INCREASING PUBLIC AWARENESS:
A COMMUNITY ACTION GROUP CASE STUDY

by
ROSEMARY F. TAYLOR

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS

in
THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
Department of Administrative, Adult and Higher Education

We accept this thesis as conforming
to the required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
April 1993

© Rosemary F. Taylor, 1993
The purpose of this study was to determine how a community action group raised public awareness for its cause, and to show the importance of acknowledging the many ways in which people of all ages learn in a variety of settings and circumstances. The research question asