of training was provided for funders, there may be opportunities to move away from a competitive model of funding and more opportunity for collaborative planning and implementation. According to one interviewee, if this way of working is promoted, "Resources would then be used so that decisions do not cannibalize resources to address a problem that could have been prevented in the first place."

The guide could also be used by other communities because it is solution focused. According to one interviewee "other communities have similar problems and if they had any idea of the range of options they have and if they just thought of the ways they could handle things, their communities might be stronger."

The Risks of Using a Guide

When asked what risks there might be in developing and using a guide to community development, most responded that the potential benefits outweigh the risks. However, some risks were identified that provide guidance as to how it should be used.

One risk identified was that the guide would be outdated very soon or people might only read one part and miss other important aspects. Another view was that the: "only risk is

the temptation to say 'well that work is done, let's just leave it, set it aside'. It ignores the aspect of change. Sometime down the road it will be totally different." It therefore should be described as organic and as living and changing.

There was also concern that a few people will control the use of it, people who are more vocal than others. The guide could potentially be used as the "be all and end all," and as a result, stifle discussion and change. Concern was also expressed that if the guide promotes one view, it may empower people who share that view, giving them greater ability to control. It was suggested effort should be made to ensure that the content is broadbased and representative.

There is also the risk of creating barriers because of language. Unless it is translated into the languages of the community, it could contribute to divisiveness. This issue could not be addressed in this research project because of resource limitations.

Potential Users of the Guide

Generally, respondents thought that the residents described in *Getting the Words AND the Music* would probably benefit from it. However, some concern was expressed about whether people who are in authority positions would buy into the ideas presented. Others suggested that some revisions would make it less threatening to those in power and thus increase the chances of them considering the ideas contained in it.

Several respondents said they would use it to orient new staff to the community. Particular mention was made of part-time staff who do not have as much opportunity to get involved in the community as full-time staff. There is potential for using the guide to help a board of directors and volunteers understand issues.

I like the idea of using this – we have a couple of interns working here for the summer – someone like that reading this report, it wouldn't take them long to

have a very good idea what the community's about...A lot of people who come down here are terrified to come down here – if they are not going to be killed they will be hassled 45 times, there are a lot of myths out there and this will dispel some of that. Once again this is a good introduction.

As well, it was suggested that the guide should be required reading for everyone who comes to the community to work. Specific frustration was expressed that “everyone has their community development rhetoric and that is all it seems to be...they come here and they don't consult, they lobby segments of the community to support whatever their initiative is.”

Organizations in the Downtown Eastside Strathcona are often asked to provide input to groups consulting on issues of poverty provincially and nationally. One respondent felt that she could give this document to such groups to read. The layout of the document was seen as useful for references purposes, one respondent felt that she could see herself referring people to specific sections.

Concern was expressed, however, that the positive description of the community will be dismissed and people will say “of course they would say that about themselves, of course they would say they have something to offer.” This caution was made because she feels that some people do not want the community to be successful, in some way they want the community to be a victim. Specific mention was made of the negative portrayal of the community by the press.

Changes Made to *Getting the Words AND the Music*

As a result of the input provided through these conversations, I made regular and ongoing changes to the document over a year-long period. I addressed the length of the document by editing out redundant material and limiting the detail provided in each area. The layout changed significantly. After consulting with a literacy expert, I changed the format to

a single column with wide margins. I included many text boxes with quotes from respondents and other research participants and incorporated photos taken by community members.

As noted throughout this chapter, I also made substantive changes in the text. In particular, I acknowledged the existence of conflict. However, because the document is about "building community," I decided to limit the airtime given that issue while exploring some of the reasons why conflict might exist. The ways the community currently works together were grouped into categories and examples provided. The categories include: community organizing, planning together, sharing resources, and programming jointly. It was acknowledged that because working together is ongoing, it is not possible to list all the ways that occur thus the ways of working together are by way of example only, there are many more ways that this is occurring in the community. Once these changes were made, the guide was again edited for length.

Overall, although the conversations generated through this process contributed significantly to the enhancement and validation of the guide, a process like this is ongoing, not something that can be contained within a doctoral dissertation. For that reason, the document was designed to foster discussion and to be added to as the community sees appropriate. To that end, the final document will be given to Community Directions in an electronic format so that they can update it and change it in the future.

Summary of What Was Learned

Getting the Words AND the Music describes, and this chapter corroborates, an approach to community development that has some unique characteristics. The most outstanding of these characteristics is a commitment to giving voice and listening to the experiences, hopes, dreams, concerns, and frustrations of marginalized people. In so doing, it

celebrates the history of the community as a safe place for low-income people and people of color and privileges a view of history that includes the experiences of these groups. It critically examines the silencing of marginalized voices and the role of power in setting institutional agendas.

This research also puts on stage a vision for community-based development that recognizes the experience of poverty and marginality, valuing and empowering residents based on their strengths while promoting a way for low-income residents to work together to have a say in how basic human needs are met. This approach to community development emphasizes diversity, respect, and safety for all, acknowledging that marginalized people often experience classism, racism, fear, sexism, and harassment. The vision promotes a holistic approach to issues in which residents and community agencies work collaboratively based on resident decision-making processes.

The tools of community-based development are consistent with this vision - a capacity for community organizing is developed, research and evaluation is undertaken in a way that supports community goals, planning processes foster an understanding of community assets, collaborative structures are promoted, and a community development corporation is used as a foundation for long-term development. However, the work toward the vision and the application of the community development tools do not in any way absolve government of responsibility for services for people who have been marginalized by rapidly changing economic structure. In fact, the approach to community development advocated in this research promotes the delivery of services in a way that builds on strengths and a history of working together.

This summary, however, raises some important questions that can form the basis for further analysis. First, recognizing that Downtown Eastside Strathcona does not exist in isolation, how does this view of community development fit into an overall public policy framework for this community? What other interests are considered in any policy framework and what is the relationship between this community and other interests?

Also, when a community has operated in the margins for its entire history, what is its internal and external experience of dissent? When it has experienced collective victimization, does it express this experience in its day-to-day activities? How can this be understood in a broader society that has highly privileged expectations of behaviour?

It is also useful to consider this vision for a community in light of other community planning experiences. What is it that causes a concentration of marginality in this way? What is the relationship between the overall economy and the experience of marginality? Do we know enough about this experience to address it in a meaningful way? I propose that the answer to these questions lies in a critical examination of what we have done in the past and an openness to alternative measures, recognizing the inadequacy of previous endeavors.

CHAPTER FIVE

POLICY CONTEXT

Community Directions, the focus of this study, is implemented under the auspices of a municipal policy framework aimed at addressing social issues in Downtown Eastside Strathcona. This policy framework is linked to other public policies at both the federal and provincial levels. In order to distill from the experiences of Community Directions ideas on how community development supported by public policy can be more relevant to marginalized communities, it is useful to examine the complex policy environment in which it was undertaken.

This chapter provides a general overview of the policy context showing that the development of policy for communities does not occur in a vacuum, it emerged in response to specific conditions and is influenced by public opinion and by bureaucratic and political processes. This examination will begin with an overview of the context in which the policy initiatives emerged and the multi-faceted policy framework developed in response will be described. In order to unravel the various layers to this multi-faceted policy, the key components of the specific initiative through which Community Directions is supported will be outlined and the participating partners introduced.

The description of the policy framework will show that the community development themes are well represented in the policy framework which, rhetorically speaking, creates the conditions for the possibility of a durable relationship between the low-income community and the City of Vancouver. However, because the policy context also involves other levels of government, it is important to ask how the language of community development is understood at different levels? How are activities coordinated? How are the interests of low-

income residents inserted in decisions at other levels? In exploring these issues, this chapter will close with a discussion of the opportunities and challenges of implementing the approach to community development as described in *Getting the Words AND the Music*.

Overview of the Context

The policy framework supporting Community Directions emerged as a result of concern about overall conditions in the Downtown Eastside expressed by the community, the public, politicians, and bureaucrats alike. As shown in *Getting the Words AND the Music*, throughout the 1990s, Downtown Eastside Strathcona, like other inner-city areas of major cities across Canada, experienced growing levels of poverty, dramatically changing drug use patterns, and major public health issues of epidemic proportions.

In 1996, approximately sixty-five percent of the residents lived below the poverty line. Homelessness was increasing and there were 327 fewer single room occupancy units in 1999 than in 1991 (Community Directions, 2001). Changing drug use patterns, particularly the introduction of cheap cocaine and crack cocaine, dramatically increased the impact on the community and focused national and international attention on the area. Changes in the impact included:

- an average of 147 people per year died of overdoses in Vancouver from 1993 - 1999, up from 39 per year in 1988
- in 1998, overdose was the leading cause of death for males 30 - 49 years of age in British Columbia
- the incidence of HIV infection increased at a rate that is significantly higher than comparable European cities, and

- approximately 2000 cases of hepatitis C infection per year were reported in the Vancouver Richmond Health Board District, of which 70% are the result of injection drug use (McPherson, 2001).

Crime and victimization in the DTES was also increasingly perceived as an issue affecting the community. In 2000, although the DTES represented three percent of the population of Vancouver, it accounted for 18% of crimes against persons, 11% of property crime, and 61% of drug related arrests in the city (Vancouver Police cited in Urmetzer & Van Wynsberghe, 2000). Similarly, medical emergency calls represent 18% of the total number for the city itself.

There was also economic change. Woodward's department store closed in 1994, as did other businesses in the adjacent area. Chinatown continued to experience change as many Chinese-Canadians moved to the suburbs and competing business centers were developed to meet their needs (Yan, 2001). Gastown, once a vibrant tourist destination was now competing with other shopping and tourism areas in other parts of the city (City of Vancouver, 2000). Business owners in both areas felt strongly that the street drug activity on Hastings Street played a major role in the economic decline of the area (McCune, 2000).

Within the resident community, the low-income community was, and continues to be, largely concerned with access to drug and alcohol services and affordable housing. Residents talked at public meetings about the number of friends who had died of an overdose. Women described their fear and anger over the disappearance of sex trade workers. Others speak of horrific conditions in single room occupancy hotels, of washrooms closed, of rat and vermin infestations, and of fire regulations being ignored. Families living in Strathcona expressed

concern about street drug activity in their neighbourhood. Property owners identified property crime as a major issue of concern.

The difference in views and interests with respect to issues in the community creates ongoing conflict (Bula, 2001). And while residents and business owners do not often agree on the issues, they have both at different points questioned the commitment on the part of public policymakers to addressing the issues.

Clearly, the social issues impacting the community required attention from the community, politicians, and policymakers. Significant interest in a progressive approach began to emerge with an apparent willingness to treat addictions as a health issue, an inclination to work toward addressing the root causes of poverty, and a tacit agreement that development that leads to gentrification is problematic. These interests led to the development of a policy framework in which the language of community development is front and centre.

Development of Policy Responses

The development of the policy framework began with the formation of the Mayor's Coalition on Crime Prevention and Drug Treatment, composed of many community representatives, to examine what needed to be done to address the growing addictions issues. In December 1998, City Council also approved a program of Strategic Actions for the Downtown Eastside which was intended to: reduce the incidence of drug addiction, reduce drug related crime, improve conditions at the street level, improve existing SROs and build replacement low-income housing, and help community people to find allies and seek a common future. The Program of Strategic Actions approved by Council directed City staff to "bring forward for Council's approval an application to the recently announced Federal

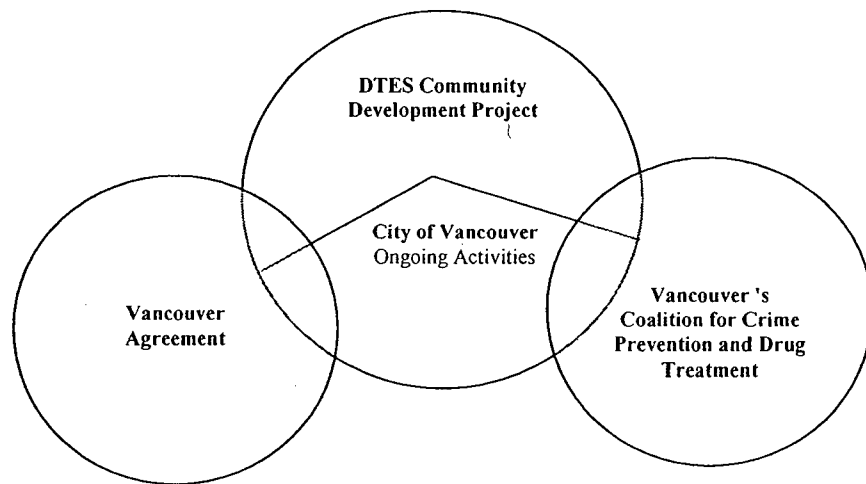
community safety initiative for the Downtown Eastside.” As a result, an application for “Building a Sustainable Future Together” was submitted to the newly formed National Crime Prevention Centre’s Innovation Fund for a demonstration Crime Prevention through Social Development project. The co-sponsor of the application was the Mayor’s Coalition on Crime Prevention and Drug Treatment. Following discussions between political representatives and senior federal, provincial and municipal staff, the project was approved in 1999 with an announcement by the then Federal Minister of Fisheries and Oceans David Anderson that the project “is a strong indication of our support for a broad, community-based approach to revitalize this integral part of Vancouver” (Department of Justice, 1999). The project later became known as the DTES Crime Prevention/ Revitalization Project.

Recognizing the role of other levels of government in addressing health, crime, and economic development issues, City of Vancouver senior management also began discussions with other government staff exploring the potential for creating a comprehensive, multilateral initiative unique to Vancouver, as directed by the approved Program of Strategic Actions. Through these consultations, agreement was reached and articulated in the Vancouver Agreement which was announced in 2000 with intention of coordinating efforts among all levels of government to improve conditions in urban areas of Vancouver generally, starting with the Downtown Eastside. With activity occurring on a number of fronts, it became clear that coordination of the City’s role in the multi-leveled policy framework described above was necessary, and thus, at the City level, the different components were united under one umbrella to be known as the Downtown Eastside Revitalization Program.

The Downtown Eastside Revitalization Program

The DTES Revitalization Program is the overall program through which the City of Vancouver coordinates its work in the Downtown Eastside. As shown in Figure 1, Downtown Eastside Revitalization Program is a comprehensive and multifaceted set of initiatives and includes the work undertaken by Coalition for Crime Prevention and Drug Treatment, ongoing City of Vancouver activities, and the City of Vancouver involvement in the Vancouver Agreement.

Figure 1 Downtown Eastside Revitalization Program



An overview of each program area will contribute to an understanding of how community development is understood within each component. It will also show how the work of Community Directions is integrated with other initiatives in the Downtown Eastside and the degree to which the voice of low-income residents is incorporated in the overall policy environment.

The Downtown Eastside Community Development Project

The DTESCDP is a crime prevention through social development (CPSD) project funded by the National Crime Prevention Centre and other government partners that contribute a total of \$1M per year for five years. The National Crime Prevention Centre is a relatively new and well-funded initiative of the Federal Department of Justice developed to implement the National Strategy on Community Safety and Crime Prevention through demonstration projects at the community level. The demonstration projects evaluate crime prevention through social development (CPSD) model as “an approach to preventing crime and victimization that recognizes the complex social, economic, and cultural processes that contribute to crime and victimization” (National Crime Prevention Centre, 2000, 1). In 1999 when this project was being negotiated, the National Crime Prevention Centre was in its first year of operation. Clear guidelines for applications, funding, and reporting had not yet been established. Decisions were based on negotiated agreements between senior government partners and thus were highly flexible yet were required to comply with somewhat less malleable Treasury Board guidelines. The funds were to be managed under co-management agreements, a condition with which the City was largely unfamiliar. These conditions presented major challenges for the implementation of the project.

Adding to this ambiguous relationship were other partners, primarily funders. Although NCPC contributes by far the largest proportion of funding at \$750,000 per year, Status of Women Canada contributes \$25,000 to enhance the involvement of women; Canadian Heritage contributes \$75,000 to support multi-cultural participation; and the BC Attorney General's Department contributes \$25,000 for evaluation purposes only. As well, in principle, Human Resources Development Canada contributes \$200,000 per year specifically for a youth employment initiative. Each partner has a different relationship with the City and

the project. The inconsistency of policy structures between levels of government created confusion, a confusion that made it more difficult for low-income residents to have input.

When this project was first funded, it focused on conflict resolution and mediation, but through the process of negotiation, it increasingly changed its emphasis to community mobilization and capacity building. The DTESCDP is now defined as a demonstration project the purpose of which is:

to implement and evaluate a social development approach to crime prevention that focuses on building community capacity to address risk factors associated with crime and victimization including poverty, addictions, mental illness, racism, homelessness, and unemployment.

The DTESCDP is composed of six areas of activity: Community Directions, a community capacity building project focusing on low-income residents, Chinatown Revitalization, supporting planning for the revitalization of the Chinatown business district, community cohesion, communications and information, research and evaluation. These areas of concentration were chosen ostensibly so that the diverse voices of the community would be represented and so that specific project objectives would be met. In order to situate Community Directions within this policy context, it is useful to examine each element of the DTESCDP and its funding sources to draw out references to specific policy foci and community development themes.

Community Directions. Community Directions is the largest component of the Downtown Eastside Community Development Project, accounting for over one third of the overall budget. Although Community Directions was introduced and described as the focus of the research in Chapter 1, to understand the relationship of Community Directions to other areas of activity within the DTESCDP, it is useful to consider its origins from a policy perspective. As noted above, when the DTESCDP project proposal was first submitted for

funding, its focus was mediation and consensus building at a broad level. This focus was viewed by the staff who developed the proposal as essential for community improvement projects to proceed.

A shift in thinking occurred soon after the funds were approved when community activists, supported by a community with a long history of social action and of mobilizing in a collaborative way, responded to the new federal-municipal partnership with indignation. In doing so, residents and community agencies expressed concern that a major initiative such as this had been undertaken without community input. Representatives of both residents and community agencies called a community meeting to discuss concerns about the way the City was proceeding. Community representatives appealed to senior City staff and to the Vancouver Foundation for assistance in ensuring that the community voice is heard in this clamor of interests. The Vancouver Foundation, in collaboration with the City, funded a community planning process through which the community identified how they thought the "Building a Sustainable Future" project ought to be implemented.

The first meeting was highly contentious with a lot of issues being placed on the table and very little agreement being reached. A series of small kitchen table discussions was initiated by various community leaders in order to bring divergent views to a common ground. Agreement began to emerge in the summer of 1999 and in September 1999 the community-based grassroots process that had come to be known as Community Directions was formalized, guiding principles were negotiated, and funding agreements achieved.

Community Directions' role was, and continues to be, to coordinate community mobilization and capacity building activities that focus on the low-income community. To ensure that the voices of residents are privileged in the process, Communities Directions, in

the early stages, declined many invitations for collaboration or for a position at a decision-making table. It consistently chose to work at its own pace and to seek a full voice for low-income residents at government-initiated decision-making tables. These choices did little to endear Community Directions to government representatives and much concern about its role as an obstructionist continues to exist. However, now that Community Directions is in its third year of operation and several positions and plans have been developed, this approach is shifting. They are increasingly participating in discussions with other levels of government, presenting views that have been developed through indepth discussion and outreach.

Overall, the formation of Community Directions interjected a counter discourse to a policy that was heavily influenced by a discourse on addictions, crime prevention, and revitalization. Although the agreement upon which Community Directions is based was initially rocky, it was heralded by the community as a first time that government was prepared to support the community in determining its own future. And despite criticism from other levels of government, the City of Vancouver through the DTES Revitalization Program, continues to actively support this grassroots process.

Chinatown Revitalization. The Chinatown Revitalization Program represents an alternative approach to community development that has been advocated as culturally appropriate for the Chinatown community. The Chinatown Revitalization process began in 2000 when the City approached Chinese-speaking community activists to support them in their endeavors to get a Chinatown Revitalization process off the ground. A small group was formed to begin work on a visioning process. This group was formalized into the Chinatown Revitalization Committee with the visioning process being coordinated by a sub-committee dedicated to that role.

The purpose of the Chinatown Revitalization committee is to provide a venue for information sharing and problem solving, where all people who live, work, or visit Chinatown – individuals and organizations – can identify issues, carry out open discussions, and develop work items that will revitalize the community. The recommendations from this committee are referred back to relevant city departments and/or City Council for approval and implementation. The main objective of the committee is to bring together community organizations, merchants, property owners, and residents to develop short-term plans and long-term vision to re-build a vibrant Chinatown as well as to develop a strategy to implement that vision. There are now sub-committees in six key areas: visioning, artists market, marketing and promotion, safety, parking and sports.

This process raises many different questions compared with the Community Directions process. For many, it is a significant first foray for Chinatown into community involvement in planning and development and the beginning of collaborative involvement and dialogue about the issues facing the community. However, as there are very few residents involved in the process, the question needs to be asked: is it community development, economic development, or community planning? What is the best way to undertake community development in a community with little tradition of community development? As this process also includes those who are highly critical of City of Vancouver initiatives for low-income people, how can it be linked to other community development activities? These issues raise many challenges, some of which are addressed in other elements of the overall program. It also provides significant opportunity to explore culturally-based community development in a community with very little tradition in what is currently understood as community development practice.

Community Coordination and Cohesion. This component of the project is to undertake to ensure that the diverse initiatives are linked with each other and with other City endeavors, and to ensure all voices are heard at all levels in the process. Responsibility for community coordination and cohesion activity rests with the project coordinator and is exercised through participation in other project components and through relationships with other community interests.

The types of activities undertaken include linking the other components of the project such as the economic capacity research and health initiatives to address addiction issues. It also supported the Victory Square lighting project, a business initiated community safety project aimed at improving lighting of Victory Square. This component of the DTESCDP also played a role supporting the Rive Gauche Market, a resident initiated market in Pigeon Park, a very lively event enhanced with music and cultural activities that provides opportunities for Downtown Eastside Strathcona residents to market craft, food and other services or products. The Rive Gauche market is linked to the Chinatown Artists Market about a block away, creating a Neighbourhood Connection. This market is undertaken in partnership with the Chinese Cultural Centre, and is an initiative aimed at increasing street activity in the Chinatown area. That market provides a venue for artists of Asian descent to display and sell their work.

Overall, this component of the DTESCDP provides an opportunity for the City to link seemingly divergent groups and initiatives. It also allows for other community voices to be heard, ones that may not participate in the other two processes.

Communication and Information. The communication and information component of the project involves informing and educating the general public about the issues facing the

DTES community. The activities included the translation of plans to address drug and alcohol issues, participation in forums about community issues, and discussion with the media to ensure the public has access to full information. This work is pursued to ensure support for the community development initiatives within a broader City of Vancouver mandate. This component of the project was instrumental in building support for the development permit approval process necessary for the construction of the new health facilities that will provide harm reduction services. It also fosters broad-based political will to move forward with this policy framework.

Research and Evaluation. The project, as a demonstration project, is guided by a research framework with the hopes of learning more about community development as an appropriate Crime Prevention through Social Development (CPSD) approach. The research approach is collaborative in that the methods were developed in consultation with the community, the process is guided by a community-based advisory committee, and the research process reports back to the community on an ongoing basis.

This summary of the Downtown Eastside Community Development Project shows that it is indeed multi-faceted and provides significant opportunity for low-income voices to be mobilized and organized. The project recognizes the differences in interests between the Chinatown community and the low-income community and endeavors to provide opportunities for the Chinese speaking community to also build capacity to address issues they are concerned with. It provides mechanisms for the two processes to work together at their own pace. It builds support within the overall Vancouver community for progressive and meaningful responses to addictions.

However, there are also many other activities that the DTESCDP are linked to through the City of Vancouver. How do low-income residents get heard at other levels? Is it possible that this project, by attempting to be community-based and community-paced, may inevitably isolate the voices of residents, allowing other processes to proceed at their own pace, generally much faster than that of the community? It is useful to look at the other components of the over Downtown Eastside Revitalization Program to identify how the resident voices get included and how community development approaches are fostered at other levels.

Mayor's Coalition for Crime Prevention and Drug Treatment

The Mayor's Coalition, composed of over 60 organizations, was formed in 1997 to respond to the growing HIV/AIDs epidemic in the DTES and collectively undertake activities focused on preventing crime and supporting drug treatment in communities throughout Vancouver. The purpose of the coalition was to increase communication, collaboration, and cooperation between partners and foster the development of innovative responses to crime prevention and drug treatment. The types of activities undertaken include: media coverage on the issues, public forums to gather community input, public education, crime prevention initiatives, and an International Symposium on Crime Prevention and Drug Treatment.

The Mayor's Coalition for Crime Prevention and Drug Treatment played a leadership role in developing *A Framework for Action: A Four Pillar Approach to Drug Problems in Vancouver* and in promoting learning and dialogue about drug issues facing communities in Vancouver. It created a focal point for discussions leading to partnership investment in actions to address these issues. However, the involvement of residents has been indirect and

the focus on activities has been on broad public opinion rather than on building community capacity.

Other City of Vancouver Departments

The City of Vancouver's Engineering, Licensing, Planning, and Housing Departments, as well as the Vancouver Richmond Health Board and the Vancouver Police Department are also central players in the broad policy framework. They have provided a coordinated capacity to improve housing, responded to the drug and alcohol issues, improve policing and support local economic development and to link these with the development of a set of initiatives to provide treatment. These include expanded health facilities, a contact centre close to Carnegie Centre, a redesign of the intersection of Main and Hastings in front of the Carnegie Centre, a life skills centre and a new treatment facility. These initiatives have been met with significant resistance from the Chinatown and Gastown business community because they believe that additional services will increase drug activity and further impact on the quality of life in these areas.

The City of Vancouver's contribution also takes the form of infrastructure improvements. The DTESCDP activities link to a set of strategic actions that address City of Vancouver issues such as enforcement, affordable housing, licensing and bylaw infractions, outdoor streetscape design, economic development, lane cleaning and lighting. This linkage will "promote integrated health and enforcement strategies to combat drug abuse" (Au, 2001, personal communication). This link is coordinated through a Core Staff group that meets bi-weekly, facilitated and supported at the most senior level, by the City Manager's office. This coordination of activities is no doubt central to an emergency response, which the conditions

are characterized as requiring. However, the number of people involved and the resources they bring presents challenges to efforts to include the voices of low-income residents.

Vancouver Agreement

An integral but little understood component of the DTES Community Revitalization and Crime Prevention Program is the link to the Vancouver Agreement. The Vancouver Agreement was formed to achieve greater coordination in the implementation of government policies between the governments involved. The purpose of the five year, multi-million dollar Vancouver Agreement is to: "work together, within their jurisdictions and mandates, and with the communities in Vancouver to develop and implement a coordinated strategy to promote and support sustainable economic, social, and community development" (City of Vancouver et al., 1999). The agreement focuses on the areas of Vancouver with the greatest need beginning with a focus on the DTES. The work is guided by a set of principles. In the interest of brevity, the principles can be summarized into five general themes: i.) appropriate and efficient planning, ii.) delivery and evaluation, iii.) diversity and equality, iv.) communication, participation and partnership, and v.) sustainability and historic preservation.

The agreement is implemented under the direction of a Policy Committee consisting of the Federal Minister, the Provincial Minister and the Mayor of Vancouver or their designates. Community Roundtables were set-up to inform government policy. The Agreement is administered and implemented by a Management Committee comprised of three representatives of each level of government. The work in The Downtown Eastside area was originally undertaken under the rubric of the Downtown Eastside Strategy which had three components: Community Health and Safety, Economic and Social Development, and

Community Capacity Building. These components were changed early in 2001 to include: Skills Development, Training, and Employment, Safety and Justice, Housing, and Social and Economic Development. In the revised format, community capacity building was dropped as a specific component and included as an overall principle for all initiatives under the Vancouver Agreement (Vancouver Agreement, 2001). The partners implement the agreement by investing in initiatives that support social and economic change. These initiatives are intended to be integrated and complementary.

Although the Vancouver Agreement is not a source of funds, participation by the City in the Vancouver Agreement has resulted in a coordinated effort to access funds through existing sources, or the re-profiling of existing funds. As a result, resources for economic development were coordinated amongst several levels of government to support a community-based economic development fund known as PEACH. As well, the linkage between the work of the City of Vancouver with the Vancouver Agreement has resulted in coordinated support for all levels of government for the health initiatives.

In the agreement, the partners agree to “establish a process to engage members of the community in achieving their economic, social and community goals” (City of Vancouver et al., 1999). The first stage of fulfilling this commitment was the Community Review of the Vancouver Agreement. The process followed was that the principles, roles and process were first developed by the three levels of government and described in a draft agreement and then submitted to residents and agency representatives for input through community meetings. Participants in the review generally supported the following areas of focus: health, safety, housing and economic opportunity. However, the report also indicates that a “strong feeling that local residents have a great deal to offer in terms of knowledge, skills and abilities and

they must be given an opportunity to fully participate in decisions that affect the neighbourhood” (Vancouver Agreement, 2000, p. 2). This was expected to be achieved through greater dialogue between community and government.

Low-income residents have in reality seen little of this opportunity. Nonetheless, this agreement has been instrumental in focusing significant resources on worthwhile projects such as drug and alcohol services, affordable housing projects, and community economic development initiatives. But in doing so, how is the voice of low-income residents to be included and how is their capacity for involvement in determining their own future to be strengthened?

Emerging Issues with Respect to Community Development Theory and Practice

This chapter shows that the policy framework supporting Community Directions was developed in a highly conflicted environment in which the interests of business community and low-income community are often pitted against each other. In an apparent attempt to mediate these interests, the policy framework adopts the language of community development with a focus on health, housing, and poverty as well as crime prevention and community revitalization. Figure 2 shows the policy focus of each program component and identifies the themes of community development that are discussed in each component.

Figure 2 Program Components, Policy Focus, and Themes

Program Component	Policy Focus	Community Development Themes
Community Directions	Housing Community economic development Alcohol and drugs Children, youth, and families Women First Nations Cultural diversity	Low income neighbourhood Assets focused Root causes of poverty Respect and safety for all Whole community Inclusive resident involvement Cultural diversity Working together collaboratively
Chinatown Revitalization	Revitalization Economic development	Information sharing and problem solving Visioning Cultural development Collaborative dialogue
Mayors Coalition on Drug Abuse and Crime	Addictions Crime prevention	Partnership Collaboration Communication Cooperation
Other City of Vancouver Initiatives	Housing Crime prevention Economic development Heritage planning Public safety Health and sanitation Parks and public realm Policing	Strategic Integration Comprehensive Collaborative Historic planning Cultural planning
Vancouver Agreement	Skills development, training, and employment Safety and justice Housing Social and economic development	Capacity building Coordinated strategy Efficient planning Sustainability Participation Partnership Diversity and equality Historic preservation

Taken as a whole, these themes are not inconsistent. Each policy focus and community development theme is important to the overall wellbeing of the community. This policy framework involves a variety of initiatives and partnerships with other levels of government, providing a foundation for multi-lateral support. However, there are risks associated with such a complex initiative.

First, is there agreement about what the community development concepts actually mean? The language of community development used in the policy framework is broad and

somewhat ambiguous such that the language of crime prevention and revitalization are included under the rubric of community development. If the project has crime prevention and revitalization as predetermined outcomes, how can the community be perceived to be setting its own direction? How do the resources available influence the direction of the process? Are the interests involved in these policy areas compatible with the interests of the low-income community?

Second, are the concerns solely with the visible displays of marginality or is there a genuine commitment to addressing the root causes? The description of the policy framework reveals that the discourse driving the policy is dominated by concerns with visible expressions of marginality, addictions, and crime - or what DTES researcher and activist, Jeff Sommers (2001), refers to as a "moral panic" - and by a desire to revitalize the community. Are the policies of revitalization, crime prevention, and even community development being appropriated as tools for gentrification and further exclusion or is there a genuine interest in creating a safe and livable community for low-income residents? While this policy promotes many principles of community development, the focus on crime prevention and revitalization may foster social exclusion through displacement rather than improve conditions for the existing residents of the community.

Third, while revitalization may well be a worthwhile pursuit, whose interests are served? Clearly, there are multiple interests that need to be fulfilled. This project involves various parts of the community and is linked to activities in other departments within the City, the Province, and the Federal Government and is made possible through contributions from other levels of government. How can the various interests be brought together in a meaningful way?

Fourth, how does the complexity of the policy environment influence the opportunities presented? An overview of each component of the Downtown Eastside Revitalization Program shows that it is indeed comprehensive and provides a policy environment to address the many root causes of poverty where government has direct influence. But it also shows that the voice of those most affected by poverty is one voice among many, challenging claims that it is indeed community-based. As well, coordination by the City ensures that the locus of authority for "revitalization" remains with the City and low-income residents are placed in the position of competing with a wide of range of voices, including those of bureaucrats, business owners, and institutions.

Lastly, how is the language of community development translated among the various levels of government involved in the framework? Is it possible that the policy language may hide a power imbalance and preclude the low-income community from having its voice truly heard in decision-making? Community Directions is concerned with increasing involvement of low-income and marginalized groups in decision-making. It is one project among many created under this policy framework and it is isolated from other initiatives. Governments are accustomed to having authority and taking immediate action. How is it possible for the community to have real voice in community development when the number of levels of government involvement and the number of paid staff are so high?

Overall, the policy framework, while laudable, also creates a complex terrain, one that could potentially contribute to community development but can also be disempowering to a marginalized community. This research argues that the community itself must play a central role in determining the answers to these questions. *Getting the Word AND the Music* proposes an approach to community development which promotes capacity building amongst

those that are most impacted by the root causes of crime, homelessness, unemployment, poverty, and addictions. The policy framework described above takes a more general approach, involving all stakeholder groups and striving for overall community revitalization. In order to understand how the variance between the two approaches may impact the potential for success of either, it is useful to identify current trends in community development theory, which is the focus of the next chapter.

CHAPTER SIX

ASSESSING "THE WORDS"

This thesis has been described up to this point as a journey - a journey that began with an idea that the knowledge and experience of the low-income community in Downtown Eastside Strathcona offers a music which makes a valuable contribution to the "words" or theories of community development. A version of this music was presented in *Getting the Words AND the Music*, which describes an approach to community development that: is inclusive of all community members, particularly the marginalized, involves residents in decision-making, promotes social justice through the equitable distribution of goods and services, and recognizes the contribution of residents and agencies working together to strengthen their community. The "terrain" traveled through to develop *Getting the Words AND the Music* was then described with an overview of the process followed, an introduction to some of the specific ideas raised by the research participants, and description of the overall policy environment.

For this journey to reach its destination, an understanding of what the experience of the low-income community in Downtown Eastside Strathcona contributes to community development theory and practice, an interrogation of community development theory is also required. This chapter describes that exploration, introducing some of the current trends in community development literature and with respect to the specific policy areas influencing activity in Downtown Eastside Strathcona. This examination will begin by offering a number of definitions of community development. An overview of principles identified in the literature will be described and the application of those principles to Community Directions will be explored. Next, current trends with respect to revitalization and crime prevention will

be examined to determine the relationship between these policy directions and community development. The principles and trends will then be analyzed through the lens of the themes raised by the Community Directions process to identify the relevance for low-income communities. Specifically, this analysis will consider the guidance given by existing theory with respect to the following concerns: how the most marginalized in a community are to be included, how resident voices are inserted into decision-making processes, how poverty is addressed at a community level, and how individuals and groups work together collaboratively in environments of difference. It will show that Community Directions approaches its role in a way that is consistent with community development theory. It will also highlight some of the gaps and inconsistencies in community development theory for marginalized communities where the experience of low-income communities could make a difference. Finally, the ideas raised by Community Directions members are revisited to show how many of these gaps can be addressed.

Defining Community Development

Community development, as an interdisciplinary form of public intervention, is traditionally undertaken to improve conditions in communities in North America and around the world by involving community members in action to address community needs and creating change at a local level (Christenson & Robinson, 1989; Lewis, 1997; Lotz, 1998). It is also viewed as a way of addressing the social impact of increasingly complex societies and the unprecedented globalization of world economies (Campfens, 1997; Lotz, 1998). The focus on community members taking charge of their future as a key element of community development is evident in the following excerpts in which community development is defined as:

a group of people in a locality initiating a social action process (i.e., planned intervention) to change their economic, social, cultural and/or environmental situation (Christenson & Robinson, 1989, p. 14)

a problem solving process that enables community members to identify their own problems/needs/desires and work together in finding solutions that are appropriate for them (Napoleon, 1992, p. 15)

the planned evolution of all aspects of community well-being (economic, social, environmental and cultural. ... a process whereby community members come together to take collective action and generate solutions to common problems (Frank & Smith, 1999, p. 3); and

collaborative, collective action taken by local people to enhance the long-term social, economic and environmental conditions of their community (Ministry of Community Development, Cooperatives and Volunteers, 2000, p. 17).

A common theme in each of these definitions is that community development involves community members, a planning process, action, and community improvement. But does community development include all community members or just some? If not all, how are members selected to be involved in the planning and action? Are some members selected or self-selected more often than others? If so, what interests do they represent? What role do these community members have in decision-making? What type of action is involved and are there any limits to what action is undertaken? And how is community improvement defined and by whom? These issues have important implications for communities such as Downtown Eastside Strathcona where the experiences and conditions are unique.

There is considerable agreement in community development literature that community development is inherently principle based (Frank & Smith, 1999) and that it "is not a neutral intervention" (Lee, 1992, p.1). Community development is also process-oriented, using a broad range of methods to express and fulfill these principles. This section

will describe and analyse these key principles, interjected with methods and processes that express these principles in practice.

Principles of Community Development

There have been many attempts to define the principles of community development. Human Resources Development Canada (Frank & Smith, 1999, p. 5) prepared a manual on community development which summarizes the principles as “respecting people, improving the quality of life, appreciating and supporting cultural differences, and being good stewards of the land, water and wildlife.” The US Department of Justice Comprehensive Communities Program describes two defining principles as: “that communities must take a leadership role in developing partnerships to combat crime and that state and local jurisdictions must establish a truly coordinated and multi-disciplinary approaches to doing so” (Kelling et al., 1998, p. 2). Others promote an approach to community development without reference to principles but describing features of that approach as though they are principles. An example of this is the Centre for Community Enterprise (2000, p. 3) which suggests that community economic development embodies features that include “a comprehensive strategy...merges social and economic goals...empowers a broad range of residents...[is] guided by strategic planning and analysis...uses a business like financial management approach...employs a core-organization format.”

None of these descriptions of principles speaks clearly to who is included, whose quality of life is being strengthened, who is involved in partnerships, or who is being empowered. A synopsis of principles in existing literature shows that there are seven main principles of community development that I have categorized as: improving material wellbeing and fulfilling basic human needs, inclusion and equality, appreciation of diversity,

citizenship and participation in decision-making, empowerment and community capacity building, holistic, comprehensive and integrated development, and environmental sustainability. An analysis of current discussions with respect to these principles suggests that in many cases there are two perspectives: one that focuses on marginality, inequality and power imbalances and another that assumes a degree of equality and homogeneity of interests.

Improving Material Wellbeing and Fulfilling Basic Human Needs

As noted in the above definitions, community development is often viewed as an approach that aims to improve the wellbeing of community members overall. This focus is evident in several government policy manuals on community development. Frank and Smith (1999), in a manual on community development for Human Resources Development Canada, focus on the role of community development in improving the quality of life for residents. Similarly, the Ministry of Community Development, Cooperatives and Volunteers (2000, p. 17) states that “the primary goal is to create a better overall quality of life for everyone within the community.”

My concern with this approach is that it seems quite possible to improve the overall quality of life of a community without dealing with poverty at all. The level of economic activity can be strengthened creating conditions where some members of the community may become better off than they were, while the gap between rich and poor becomes even larger. As well, when community conditions improve, the cost of housing can also increase, displacing low-income residents and attracting those who raise the overall income levels. How then is the overall community quality of life improved if some are left out or even

worse off? Clearly an aggregate approach to community wellbeing hides systemic inequality and some way of disaggregating community wellbeing is required.

There are several ways of disaggregating community wellbeing that have significance for this discussion. One way is to focus on the fulfillment of basic human needs as a fundamental focus of community development. This approach is evident in Korten's (1990) discussion of development as "change" in which all people have the opportunity to meet basic human needs, no one group of people benefits from taking from another, resources are used in a way that ensures future generations can also meet basic needs, and people who are currently deprived of involvement in and contribution to economic well-being are no longer so deprived.

Others characterize it as a commitment to social justice. Foremost amongst these is Lotz (1998: 2) who tells us that: "community development is based on values that include social justice and the equitable distribution of power and resources." Wharf and Clague (1997, p. 311) also emphasize this principle as they advise that "community development is dedicated to bringing about a more just and equal society."

Martha Nussbaum (2001, p. 5) contributes to this discussion by introducing the notion of a human capabilities approach to development for women, suggesting that there is "a bare minimum of what respect for human dignity requires." She proposes that the notion of development must be based on a view of people, not as the means for others ends, but as persons with capabilities, ends in their own right, "a threshold level beneath which...truly human functioning is not available" (2001, p. 6). For the basic human needs of all community members to be fulfilled and their capabilities fulfilled, poverty must be addressed.

Overall, when a dis-aggregated approach to community wellbeing is adopted, community development is very much concerned with poverty, the gap between the have and the have-nots, conditions of marginality that result, and the impact of these conditions on residents of a community. However, many public policies adopt the former approach, that of overall community wellbeing and may in fact neglect the experience of poverty amongst many residents. Community Directions makes an important contribution in this regard by focusing attention on the need to address poverty amongst those who are most marginalized.

Inclusion and Equality

The principle of inclusion and equality is clearly linked to the fulfillment of basic human needs. It means that all members of a community are included in social and economic activities and have equitable access to a reasonable quality of life. There are many and varied references to this principle in community development literature. Lewis (1997, p. 166) advocates for an approach to community economic development that “specifically addresses the problems of the poor and the powerless” and seeks structural change that fosters inclusion of the marginalized. Campfens (1997, p. 24) supports this view arguing that “those who are marginalized, excluded, or oppressed should be given the essential tools that will enable them to critically analyse and become conscious of their situation in structural terms, so that they can envisage possibilities for change.” The potential for inclusiveness is promoted by Wharf and Clague (1997, p. 320) who, in an overview of community organizing in Canada, advocate for the establishment of caring communities involving: “1.) strong national/provincial socio-economic policies, 2.) establishment of caring community institutions, 3.) municipal governments dedicated to a community of caring, and 4.) an ethic of solidarity among residents.”

This reference to caring communities brings to mind the work of Jean Vanier (1998) founder of L'Arch communities, who suggests that the experience of inclusion is fundamental to human development. Andrew Levitt (1991, p. 6) extrapolates the idea of inclusion to a city when he suggests that "our challenge is to view the city inclusively...accepting the modern city as nothing more or less than as a distinct reflection of who we are...split, fragmented, and depressed because we are." Other authors who fit broadly within this rubric are those focusing on the role of families and communities in helping humanity deal with the loss of meaning and feelings of isolation. Carolyn Shaffer and Kirston Anundsen (1993, p. 8) talk about a belief that "the demise of old-style communities, defined primarily by blood ties, place, and necessity, offers an unprecedented opportunity to create new models of community that incorporate the best qualities of the traditional forms without their limitations."

While the provision for human equality is technically entrenched in Canadian law, the reality of inequality affects many residents of Downtown Eastside Strathcona, particularly First Nations people, low-income women, and people with mental illnesses. The experiences described in *Getting the Words AND the Music*, and in discussions with the community presented in Chapter Four show that, for many, exclusion is a daily occurrence. A commitment to the principle of inclusion and equality is clearly fundamental to community development for this community.

Appreciation of Diversity

Respect for cultural diversity is a principle that is intertwined with the principles of inclusion and equality and is articulated in the literature in several different ways. Harvey Stalwick (1997, p. 50) suggests that "a major opportunity for community development is to

strengthen and celebrate Canada's diversity." Similarly, Nozick (1992, p. 7) promotes culture as a principle of community development, noting that it allows development that is "grounded in the life experiences of the people who live in them and in the natural histories of specific regions." St, Denis (1992) discusses how approaches to community development and community planning that are participatory in nature are more relevant to Aboriginal cultures than others. Salway-Black (1994) calls for an approach to community development based on Aboriginal culture that is people-centred, sustainable, and self reliant. Stephan Ameyah (2000) calls for "appreciative planning" in which the culture and history of a community is respected and used as starting points for planning and development.

While cultural diversity is a general tenet of community development and Canadian society as a whole, according to Beall (1997), communities tend to have the ability to recognize difference with ease but have much more difficulty working with diversity. In Beall's view, we recognize differences between people but do not understand how to grapple with the issues that result nor how to gain the benefits that diversity brings to communities. In particular, difference, and in many cases poverty and marginality, becomes concentrated in differentiated spaces showing who has power, who does not, and the values and assumptions of decision-makers.

In Downtown Eastside Strathcona, opportunities to understand and address difference are ubiquitous. Despite a recognition in literature and public policy, the experiences described by residents in Chapter Two and Four suggests that the principle needs to be explored in an ongoing way. Community Directions promotes and explores diversity through culturally-based groups, cultural celebrations, ongoing discussions of racism and discrimination, and provision of language support. It also acknowledges diversity in many

other realms, recognizing barriers to involvement of low-income women, supporting people with mental illness to be part of community processes, respecting health issues, and acknowledging diverse ways of providing for personal sustenance. What is needed is an entrenchment of this understanding in public policy.

Citizenship and Participation in Decision-making

Citizenship through participation in democratic decision-making about the future of the community is fundamental to community development (Lee, 1992; Campfens, 1997; Rubin & Rubin, 2001). Democratic participation, however, is much more than mere consultation. Daly and Cobb (1989, p. 172) discuss the idea of "person-in-community," meaning that "1.) there is extensive participation by its members in the decisions by which life is governed, 2.) the society as a whole takes responsibility for the members, and 3.) this responsibility includes respect for the diverse individuality of these members." Conn and Alderson (1997, p. 46), in discussing their experience with WomenFutures Community Economic Development Society, describe the value of participation in decision-making to women as: "women gain confidence when their opinions and experience are valued; their confidence strengthens their participation in community planning and decision-making."

The discussion of this principle centres on two key themes: citizens as active participants in democratic processes and citizens as stakeholders in a negotiated process. The importance of citizens as active participants is articulated by Wharf and Clague (1997, p. 311):

Community development provides a vehicle for ordinary citizens in low-income neighbourhoods to articulate their needs and priorities. Given the barriers that prevent these citizens from taking an active role in the democratic

process, such participation becomes an important way to exercise the democratic franchise.

Participation is also contested. According to Rubin and Rubin (2001, p. 7) "contestations occur over: how the problem is defined or framed...how decisions are made...Who carries out the decisions that are made...who benefits from the solution...how societal resources are allocated..." According to Campfens (1997), to ensure resident voices are heard, community development ought to be based on local knowledge, traditions and governing structures as well as endogenous definitions of need and appropriate solutions. Others such as John Kretzmann and John McKnight (1993) see residents and resident-based groups as the central players in decision-making, drawing on external organizations and resources to assist residents in achieving community-identified priorities.

There are also others who put less emphasis on citizenship and more on a shared vision among stakeholders. In particular, Frank and Smith (1999) tell us that community development starts with those in a community with a shared vision and expands to include a broad range of interests including government representatives, business, financial institutions, labour, education and health institutions, politicians and resident. In this view, residents of a community are one player among many, with entities such as financial institutions, government representatives, and governments having a voice.

Participatory techniques vary as well depending on whether emphasis is placed on general citizen participation, involvement of those marginalized in democratic processes, or on broad stakeholder involvement. Citizen participation as the foundation of sustainable community development is well articulated by Nozick (1992) and Poulman (1995) but can, according to Arnstein (1969 cited in Pohlmann, 1995) range from manipulation of citizens to

full citizen control. Connors (1994, pp. 1-26) describes ways to involve people who avoid participation, or what he refers to as the "silent majority." He advises that "if the silent majority is not involved... decisions will be initially imposed by vociferous and well-organized minorities," some of which are more likely than others to foster inclusion and equality. Community mobilization is a crime prevention intervention aimed at increasing resident involvement in decision-making, recognizing that "it is the people who live, work and play in the community who best understand their area's assets, problems, needs and capacities" (National Crime Prevention Centre, 2000, p.1). Community mobilization as crime prevention brings together a broad range of citizens from many different backgrounds with many different interests with the view to building community.

Other proponents of community participation focus on increasing the involvement of the most marginalized in the community through community organizing (Gattfly, 1983; Barndt, 1991; Rubin & Rubin, 2001). Organizing is concerned with empowering the people most affected by an issue to have some say in action that is taken. According to Rubin and Rubin (2001, 6) "organizing builds the confidence necessary for democracy, while addressing a wide range of social and economic needs." Community organizing for low-income and marginalized communities often adopts social analysis techniques (Absolon & Herbert, 1997; Barndt, 1991; Gattfly, 1983). Social analysis is concerned with residents having the opportunity to talk about their lived experience and participate in a critical analysis of the systemic barriers they experience on a day-to-day basis.

Techniques to involve a broad range of stakeholders in decision-making include search conferences (Emery & Purser, 1996) and strategic planning processes (Lewis, 1997). Search conferences, an open brainstorming and idea mapping process involving all

stakeholders, are proposed by some as one way for all concerned stakeholders to talk openly and creatively at one table (Emery & Purser, 1996). Strategic planning is an important process for ensuring that activities are planned, the use of limited resources is maximized, and collaboration between stakeholders enhanced (Campfens, 1997; Frank & Smith, 1999; Lewis, 1997). It involves residents and other stakeholders analyzing internal and external conditions. Residents and stakeholders also design, develop, and implement action based on local knowledge, traditions, and governing structures and their own definition of need and appropriate solutions (Campfens, 1997; Frank & Smith, 1999).

Community Directions uses all of the techniques above with an emphasis on social analysis and strategic planning. In terms of general citizen involvement, Community Directions is open to all residents. At every General Meeting, the meeting begins with a popular education process to support residents to express and analyse their own knowledge and experience, helping those who might otherwise be excluded in building confidence in their own voice. Low-income residents are then more likely to get involved in Working Group meetings that undertake much of the planning. Community Directions also promotes partnerships with organizations that support its vision. In this way, it recognizes the role of other stakeholder groups in community planning.

Empowerment and Community Capacity Building

One challenge in fulfilling the principle of citizenship and involvement in decision-making is that often people who are impoverished or otherwise marginalized do not participate in democratic processes. An important role of community development is to empower those who are marginalized and to build capacity for active participation. While some argue that low-income communities are limited in their capacity to significantly

improve conditions for residents because poverty, unemployment, racism, and illicit drug use, originate at a national and global level (Dreier, 1996), others suggest that change can occur if those who are powerless are better able to participate in democratic processes.

According to Rappaport (1981:15), empowerment means “to enhance the possibilities for people to control their own lives.” Lee (1992, 5) in discussing empowerment in a social work context argues that “a crucial aspect of what it is to be human is the need to be able to act and exert influence on one’s environment” and that social workers invariably see empowerment as one of the most important roles of community development practice. Salway-Black (1994) argues that culturally based approaches to community development are most likely to empower Aboriginal people and give them a voice in their own development.

Community development endeavors to empower residents by building community capacity. Capacity building is “the process of improving the quality of life of a neighbourhood by strengthening the capacity of neighbourhood residents, associations and organizations to identify priorities and opportunities and to work, individually and collectively, to foster and sustain positive neighbourhood change” (Aspen Institute, 1999). The articulation of the capacity building approach to community development first emerged in the Chicago Area Project, which focused on enlisting and supporting local leadership in inner-city neighborhoods, working through local institutions, and promoting voluntary participation. In the 1960s, it became a central theme in the “War on Poverty” in urban areas of the United States. The Back of the Yards movement initiated by Saul Alinsky (1946) promoted the role of social action in community development.

Community capacity building is a way of supporting community development that recognizes and enhances the existing assets in the community that is particularly well suited

to low income communities. Human Resources Development Canada says that community capacity building is more than simply the development of skills, people and plans, rather, it “includes commitment, resources and all that is brought to bear on a process to make it successful” (Frank & Smith, 2000, p. 10). Kretzman and McKnight (1993) advocate for “asset-based community development,” a capacity building method for supporting communities to identify and mobilize their own people, organizational, skill, physical and structural capacities. Asset-based community development is based on the concept of capacity building which aims to help people identify their own strengths, skills and knowledge and to use those “assets” as the basis of community mobilization. John McKnight (1992) builds on DeTouqueville’s discussion of the role of volunteerism in democracy and argues that community development initiated by those outside the community is often based on needs rather than strengths and as such is crippling. Asset-based community development places residents at the centre, with resident organizations in an inner circle and governments and institutions as support.

In low-income communities such as Downtown Eastside Strathcona, there are many barriers to achieving resident involvement required in social and economic processes and community decision-making. Some examples of barriers experienced by community members include: poverty, addictions, language, education levels and cultural differences. Overall, community capacity building helps people identify their own strengths and the skills and knowledge they have to offer and engages other capacities that contribute to a community’s ability to create. It also strengthens the local economy, community infrastructure, and the capacity for collaboration and partnership. Community capacity project respond to community-identified issues and build on community knowledge,

strengths, and abilities and thus cannot be prescribed and pre-planned. As a result, community capacity building initiatives sometimes test the flexibility of government and other institutions (Moore & Putney, 1999), an experience evident in the Community Directions experience.

Holistic, Comprehensive and Integrated

The development of community capacity involves all aspects of individual and community life, thus another principle is that community development should be undertaken in a comprehensive, holistic, and integrated way. This means that the different needs of individuals, families and communities should not be addressed in isolation from other needs, but as a whole. Integration of the various elements in a community is sought including the different sectors, community groups, and structural levels of government and institutions in order to address issues more holistically and achieve efficiency of resources (Campfens, 1997; Frank & Smith, 1999).

In the 1980s, community development practitioners in urban inner-city areas began to articulate their awareness that issues facing communities are inter-related and multi-sectoral, promoting an approach to community development based on two central principles: comprehensiveness and community building (Chaskin, 2001; Kubisch, 1998). This approach entitled a “comprehensive community initiative” aims to promote transformation of impoverished communities in a way that strengthens the capacity of both individuals and community structures. Comprehensive community initiatives are characterized by a holistic view of the community and a multi-sector approach to the delivery of human services through partnership and collaboration (Brown, 1996).

Community collaboration is a key requirement of a comprehensive approach (Camphens, 1987; Frank & Smith, 1999), but it is often a challenging principle to put in place. One of the main challenges is to address tensions between insiders and outsiders through dialogue and between process and product through balanced planning (Aspen Institute, 1999; Kubisch, 1998). According to White and Wehlage (1995, p. 35) "given the goal of building social capital, the criteria for a successful collaboration would shift from delivering services more efficiently to success in fostering community."

Overall, comprehensive community development contributes to community development practice because it provides a conceptual framework that acknowledges the link between the different components of individual, family, and community life. However, the degree of collaboration required between community agencies can sometimes increase the role of agencies, thus limiting local control and silencing voices of low-income people. Is it possible to be comprehensive, to bring in the external resources required, yet still be empowering and build community capacity? The experiences of residents and agencies working together in Downtown Eastside Strathcona suggest that it is.

Environmental Sustainability

The notion of community development as *sustainable* community development came into prominence in the late 70s and 80s in response to international discussions regarding the need for alternative development and environmental sustainability at both the local and global level. The World Commission on Environment and Development issued "Our Common Future" in 1987 that first advocated that there is a need for protection of the rights of future generations to access environmental resources to sustain human life.

Poverty is viewed as a major global issue with direct impact on the environment. According to this report, sustainable development “requires meeting the basic needs of all and extending to all the opportunity to fulfill their aspirations for a better life” (WCED, 1987, p. 8).

The 1975, the Dag Hammarskjold Foundation identified principles of alternative development that became the foundation of sustainable community development⁸. Roseland (1992, p. 1), promoting the centrality of this discussion to policy frameworks, offered an important resource manual on how to promote sustainable development at the municipal and local level with the hopes that “enlightened local decisions about these issues will be of global as well as local benefit.” Nozick (1990) makes a strong contribution to the discussion by advocating for sustainable community development that links the principles of environmental sustainability with those of community development.

There are several aspects of sustainability that are particularly significant to Downtown Eastside Strathcona. First, the recognition of the role of poverty in environmental degradation resonates with issues raised by the community. As well, the protection of the land is a central theme in discussions with First Nations communities as is the need to recognize the history of Aboriginal people in the geographic area that has become Downtown Eastside Strathcona. Although it did not form a focus of discussions while this research was being undertaken, Downtown Eastside Strathcona residents also express concern about livable public spaces with an emphasis on the need for more urban green space.

⁸ Nozick subsequently highlighted these principles in a definition of sustainable community development.

Viewing the Principles Holistically

The above overview suggests that the principles are inter-related and cannot be applied in isolation from other principles. Thus, participatory planning on its own is not community development nor is capacity building that is not concerned about empowerment. Sustainable development involves addressing poverty and community capacity building involves strategic planning and community-paced decision-making. The application of these principles in a holistic way can be discerned in initiatives that focus on caring, sustainable, healthy, or safe communities. Sherry Torjman (1998) proposes strategies for building “caring communities” that include poverty reduction, investing in all forms of capital, civic engagement, partnership, leadership development and celebration. As noted above, much can also be learned from the notion of “sustainable communities” wherein the ideas of environmental sustainability are linked with issues of equity, fulfillment of human needs, inclusiveness, democratic participation, and cultural repatriation (Nozick, 1990). The Healthy Communities movement emerged in the 1980s, recognizing the inter-relationship between health indicators and the need for community-based activities that addressed health issues in a coordinated way. It supports the role of communities in identifying its own health-related issues and developing action plans to create a healthier community (Nozick, 1998). The City of Toronto developed a Safe City Strategy, a comprehensive, coordinated, and community-based approach to preventing crime, developed using community development techniques, including community consultations, partnerships, programs, and policies to address community issues (City of Toronto, 1999).

Conceptually, it is relatively easy to understand the relationship between the principles and approaches to community development. But how is public policy to deal with

such a complex and messy array of concepts? Public policy attempts to balance interests and as such is a somewhat complex and at times incoherent undertaking (Ball, 1990). It is important to recognize that despite claims to the contrary, policy development cannot be value-neutral and that some way of making sense of diverse values in a community, particularly a marginalized community, is necessary. It is useful, therefore, to look at the way in which these principles may be expressed or not in literature with respect to the specific public policy contexts: revitalization and crime prevention.

Overview of Literature Relating to the Policy Themes

The above overview of selected elements of theory shows that community development is indeed a public intervention that is appropriate for low-income and marginalized communities. However, can it be applied unilaterally in any policy context in that community? Is it an appropriate approach for dealing with economic decline in which the interests of business owners competes with the interests of residents? Can it be used to prevent crime and victimization in an environment where there is significant disagreement on what is needed to prevent crime and victimization? To explore that question, I will now present an overview of literature with respect to community revitalization and crime prevention, themes that dominate policy discussions in Downtown Eastside Strathcona.

Community Revitalization

Community revitalization is promoted across North America as a laudable activity that brings life and culture back to the inner-city by mobilizing residents, businesses, agencies and government to work together on solutions. Economic and physical revitalization is promoted as a public policy measure to address the private sector dis-investment and

public disorder associated with this social exclusion (Smith, 1996). Early on it was a response to suburbanization, a policy direction aimed at stemming the flow of business and industry to suburban areas resulting in threats to the survival of Downtown areas (Hodge, 1991). It later became a movement aimed at reclaiming inner-city areas beset by "crime and decay," an artifact of concentrated urban poverty.

Revitalized inner-city areas are neighbourhoods that are considered "livable," meaning that the residents feel safe living there, have opportunities to work and learn, have access to affordable housing and other human services, and environment conditions that promote health and wellbeing (National Association of Housing and Redevelopment, 1997). Revitalization is accomplished through urban re-design, heritage preservation, cultural development and economic development. Revitalization also means that the competitive advantage of inner cities is captured and wealth created, providing economic incentives to draw businesses back into the inner-city area and contributing to the role of cities as engines of strong national economies (Porter, 1995). A recent report by the Milken Institute details the role of the "e-economy" in reviving inner cities (Kotkin & Devol, 2001). This report describes the burgeoning "cyber-districts" as former warehouse districts that are attractive to unattached, young, creative knowledge workers seeking an urban lifestyle. Revitalization also involves the enhancement of cultural areas. Urban planner Andrew Yan (2001) tells us that Chinatowns across North America are undertaking revitalization processes to consolidate their role as cultural centres for Chinese speaking people.

Community economic development is also undertaken to promote the revitalization of local economies through comprehensive strategies and the development of local priorities and ownership of resources to benefit the people who live there (Centre for Community

Enterprise Development, 1999). In the United States in recent years, much community economic development is supported through "Empowerment Zones," a federally supported initiative aimed at creating social change by re-inventing a relationship between low-income communities and government. Both approaches are based on an acknowledgement that "revitalization plans have been disconnected from the very people they intended to benefit" (Herring, Bennet, Gills, & Jenkins, 1998, p. 183). It seeks to involve the private sector in addressing poverty, not to provide trickle down benefits to low-income people as in traditional economic development, but to involve those in poverty in real partnership with business, accruing shared benefits.

The discourse on revitalization, regardless of its focus, also has its critics. Dominating the critique are concerns about whether revitalization makes a difference for low-income people. An evaluation of perceived urban success stories among fifty urban areas identified as "distressed" in 1980, showed that by 1990, there was little measurable difference in the socio-economic indicators of those communities that successfully revitalized and those that did not. In fact, some supposedly revitalized cities performed worse in this regard than cities that had not been successfully revitalized (Wolman & Ford, 1994). Teitz and Chapple (1998) echo this, advising that revitalization plays a role in exacerbating urban poverty.

Others express concern that revitalization is essentially synonymous with gentrification. Canadian expert on gentrification, David Ley (1985, p. 9), defines gentrification as "an upward change in neighbourhood social status" as measured by occupational and educational variables. In his view "gentrification has been the single major

contributor to the crisis of affordable housing in many large Canadian cities” (Ley, 1985, p. 192). Smith (1996), in applying the French term “revanchist”⁹ to gentrifying cities, suggests that revitalization and gentrification is a “taming” of the inner-city at the expense of low-income people. Architect Thomas Dutton (2001, p. 7) concurs: “revitalization efforts are selling an image that has no place for the poor who actually live there... 'development' means attracting people of higher incomes to live and work and play,” in his view, an act of domination of low income communities. Kotkin and Devol (2000) acknowledge that technology-based revitalization has displaced low-income residents. Moore and Putney (1999), in highlighting the successes of asset-based community development in Savannah Georgia, advise that the next step in community development for their city is to determine how to deal with displacement that results from community improvement.

In Downtown Eastside Strathcona, there are many residents who would like to see their community cleaned up. However, the experience of many other communities is that community improvement results in increased rents and displacement. This presents a lose-lose option for low-income people. The challenge is how to find a way to improve the overall physical conditions while protecting affordable housing and other services for existing residents.

Crime Prevention

Crime prevention is proposed as another key component in addressing urban decline. Crime prevention as a public intervention includes a broad range of activities as shown by a

⁹ Translated roughly means 'revengeful'

definition provided by Sherman et al. (1998, p. 2), who suggest that crime prevention is “any practice shown to result in less crime than would occur without that practice.”

The main crime prevention approaches include law enforcement and corrections, opportunity reduction, and social development (Canadian Council on Social Development & Canadian Criminal Justice Association, 1984). Law enforcement and corrections focus on the individual as the perpetrator of the crime, while opportunity reduction seeks to reduce the incidences in which crime could occur. Opportunity reduction approaches include Block Watch and security systems. Environmental design includes design of public spaces and traffic flow to reduce opportunity for crime and ongoing clean-up to reduce the effect of the “broken windows syndrome” (Perkins, Meeks, & Taylor, 1992).

The literature seems to suggest that law enforcement and corrections approaches do not necessarily prevent crime from occurring (CCSD, 1984, Hughes, 1998; Rosenbaum et al., 1998). Opportunity reduction approaches work best in places where there are economic interests involved such as home ownership, but do not seem to have significant long-term impact on crime rates in low-income communities (CCSD, 1984). Some opportunity reduction approaches actually increase crime levels and fear of crime because the awareness of potential criminal activity derived from participation in the program is heightened as is the reporting of potential activity. Crime prevention as environmental design is challenged by Samson and Raudenbush (2001) who, in exploring the effect of the broken window syndrome on crime, argue that it is not so much the incivilities that cause crime, but the lack of collective efficacy associated with exclusion and the concentration of marginality that leads to incivilities and disorder.

The focus of the Downtown Eastside Community Development project is a social development approach which acknowledges that the crime levels in every community are influenced by a number of social and economic factors.¹⁰ According to the National Crime Prevention Centre (2000, p. 1), crime prevention through social development (CPSD) is “an approach to preventing crime and victimization that recognizes the complex social, economic, and cultural processes that contribute to crime and victimization.” It involves activities to address risk factors that emerge from these complex processes such as inadequate housing, poverty, family violence, unemployment, and low education levels.

Some argue that crime prevention through social development is only effective if it is targeted to specific groups such as single parent families or at-risk youth. In a quantitative evaluation of “what works” and “what does not work” in crime prevention programs in the United States, Sherman et al. (1998, p. 8) state that the general “community mobilization of residents efforts against crime in high crime, inner-city areas of concentrated poverty fails to reduce crime in those areas.” He suggests that crime prevention through social development should be highly targeted. This is consistent with the view put forward by the Canadian Council on Social Development (1984, p. 7): “effective social development initiatives are usually targeted to risk groups who are not only socially and/or economically disadvantaged but also experience family, school and community problems.”

¹⁰ Socio-economic factors influencing crime levels include: family environment, community support, poverty, education levels, housing, and economic conditions. This approach also recognizes that children and youth are influenced by families who are supported or not supported by communities which is in turn, function within a socio-economic context. When a social development approach to crime prevention is adopted, it means that we are working at all levels, with the individual, the family, the community and the private and public sector to address the social and economic factors which contribute to crime and victimization.

Others flag issues on how crime prevention is assessed, suggesting that crime prevention cannot be evaluated solely in a quantitative way. Hughes (1998), in a review of crime prevention in Great Britain, criticizes this way of analyzing crime prevention, arguing that crime prevention has not been subject to the same critical analysis as has other social science topics and has been dominated by an obsession with technical and administrative analysis of “what works” and “how best to measure what works.” Ward (1998) tells us that there is not one single approach to crime prevention that can alone address the problem, because the causes of crime are multiple and both personal and societal.

Since the 1990s there has been a growing interest in comprehensive approaches to crime prevention through social development. A comprehensive approach to crime prevention recognizes that involvement in crime is a result of many factors, thus multiple supports may be required. The two distinguishing features of comprehensive approaches are that the project involves collaboration and integration between services and some level of community control is involved (Kelling et al., 1998). The John Howard Society (1995, p. 6) in a literature review of CPSD advises that a comprehensive approach “promotes the rebuilding and strengthening of a community by the people who live in it, rather than those from outside the community.”

Crime prevention as a policy focus seems to create conditions where participants at all levels focus on crime rather than its root causes. It is concerned with the impact of social exclusion on mainstream society rather than with the impact of social exclusion on residents of communities. Other express concern that “it is the temptation of governments, not seized by any sense of justice on behalf of the disadvantaged, to place their confidence in the

mechanisms of social control - to bolster the fugitive utopia of the truly advantaged while increasing the containment of the truly disadvantaged" (Hope, 1997, p. 157).

In Downtown Eastside Strathcona, it is the low-income and marginalized residents who are most often the victims of crime. How can crime prevention be undertaken in a way that addresses crime and victimization experienced by those who are least advantaged? What is the relationship between revitalization and crime prevention or between urban decline and crime and victimization? Is it possible that the causes of social exclusion, urban decline and prevent crime and victimization derive from the same global conditions? Further exploration of literature that discusses causes of urban decline and crime is required.

What Got Us in This Mess?

Overall, community development aims to reduce poverty, address social exclusion, and increase involvement in democratic decision-making of those who may not typically be involved. In the case of this project, it is also intended to revitalize the community and decrease crime and victimization. But is it possible to achieve this broad range of ends without a clear focus on what caused the poverty and exclusion or urban decay and increased crime rates in the first place? The identification of appropriate measures to address urban issues needs to, in some way, address the conditions that caused the issues in the first place.

There are several different views in this regard. One is that cities are to a large degree a function of the global economy and both poverty and urban decay are a function of structural change therein (Campfens, 1997; Porter, 1997). Another is that governments, in choosing to cut back on services, have caused a shrinking of the social safety net at a time when the structural changes are having their greatest impact (Cohen, 1997). There is also a view that modernity has resulted in isolation and disconnection causing further issues

(Alexander, 2001; Boothroyd, 1991). Each of these makes a useful contribution to the discussion of actual causes of poverty and other social issues.

Structural Change

This view holds that concentrated urban poverty is caused by the rapid pace of globalization through the 20th century, which created a growing gap between rich and poor (Campfens, 1997). In this account, western societies were dominated until the 1970s by “development” that involved economic expansion, an increase in gross national product (GNP), and the use of natural resources to support this expansion. Industrialization, the engine of development, created jobs and increased access to consumer goods and social issues that resulted from rapid expansion were ameliorated with welfare policy, the redistribution of goods and services, and further economic expansion (Bhalla & Lapeyre, 1999; Western Diversification, 2001).¹¹ Poverty during this time was largely diffused and did not necessarily mean exclusion from participation in mainstream society (Wacquant, 1999).

In the post war period, globalization mechanisms¹² to support the expansion of laissez-faire economics (Campfens, 1997; Douglas, 1994; Korten, 1995) were created¹³. In the 1980s, economic growth was pursued through the unfettered globalization of national economies (Teitz & Chapple, 1998; Western Diversification, 2001). Changes in the labour market structure to accommodate the globalization of national economies and increased competitiveness created “knowledge” economies. According to Brown (2001, p. 236) the

¹¹ From the Depression period to the 1970s, unemployment was low and largely cyclical. Federal governments invested heavily in housing and in urban infrastructure (Western Diversification, 2001). Although systemic barriers for people of color and women continued, education levels for the general population generally improved, as did housing and health conditions.

¹² Examples include the International Monetary Fund and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade.

emergence of knowledge economies created significant opportunities, offering “a solution to income polarization given that everyone will get the skills that employers want, this will be reflected in rising wages, especially for those at the wrong end of the earnings curve.”

Development in urban areas created world cities and strengthened regional economies. Cities were thus central to the economic growth of developed countries and particularly so in increasingly globalized economies.

However, according to Campfens (1997, p. 16), “what can be perceived to be a victory for those who own and run the planet is a disaster for those many people residing in communities caught in the middle.” It is argued that the structural change associated with globalization also created a group of permanently unemployed or underemployed people increasingly concentrated in marginalized urban areas, essentially excluded from economic production and consumption. Factors associated with this change identified in the literature include:

- a decline in the role of the industrial sector¹⁴ (Hajnal, 1995; Teitz & Chapple, 1998; Wacquant, 1999),
- a change in the spatial distribution of employment,¹⁵ and a corresponding isolation of inner-city residents from employment networks (Lee, 2000),
- the spatial segregation of people by race and gender¹⁶ (Byrne, 1999; Hajnal, 1995; Ley & Smith, 1997), and

¹⁴ According to Wacquant (1999), low-skilled jobs were replaced with technology and employee benefits were dramatically altered, significantly destabilizing the workforce and the wage-labour relationship.

- a “decoupling” of low-income neighbourhoods from the regional and national economy (Wacquant, 1999).

In North America, governments, in seeking to be competitive in the global marketplace, committed to an agenda of downsizing and a corresponding public disinvestment in social programs to support competitiveness and growth in a period of economic stagnation (Cohen, 1997; Lee, 2000; Western Diversification, 2001). Many low-income people were thus concentrated in areas of disinvestment, characterized by a significant increase in poverty, homelessness, crime and victimization, boarded up buildings, out migration to suburban areas, and exclusion from participation in mainstream society (Hajnal, 1995; Teitz & Chapple, 1998)¹⁷ with a significantly diminished social safety net.

Loss of Community

Others argue that main issues facing North American communities are caused by a loss of community and resulting isolation and that community building processes will address this. Some attribute the loss of community to the rise of instrumental reason, industrialization, and the privatization of identities has left many people feeling isolated,

¹⁵ Production no longer required large industrial complexes; employers moved to suburban offices. As result, a spatial mismatch between where the jobs are and where the unemployed people lived was created and poverty is segregated in what were historically industrial working class areas. (Teitz and Chapple, 1998).

¹⁶ Hajnal (1995) suggests in a review of urban poverty in Canada and the US that visible minorities, particularly Aboriginal people and blacks, are also more likely to live in concentrated urban poverty than non-visible minorities. Ley and Smith (1997) highlight a strong relationship with socio-economic variables including the incidence of female led households in inner-city urban areas.

¹⁷ This change is consistent with economic conditions nationally where, despite the fact that Canadians enjoy one of the highest standards of living in the world, urban poverty is a growing.¹⁷ In a review of urban poverty in Canada, the Canadian Council on Social Development (Lee, 2000) found that between 1990 and 1995, the

disconnected, and lacking a spiritual framework (Boothroyd, 1991; Harris, 1999; Taylor, 1991). These conditions are also seen as important factors in deteriorating family conditions (Boyes & Ogden, 2000; Ward, 1998; Weatherburn, 2001) and involvement in crime (Samson & Raudenbush, 2001; Ward, 1998).

The experience of isolation from the loss of community is perceived to particularly impact those who are marginalized, those on low-income, those with addictions, and those who experience violence. According to Byrne (1999), social isolation, exclusion and inequality are the inevitable result of being unemployed, of not being able to maintain healthy personal connections that often cost money and of not having basic needs met. Alexander (2001), in a recent discussion paper on addictions in the Downtown Eastside, argues that addiction is caused by social dislocation resulting from being detached from relationships and full involvement in a free market society.¹⁸ Horseman (2001), in discussing the impact of violence on women's ability to learn, suggests that society's silence on violence against women isolates women who have experienced trauma, thus limiting their ability to seek the community support they most critically need.

Increase in Crime

There is also a view that inner-city areas have deteriorated because of crime and a general attitude of lawlessness. As noted in Chapter 5, Vancouver's inner-city experiences a disproportionate share of crime. Although the Vancouver Police Department advise that

population of people in poverty grew much faster (33.8 %) than did the general population (6.9 %) and the geographic area of low-income neighbourhoods grew as well.

¹⁸ People dislocated from intimate family ties for whatever reason and unable to re-establish psychosocial integration will find other ways to have those psychosocial needs met.

crime rates are going down (K. Doern, personal communication, February, 2000) here and in North America overall, the proportion of crime experienced in the Downtown Eastside compared with other parts of the city suggests that crime is indeed a community concern. To determine how to best resolve the impact of crime on this community, it is useful to understand some of the causes of crime which, according to Ward (1998), are multiple, and both personal and societal.

A primary cause of crime identified in the literature is socio-economic deprivation and related factors such as inadequate housing, unemployment, and low education levels (International Centre for the Prevention of Crime, 2001; Ward, 1998; Weatherburn, 2001). The International Centre for the Prevention of Crime (2001, p. 2) advises that "crime tends to be lower in countries where there are ... fewer children in relative poverty." In a review of urban poverty in Canada, the Canadian Council on Social Development (Lee, 2000) found that between 1990 and 1995, the population of people in poverty grew much faster (33.8 percent) than did the general population (6.9 percent) and the geographic area of low-income neighbourhoods grew as well. The concentration of poverty and marginality in "place," and a corresponding exclusion from access to social structures, contributes to an increase in criminal involvement in that place, one way that those who are excluded can access power and participate economically (Body-Gendrot, 2000).

There is also evidence to suggest that poor parenting and deteriorating family conditions cause crime (Ward, 1998; Weatherburn, 2001). The view that deteriorating family conditions impact on crime is consistent with an ecological view of crime causation. This approach suggests a need to focus on the relationships and influences that support or impede

development in order to identify protective and risk factors (Boyes & Ogden, 2000), a focus which is sometimes difficult for impoverished families to sustain.

Crime experienced in areas of concentrated urban poverty is linked in many cases to drug use and changes in drug use. According to Weatherburn (2001, p.7), "illicit drug consumption almost certainly does cause crime but not by driving large numbers of otherwise law abiding people into crime." He suggests that the link between crime and illicit drug use has two roots: first, when those who are already involved in crime also become addicts, they are more likely to commit crimes to support their addiction, and second, criminal activity results from competition between drug suppliers.

Another cause of crime that has received significant attention in discussions of inner cities and revitalization is the environmental conditions in the community (Perkins, Meeks, & Taylor, 1992; Samson & Raudenbush, 2001). This view holds that if there is a preponderance of incivilities and signs of disorder, would-be criminals believe no one cares and involvement in crime increases. After examining observable cues of incivilities using an environmental inventory and relating these to residents perceptions, Perkins et al. (1992) concluded that physical incivilities negatively impacted resident's view of their own safety, but features such as window bars and gardens also contributed to perceptions of risk.

Others have challenged this view, arguing that it is not so much the incivilities that cause crime, but the degree of collective efficacy achieved through cohesion and community trust that, in fact, determines the amount of disorder present and the degree to which residents will intervene to prevent crime. These authors contend that rather than disorder causing crime "both crime and disorder stem from structural characteristics specific to certain neighbourhoods, most notably concentrated poverty and the associated absence of social

resources” (Samson & Raudenbush, 2001, p. 2). Showing that, even in neighbourhoods where there is a high level of poverty, when a high level of efficacy is present, crime levels go down, Samson and Raudenbush (2001) conclude that initiatives to address disorder will not be effective unless they include a strong emphasis on building collective efficacy.

This discussion of revitalization and crime prevention suggests that addressing urban decline and crime and victimization with revitalization and crime prevention techniques may in fact exacerbate social exclusion. Some understanding of how to get at the root causes is central to meaningful and inclusive resolution. Because as Lee (2000, p. 94) so aptly states, “any level of poverty has implications for the level of social cohesion and social inclusion in the communities and in the country as a whole”, there is a need to openly discuss the impact of structural change on communities in order that measures to address social exclusion can be identified and implemented.

Gaps in Community Development Theory

In this chapter, I have introduced community development as a principle-based approach to addressing community issues. An overview of revitalization and crime prevention literature showed that these policy directions cover a broad range of activity, some of which fits within the rubric of community development. The juxtaposition of community development, revitalization, and crime prevention also show some areas where the principles conflict. *Getting the Words AND the Music* introduced the idea of a “low-income friendly” community that provides affordable housing and ensures basic human needs of all residents are met. What does this idea contribute to community development theory and what are the gaps in theory and practice that may influence the ability of community development practice to implement such as idea?

I propose that there are several areas where the experience of Downtown Eastside Strathcona can make a valuable contribution to understanding the role of community development theory and practice in addressing social exclusion. First, community development is somewhat ambiguous and inconsistent on the issue of basic human needs. Communities understandably pursue material wellbeing through full participation in the global market undeterred by the relationship between globalization and social exclusion. It can, if uncritical of its own role, foster an exclusive view of community, promote economic development at a cost to social development, and place the burden on communities to solve systemic inequality. There needs to be some recognition that overall wellbeing of a community requires that poverty be addressed.

Second, community development focuses on building community, community capacity, and community participation treating communities as single homogenous unit. This way of viewing community ignores the differences in capacity amongst its members, that some residents are very active in their communities and bring recognized expertise to community processes and there are others who are homeless and cannot attend community meetings because they are pacing the streets with their worldly possessions. Communities can also be exclusive, setting boundaries around who will be included and who will be excluded.

While community development ostensibly promotes inclusion, it can also maintain the status quo with respect to power through the language of capacity building, partnership, and collaboration. There are few opportunities in environments dominated by partnership and collaboration between various interests to express the lived experience of marginality and little specific acknowledgement of how to include the voices of those who are most

marginalized. It does not give any guidance on how to ensure addicts and sex trade workers are included without moral judgement. Nor does it recognize the frustration felt by those living in SROs when plan after plan for affordable housing is prepared with community input, but there is little in the way of resources for housing development. Community development theory and practice has to find a way to learn from residents themselves how best to be inclusive.

Third, the language of community development can obscure the values associated with it and allow those in authority to remain ambiguous on important issues. For example, when the community wellbeing is viewed as in aggregate, it can conceal conditions experienced by individual community members. Similarly, when community planning processes often involve a broad range of stakeholders, residents are one set of voices among many with an interest in the future of the community. Residents in low-income communities are often dis-empowered at tables with a broad range of stakeholders and thus feel "done to." It is important that policies supporting community development approaches be clear on the whose interests are of primary concern.

Last, although comprehensive community development and collaboration is promoted, community development theory and practice does not highlight the unique benefits and challenges of low-income communities working together in comprehensive and integrated ways. It does not show that community agencies working in low-income communities share resources in ways that are not documented, refer and support people in ways that reconstruct the experience of family, and plan in ways that sometimes cannot be explained. It also does not discuss how very difficult it is to collaborate and coordinate in severe conditions, removed from the office of academics and policy makers.

These gaps in theory and practice create the conditions whereby community development practitioners may approach their practice with a theoretical toolbox or words and concepts that, taken out of the context of poverty and marginality, can actually maintain social exclusion of those who are marginalized by class, race, state of health, ability, or sexual orientation. However, if practitioners listen to the music in the community they are serving, that theoretical toolbox may change shape significantly. The last chapter will consider the contribution of a specific Downtown Eastside Strathcona community process to this discussion, providing direction on ways to promote social inclusion in public policy.

CHAPTER SEVEN

HEARING THE MUSIC

This journey began as a result of personal reflection on my own community development practice, and a recognition that much of what I know was learned from the largely low-income and marginalized communities with which I had worked. I set out to explore this recognition with the view to showing that low-income and marginalized communities contribute to a counter-discourse on community development, offering what Chamber (1997) refers to as a new light to theory and practice. This chapter will summarize the research undertaken and the community development themes identified. Recognizing that theory and practice are inextricably linked, it will describe the implications for theory and consider what this means on the ground, in practice. The chapter will close with a brief exploration on what these implications mean for my own practice.

Summary of Research

This thesis began in a somewhat unconventional way, introducing *Getting the Words AND the Music*, a guide to community development that expresses what low-income residents and agency representatives described in this research as appropriate community development for Downtown Eastside Strathcona. I then outlined the steps followed to develop the guide beginning with a description of the negotiations to secure support for the research. I showed that the ideas identified through a review of other reports and participation in community meetings were used in the preparation of the guide. Narratives collected through interviews and focus groups to fine tune and validate the guide were

presented. I then set out to examine what these ideas might mean for community development theory and practice that might be specifically concerned with social exclusion.

This examination showed that Community Directions is implemented as part of a larger revitalization policy framework and is supported under the rubric of a crime prevention policy focusing on the root causes of crime. The review of literature suggested that although community development is clearly defined by social justice principles, the understanding of these principles is influenced by the values of those implementing them. It showed that the root causes of crime are essentially the conditions of social exclusion including poverty, homelessness, unemployment, addictions, and discrimination; the amelioration of which requires active involvement of those most affected. Revitalization was bracketed as a policy direction that, while credited for reversing the trend of urban decay, can also cause displacement and homelessness, exacerbating the root causes of crime and social exclusion. Thus, the discussion of crime prevention and revitalization, while concerned with important issues for society as a whole, raise red flags with respect to how community development theories are applied.

While few would argue with the main principles of community development identified in the literature, I concluded in Chapter Six that there are some significant gaps in how community development theory and practice deals with social exclusion. In particular, it is sometimes ambiguous about its primary area of concern, the voices of the most marginalized are often absent, decision-making authority is not granted to the community, and existing community processes are not sufficiently respected. Recognizing that community development theory and practice evolves and adapts to community environments, what can be learned from what the Downtown Eastside Strathcona community, through the

Community Directions process is saying that can be useful to other communities? This research suggests that low-income communities contribute to closing the gaps; the ideas about community development raised in this research clearly have implications for both theory and practice.

Implications for Theory

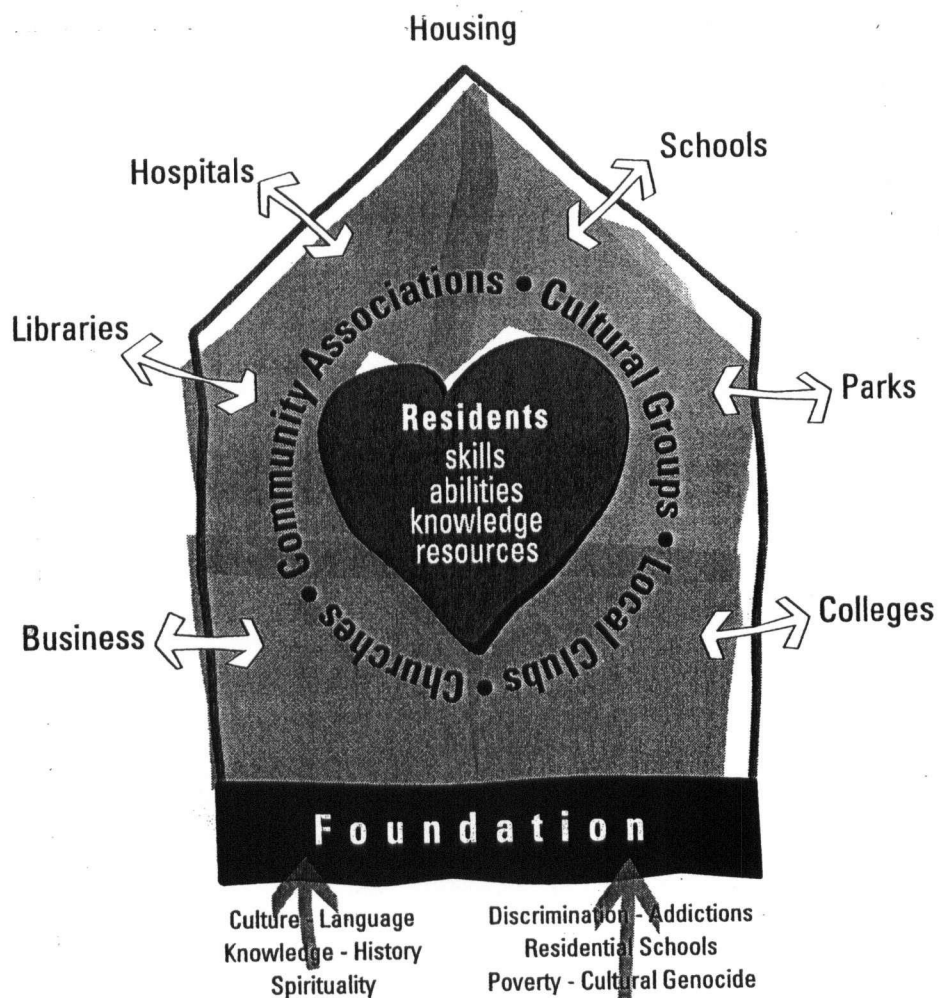
I propose that the story of how the Downtown Eastside sees community development, presented in *Getting the Words AND the Music*, makes a number of important contributions to community development theory. First, this story suggests that, if community development is to be lasting and meaningful in marginalized communities, it should clearly be resident-centred, initiated by and serving the interests of people who comprise the community. Second, because community development is the only approach to public intervention that is dedicated to those who are most marginalized, this component of theory and practice should take precedence or as Robert Chambers (1983, p. 168) suggests, we should “put the last, first.” Third, if those who are implementing community development theory and practice are to hear the voice of those who are marginalized, they must remove barriers and set aside standard professional approaches so that they can hear, an approach that Chambers (1983) refers to as a new professionalism. Next, community development approaches should address the issues that created the social exclusion in the first place, rather than trying to solve social exclusion through more of what caused it. Thus, rather than seeking to grow our way out of social exclusion, we need to make a commitment to investing in social programs that address the exclusion created by our previous history with development. Last, this story describes a community that strives to be inclusive and caring as its *raison d’être*. Surely mainstream society has much to learn in this regard. What specifically does this story teach us with

respect to these themes? An exploration of each points to the contribution to community development theory made by the experience of this low-income community.

Being Resident-Centred

Chapter Six showed that community development is often described as concerned with the interests of all stakeholders. Building on the work of Kretzmann and McKnight, (1993), Figure 3 highlights the importance of community development that starts with residents.

Figure 3 Resident-Centred Community Development



This illustration draws attention to the fact that, for many residents, their community is their home and is where their heart is, not an object of contempt and scorn. This view recognizes that the foundation of the community is comprised of rich cultural traditions, knowledge, and skills as well as experiences of poverty, discrimination, abuse, and addictions. Residents form resident-based associations to meet individual needs and support community development. The community is linked to a broader city-wide, regional, or national community through businesses, institutions, and agencies outside the community. The foundation of the community is strengthened when residents are able to articulate their experiences, set community priorities, and accrue the benefits of community development.

This is a vision that is in marked contrast to a needs approach in which external interests work with the community to address the identified needs (McKnight, 1992). This approach sees the community primarily as a bundle of needs - a low-income community, an addicted community, single parent community, or disabled community. Resident-centred community development involves recognizing this history, strengths and abilities of the community, using these as the starting point for development. This is consistent with a view put forward by Campfens (1997) that community development ought to be based on local knowledge, traditions, and governing structures as well as endogenous definition of need and appropriate solutions. In this way the culture and history of a community is respected and its members valued for who they are.

This vision is also at odds with the notion of world cities with dynamic economies and competitive real estate markets in which the land values are determined not by its worth to people who live there but by international markets. In many ways, it is also inconsistent with the vision articulated in public policy which seeks to revitalize the community and

prevent property crime, concerned with the interests of those who are included, ostensibly providing the greatest good for the general population of Vancouver.

Being resident-centred also means promoting participation of community members in democratic decision-making and in doing so removing barriers to involvement. Community development that is resident-centred promotes partnership with business, government, and institutions, recognizing their contribution to the community. However, community also retains decision-making about community priorities for itself, an approach consistent with democratic principles. Community development that starts with the community is clearly focused on ensuring that activities undertaken under the auspices of development improve the wellbeing of residents.

Putting the Last First - Promoting the Voice of the Voiceless

Although community development is resident-centred, implying a general resident interest, it also aims to promote equality, requiring specific attention to those who are marginalized in any community. This research has shown that despite the economic optimism of neo-liberals, the number of people who are being socially and economically sidelined as a direct result of economic structural change and the decline in re-distributive policy is growing. So that we, as a society, do not ignore the needs of any one group in our midst, it is crucial that open and vigorous discussion on this issue replace the current hegemonic dialogue dominated by a narrow vision economic growth. Community development theory and practice has an important role to play, and indeed a responsibility, given its history as an emancipatory practice.

A central theme in this regard is the role of community development in promoting cultural and ethnic diversity, acknowledging the exclusion of non-dominant cultures from

full participation in social and economic activities. But diversity should also be broadened to include those that are marginalized and excluded in any way, including diversity in income level, sexual orientation, living conditions, health levels, and ways of drawing income. Thus, people who are homeless, work in the sex-trade, are living with HIV/AIDs, or are intravenous drug users are recognized as members of community, entitled to full participation in all that it offers.

Community development theory also speaks to the role of practitioners in promoting public participation and citizenship. This research suggests that community development practitioners have a particular responsibility to ensure that those who are not heard in other processes are heard in community development processes. The voices of those without power are particularly important in this work because it is their wellbeing that is of greatest concern. Thus, it is important that they be “subjects” rather than the “objects” of public policy. Their voices will assist us to understand their strengths and experiences in a way that will allow them to become central actors in community development.

Community development also has a critical role to play in articulating the relationship between certain public intervention activities and the continued marginalization of people. *Getting the Words AND the Music* presented a vision for the community as a place where low-income people are valued and given opportunity. Some argue that this suggests that the community will strive to keep people poor or will only value poor people. On the contrary, this vision challenges community development that raises the standard of living of the community in a way that requires those who are most vulnerable to leave.

In understanding marginality, this community recognizes that many of the issues such as violence, addictions, and homelessness, are societal. There is an awareness that low-

income and marginalized people do not cause poverty nor do they create and solely sustain the drug trade. The way in which this group is consistently marginalized and excluded from participation in mainstream social structures and policy development maintains privilege. It is critical that community development practice recognize this and focus on privileging those without power.

Promoting Participation - Learning to Listen and Learning to Hear

A clear theme in this research is that for the voices of those who are marginalized to be heard and social efficacy created, community development practitioners need to be able to listen to and hear those who may otherwise be excluded. Current discourse on community development emphasizes communication, partnership and collaboration between residents, organizations, government, and the private sector. While these concepts are important to any public process, as the focus of community development, these activities privilege people who are articulate, have leadership skills, and have a degree of power by virtue of employment, lifestyle, wellness and education.

At present, many residents, business owners, representatives of community groups, and policy makers have opportunities for input into public policy. They participate in parent advisory committees, health committees, cooperative societies, sports leagues and they have the confidence to participate in existing public forums such as open houses and public meetings. While it is important that opportunities for the general community to have input be maintained, it is also as important to find ways that those who experience social exclusion can be heard in privileged environments such as these.

Learning to listen involves a consciousness about those activities that “silence” people who are marginalized. It means being prepared for an alternative analysis, one based on the

experience of exclusion. Learning to listen and hear what low-income and marginalized communities means making a commitment to undertaking action “with the community” rather than “to the community.”

Ensuring Access to Services to Fulfill Basic Human Needs

Although a central tenant of the neo-liberal agenda in North America is that social service expenditures must be cut back and communities assume responsibility for caring for those in need, the experience of social exclusion suggests that this approach serves interests other than those of low-income communities. The literature review showed that social exclusion is a consequence of development in both the industrialized and post-industrialized periods. Social exclusion results in poverty, homelessness, addictions, and isolation, all root causes of crime. It also suggested that social exclusion is broadened when the social safety net is diminished. In focus groups and interviews, residents described conditions of social exclusion: of standing in food line-ups, of not being able to buy diapers because the income assistance cheque was late, and of walking the streets for hours for fear of rats in their rooms. These are clearly conditions of social exclusion that are unacceptable.

This research showed that to address social exclusion in a meaningful way involves public investment. This public investment, according to Community Directions members, should be in the form of improved housing, drug and alcohol services, education and training, community economic development, services for children and families, and increased access to health care. In making this investment, it is also important to recognize the inter-relationship between these services. This research supports the view that community development should be comprehensive and integrated in order to address issues more holistically and achieve efficiency of resources. What the low-income community

particularly contributes to community development theory in this regard is a recognition that the capacity to achieve comprehensive, holistic, and integrated services is most likely to occur at the community level.

Redefining Community - Inclusive and Caring Communities

There is general agreement that communities in the post-industrial period have changed. The role of community as place has declined. The role of community as identity has grown. Communities no longer play as strong a role in social control. Greater openness to heterogeneity is present, yet these same conditions contribute to racism, isolation, disconnection, and social exclusion. This research supports an alternative way to think of community. It proposes that a community is one in which all members are included: the impoverished, homeless, addicted, traumatized, mentally ill, and criminally involved members. This means that we do not participate in the moral panic that marks many revitalization and crime prevention initiatives; we need to recognize that the issue is not one of social control but rather one of individual and community healing.

The comprehensive, holistic, and integrated approach discussed above is one that strengthens the community from the inside. It involves working together, linking up with the ways the community currently works. It also means that there is a recognition that the conditions of social exclusion did not arise in a vacuum or in a short-time frame, nor can the excluded be blamed. The process to address social exclusion is a long-term endeavor that involves change within the community, policy changes to address its root causes, and a commitment to caring enough to find ways to include all residents in the socio-economic activities of the community.

Implications for Practice

Although the experience of Downtown Eastside Strathcona clearly has implications for how community development theory is interpreted, the particular value of this research is that it shows what these implications mean, on the ground, in conditions of social exclusion. Using the categories of contribution described above, this section will describe ideas that emerged in the research about how this theoretical shift can be implemented.

Being Resident-Centred

Simply stated, resident-centred community development means that people who live in a community are the subjects of development. It involves building on the strengths or assets residents offer. The residents of low-income communities are also parents, skilled trades-people, friends, and artists. Behind the visible expressions of poverty, the residents are people with rich histories as members of aboriginal communities from across Canada, as immigrants in a new country, as men who worked for many years in our resource economy now making their homes in SROs, or as social activists. Overall, the residents are people with knowledge, skills, and abilities that are very important for community building.

Being resident-centred also means ensuring residents participate in decisions affecting their community. For many community development practitioners this means giving up power, or what Moore and Puntenney (1999, p.1) refer to as “leading by stepping back.” This involves the day-to-day willingness to turn over the reins of power to the community, allowing community-based and community-paced development to occur. Examples of how this willingness in practice might be expressed include designing programs with full community involvement based on community experience rather than the constraints

placed on program design by policy makers and responding to a community time-line rather than an artificially imposed one.

Being resident-centred also means valuing diversity in its broadest sense. In the case of Downtown Eastside Strathcona, approximately half of the community represents a visible minority. When the community describes the diversity in their midst, cultural and ethnic diversity is a key element but they also express appreciation for diversity of ability, health level, sexual orientation, lifestyle, and ways of drawing an income.

In the end, the most significant measure of whether an action is resident-centred or not is the determination of who will benefit and how. Activities that clean up a community for tourists are likely to foster other activities to limit perceived vagrancy. Construction of high end condominiums is likely to lead to increased land value and conflict between various community interest. Resident-centred community development requires practitioners to critically examine activities to ensure that low-income residents are not displaced, silenced, or made to feel unwelcome. It means involving the members of the community in assessing how the activities will impact on their day-to-day lives.

Putting the Last First - Promoting the Voice of the Voiceless

Getting the Words AND the Music highlights many aspects of practice that have to be considered if community development is to put the last first. A central starting point is that the wellbeing of those who are worst off can only be promoted if they are treated with respect. In the case of low-income people, treating people with respect requires each of us to endeavor to understand the experience of marginality despite never having experienced it in quite the same way. In particular, care is required to ensure that residents are not silenced and "done to," not out of malice, but out of lack of understanding of difference and marginality.

It also includes treating the community as though it is a home, rather than as skid-row, an object of fear and pity. In doing so, conditions experienced by low-income people should be assessed by a similar standard to mainstream society, such that services are provided and basic needs met at a level considered acceptable for the general population.

Giving voice to the voiceless requires designing activities to respond to the experience of residents. From a program design perspective, it means starting with something understandable such as the popcan economy, the basis of a community recycling depot. It means responding to the individual, whether their experience and needs fit the program design or not. It also means believing in people and actively seeking opportunities for paid employment for residents where possible.

If the broader community is genuine about meeting the needs of marginalized people, it is important that their voices be clearly heard in policies designed to address their needs. This requires additional resources for community organizing and for various individual supports such as a food, busfare, and childcare. It also involves the creation of a safe forum for those who experience the trauma of social exclusion on a daily basis. The broader community and especially policy makers need to be able to listen with respect and understanding to the experiences that low-income people bring to the table. And policymakers must assume responsibility for incorporating these perspectives in public policy.

In doing so, some of what is said may be discomfoting and challenging to authority and some of the values of mainstream society. When these conversations are characterized as conflicted and angry, it trivializes valid concerns and invalidates the many low-income

people, who with limited resources, make vast contributions to their community and society overall.

It is time to honor that contribution by listening and hearing, no matter how uncomfortable it may be. Community development that gives voice to the voiceless is one that builds a feeling of safety amongst people who are marginalized by sharing power in meetings, decision-making, or day-to-day conversations. It is evident that no outside expert can build social efficacy. However, community development practitioners can validate experiences that are unlike our own so that others are not left to feel uncomfortable about their experience of exclusion.

Learning to Listen and Learning to Hear

Learning to listen and hear is an important message in this research. Focus group members and key respondents talked about their feelings that people from outside the community do not listen because of a lack of respect for residents. They talked about “professional-speak” and the barriers to meaningful conversation that it presents. They talked about how they feel silenced by their experience that others do not really care about the women who have disappeared in the community or who die from drug overdoses. They advised that when people are listened to, they are empowered, allowing leadership to emerge.

Listening to people who experience social exclusion is particularly challenging for government. Listening through the adoption of a resident-centred approach limits the role and power of government and requires “skilled people inside government who understand its potential and limitations and don’t treat those involved as threats or as possessors of magic potions” (Lotz, 1998, p. 181). Governments, answerable to a broader electorate, are challenged by the notion of marginalized communities as communities with assets and even

more with the notion of a “low-income friendly community” because it does not fit well with the dominant agenda, one concerned with property crime and economic impact on the city as a whole. Listening and hearing means developing policy that is respectful of the residents of a community, in this case a low-income and marginalized community. For this approach to be fostered, government must take a leadership role in giving up power to communities playing a role characterized by support and non-interference.

Ensuring Access to Services that Meet Basic Human Needs

If we want to ensure that all members of our community have basic human needs met, we have to be prepared to investment in services to meet those needs. According to the participants of the Community Direction process, public investment for Downtown Eastside Strathcona is required for improved housing, drug and alcohol services, education and training, community economic development, services for children and families, and increased access to health care. Participants in this research emphasized that these services should be provided in a comprehensive and integrated manner in order to address issues more holistically and achieve efficiency of resources, capacity that is most likely to occur at the community level. They also highlighted ways in which services can be delivered at a fraction of the cost using existing community knowledge and resources.

At a time when governments in British Columbia and across Canada are cutting budgets, the issue of public investment in services to fulfill basic human needs is particularly important. In some case, governments couch disinvestment in the language of public/private partnership, placing practitioners in seemingly conflicted positions: speak up and lose funding or collaborate and lose less funding. Community development practitioner have an important role to play in advocating for continued investment in services to meet basic needs,

that of educating politicians, policymakers, and the general public about the need for public investment, the overall savings accrued with community-based delivery, and the potential for long-term community gain from appropriate public investment.

Redefining Community - Inclusive and Caring Communities

This research also suggests that the members of society as a whole need to reconsider how community is understood. We need to recognize that everyone in the community has a right to be treated with dignity and to be the object of care. As communities, we have the capacity to provide care to all those in need and to develop the appropriate support structures to be inclusive. Community groups in Downtown Eastside Strathcona do this through community centres that serve as community living rooms, providing community-based programs for at-risk families, and having relevant community events such as baseball games between the addicts and the police. Community groups work together to provide a network of support services, replicating what might otherwise be a natural support system of an extended family.

We all contribute in various ways to the marginalization of others and it is important for community development practitioners to play a leadership role in action to remove barriers and promote inclusion in all communities. In doing so, community development practitioners who are outsiders in a community marked by social exclusion can work with low-income people to make room for them in the Canadian socio-economic system, to be inclusive of all.

“Getting the Music” - A Process of Personal Change

While this research identified many important implications of the experience of marginalized communities for theory and practice overall, it also influenced me on a personal level. It was clear from my involvement in this research project and other community development activities in the community that a practitioner cannot work in marginalized communities, like Downtown Eastside Strathcona, without being personally changed in some way.

For me, involvement in this project resulted in an ongoing analysis of my own practice, creating a feeling of discomfort and challenging my confidence. My previous community development training provided technical skills and a theoretical foundation but it also distanced me from my own experience of poverty, from an awareness of systemic barriers faced by family members and other people I had grown up with, and essentially from meaningful relationships with people in communities. This project and others required me to drop the protective cloak of professionalism and personally invest in the community.

I came to understand the role of personal relationships in my practice. Although I had previously worked on other initiatives in the community, because this project involved many people I had not worked with before, it took two years before I felt trusted. Part of that process involved becoming more comfortable with the stories that residents shared and overcoming my own fear of an environment that is so different from my own day-to-day reality. It also involved the ongoing struggle to be an authentic human being, to be myself and speak from my heart, rather than from a bank of theory. Because I draw an income, and like other practitioners am seen by some as making money off the backs of the poor, the development of trust is an ongoing process.

Learning to respond in a meaningful way to the individual and community-wide experiences of tragedy in marginalized communities - death, serious illness, fear, and violence - and with the grief, anger, and frustration that resulted was, and continues to be, an ongoing endeavor. Like other practitioners, I found a natural response is to distance oneself from the reality of the street. So that I might contribute to a community of caring, I am regularly required to re-think how I engage in the community. The anger and frustration of the community demands immediate action; as a paid worker in the community, I often feel hopelessly inadequate in responding to the justifiable demands.

Correspondingly, my confidence in the role of community development to effect change on the short-term was also challenged. Clarity with respect to what actually causes marginalization and social exclusion emerged, as did greater understanding of measures required to address it in a meaningful way. How is it possible to address an issue of global proportions in a community-paced and community-based way? I began to see this work as a movement, of which each community project plays a small but important role.

This project challenged me to recognize my own professionalized way of silencing people and asserting my own agenda. I became painfully aware of the importance of stepping back and providing space for other voices. I began to shift traditional expectations of what practice involves and, as a result, better understanding of the role of creativity and openness also emerged.

Prior to undertaking this research, I saw community development as a process that mediated conflict and sought collaborative solutions. Much of that view still holds but this project also made me more cognizant of the conflicted nature of community development in marginalized community. It provided evidence of conflicted interests where the interests of

economic growth supercede the fulfillment of basic human needs and where public resources impact the distribution of power. I began to see conflict less as a dynamic that it is possible to resolve and more as a dynamic that requires strategizing about.

Overall, the shift involved a willingness to be comfortable in what is essentially a very “messy” and unpredictable practice. This understanding makes it much easier to look at practice differently, to recognize the lived experience of residents and to respect the right of residents to interpret their experience in their own way. Out of that understanding grows a commitment and willingness to play a leadership role in supporting the development of inclusive and caring communities.

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Zacharias, Y. (2000, May 4). Slain woman in dumpster led life on mean streets. *Vancouver Sun*. pp. B3.

Zinn, H. (1994). *You can't be neutral on a moving train: A personal history of our times*. Boston: Beacon Press.

APPENDIX 1 RESEARCH PROPOSAL SUBMITTED TO THE COMMUNITY

WHAT IS PROPOSED?

I am interested in undertaking a research project that documents the Community Directions process and reviews other processes that the community has done in the past. The purpose is to provide a record of what the Downtown Eastside community sees as the best way to conduct community development in their community. In doing so, I hope to:

- describe characteristics of community development for low-income communities
- determine appropriate roles of specific partners
- explore the role of the various levels of government; and
- recommend appropriate policy and program directions to support community development in East Vancouver.

WHAT IS INVOLVED?

The study will adopt participatory research methods in which assumptions and conclusions will be tested in an ongoing way with a small advisory group. The methods include:

Literature Review

A review of what other people have written about community development in similar settings around the world will be done. The review will focus on existing theory and practice in community development, participatory research, lifelong learning, learning communities, with an emphasis on community development in inner-city areas, Aboriginal communities, and developing countries.

Interviews

Semi-structured interviews to get the views of a broad cross-section of professional colleagues in organizations involved with community development in the Downtown Eastside such as community organizations, non-profit agencies, education institutions, groups serving immigrants and visible minorities, and government agencies will be undertaken. Interviews will be conducted in person and at a time and place convenient to the participants.

Focus Groups

I will conduct approximately focus groups with community residents to ensure community voices are appropriately heard in the research. This will provide a way of checking assumptions that sometimes occur for people working in the community.

Case Study Analysis

A historical overview of community development and specific initiatives including Vancouver East Community Skills Connection, the Community Services Fund, the Services for Children and Families Consortium, and the Downtown Eastside Strathcona Coalition will be used to draw out what the community has already said about the subject.

The researcher will participate in community meetings with respect to the Community Directions project and work as a participant observer to record the process followed, concerns and ideas expressed, and decisions made.

WHAT WILL THE COMMUNITY GET OUT OF THIS?

The community will get:

- a plain language description of how the community would like to work with partners, and
- an opportunity to have its story told in a way that they have a say on.

The document can be used to set the principles used in a participatory evaluation of the Community Directions process.

WHAT RESOURCES WILL BE NEEDED?

I applied for and received a small grant to offset the costs of this project. This will pay for childcare, focus group refreshments, and some of my time.

If it is possible to get additional resources for the research I am interested in adding a participatory research component. If we are able to add a participatory research component, 1-2 part-time research trainees will be hired and trained for 3-4 months. Training will include an introduction to community-based research, interview skills, facilitation skills, database management, and research analysis.

WHAT IS THE TIMING FOR THIS?

Because I am doing this as part of my work in a UBC graduate program, I need to keep the project contained within a timeframe that allows me to complete the project in March. To help ensure that my needs and the communities needs are met, we can plan this project as a specific phase in the overall process, allowing this work to be used to build toward subsequent phases.

CAN THE PROJECT BE CHANGED AS WE GO ALONG?

The subject of the research means that there is quite a bit of flexibility in interpreting how things should proceed. However, there are some things that are required by the university. Most importantly, I will have the method reviewed by an ethics committee and if the methods change, I will have to go back to the committee for approval, which for a researcher is a major delay. Also, although the faculty I am in is very flexible and supportive if community processes, they will need to have input into the design, analysis, and final report.

APPENDIX 2 LIST OF REPORTS REVIEWED BY THEME

The following reports were reviewed and a database developed to identify what the community had said before:

Alcohol and Drug

City of Vancouver. (July 1998). "Background Paper on Drug Treatment Needs in Vancouver".

Davies, Alysia. (Undated). "Steal and Pawn Dusk to Dawn Pawnshops, Illegal Trade and Drugs in the Downtown Eastside". Downtown Eastside Neighbourhood Safety Office.

Economic Development

Vancouver Economic Development Commission. (1999). "Down Eastside Economic Revitalization Initiative Initial Report" Vancouver: Unpublished Report.

City of Vancouver. November (1998). "Building a Sustainable Future Together Part of the Downtown Eastside Community Revitalization Program". A Proposal.

Fryer, Margo & Brian Lee. (October 1999). "Challenges and Promise: A Report of Summer Student Community Consultation. The University of British Columbia's Downtown Eastside Initiative.

Ministry of Employment and Investment, Community Development Unit. (1999). "Which Legacy Vancouver's Downtown Communities".

Housing

Colliers International Realty Advisors Inc. (1999). "SRO Conversion/Demolition Study for Downtown Vancouver, 1998-2011". Vancouver: An Unpublished Report.

City of Vancouver. (July 1998). "Housing Plan for the Downtown Eastside, Chinatown, Gastown, Strathcona (draft)".

City of Vancouver. (July 1998). "Victory Square Concept Plan".

City of Vancouver. (July 1998). "Gastown Land Use Plan".

Children and Families

Franklin Pilot Project Team. (1995). "A Model for Developing Community Serving Schools". Vancouver: An Unpublished Report.

Kiassa Neighbourhood House. (1989). "Project Star Seniors Together as Resources". Vancouver: Unpublished Report.

Children Need Care Now Committee. (1994). "Your Promises Our Future". Vancouver: An Unpublished Report.

Grunberg, Sharon, Grunberg, Matthew, & Wong, Wayne. (1992). The Voice of First Nations Youth First Nations Youth Needs in the Strathcona and Downtown Eastside Area of Vancouver, British Columbia.

"Inner-city Foster Parents Supporting Community, Supporting CultureFor Our Children". (1994). A Community Project Report.

Lee, Calvin. (1992). *The Fine Art of Centering: A Social Action Research Play*. A Research Report Submitted to the McConnel Foundation.

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APPENDIX 3 COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT THEMES IDENTIFIED

Principles	Focus	# of Reports
Is respectful, inclusive, and non-judgmental.	Children & Families	2
	Women's Issues	4
	Alcohol and Drug	5
	Housing	1
	Safety and Wellbeing	4
Meets basic needs	Alcohol and Drug	4
	Housing	3
	Safety and Wellbeing	3
Reflects cultural diversity	Children & Families	3
	Women's Issues	3
	Alcohol and Drug	6
	Safety and Wellbeing	3
Is wholistic, comprehensive and integrated	Children & Families	6
	Alcohol and Drug	8
	Safety and Wellbeing	3
	CED	1
Involves participation of those most affected	Women's Issues	2
	Alcohol and Drug	7
	Safety and Wellbeing	5
Focus		
Root causes of issues	Women's Issues	1
	Alcohol and Drug	2
Family centred	Children & Families	11
	Alcohol & Drug	3
Preventative and focuses on harm reduction	Children & Families	4
	Women's Issues	3
	Alcohol and Drug	4
	Housing	1
Focuses on the needs of the marginalized	Women's Issues	1
	Alcohol and Drug	3
	Safety and Wellbeing	2
Process		
Neighbourhood based and accessible	Children & Families	7
	Housing	2
	Safety and Wellbeing	1
Building community capacity	CED	4
	Children & families	6
Promotes collaboration between agencies	Children & Families	1
	Women's Issues	2
	Alcohol and Drug	3
	Safety and Wellbeing	5
Recognizes links between issues and the whole of society	Children & Families	7
	Women's Issues	7
	Alcohol and Drug	5
Involves community-led planning and organizing	Children & Families	7
	Women's Issues	1
	Alcohol and Drug	6
	Housing	2
	Safety and Wellbeing	2
	CED	3
Leads to a community development corporation	Housing	1
	CED	1

APPENDIX 4

SAMPLE INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Project: Creating a Framework for Community-based Development in the
Downtown Eastside Strathcona Community

Date of Interview:

Time of Interview:

Interview Number:

Interviewer:

1. The interviewee will have received a copy of *Getting the Words AND the Music* in advance.
2. A brief summary of the project will be given and the interviewee will be given an opportunity to ask any questions. Written agreement to participate will be requested. I will ask for permission to tape the interview.

Questions

3. Tell me about your agency's role in community development in the Downtown Eastside Strathcona community?
4. What is your overall impression of this guide as a description of how the community would like outsiders such as government, churches and large non-profits to work in the community?
5. What are the strengths of this guide as a way of expressing how the community would like outsiders to work in the Downtown Eastside Strathcona area?
6. What are the weaknesses of this guide as a way of expressing how the community would like outsiders to work in the Downtown Eastside Strathcona area?
7. What are the opportunities for using a guide such as this to express how the community would like outsiders to work in the Downtown Eastside Strathcona area?
8. What are the risks for using a guide such as this to express how the community would like outsiders to work in the Downtown Eastside Strathcona area?
9. What community development approaches and practices work best in this community?
Why?
10. What community development approaches and practices do not work in this community?
Why?
11. If you were writing this guide, what would you add? What would you change?

Thanks a lot for your time and ideas. If you want to see the results of this project when it is completed, I can arrange for a copy to be sent to your agency. Please circle: Yes or no

APPENDIX 5

SAMPLE FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL

Project: **Creating a Framework for Community-based Development in the Downtown Eastside Strathcona Community**

Date of Group:
Place:

Time of Group:
Number of Participants:

Process Followed:

Brief overview of project and what we will do in focus group will be given. Participants will be asked to sign agreement forms showing what will happen with the research data and the final document. I will ask permission to tape the group. I will walk the group through a summary of the guide to show key concepts. Questions will then be posed in a very informal, kitchen table kind of approach.

Questions Posed:

1. What is your first reaction to what I have just presented to you?
2. When I describe this community in *Getting the Words AND the Music*, how would you like to see it described?
3. When I describe the strengths of the community, what would you like me to say?
4. When I describe the needs of the community what would you like me to say?
5. When I describe how people in the community work together, what would you like me to say?
6. When I describe how people, including those in the worst shape, get their ideas and concerns heard, what would you like me to say?
7. Is there a community project that you know of that worked really well?
8. What worked about it?
9. If you were writing a guide for outsiders on how to work with the community, what would you think is the most important thing to include?
10. Have I mentioned anything that you think should not be included? If so, what is it?
11. Thanks a lot for your time and ideas. If you want to see the results of this project when it is completed, a copy will be available here at _____.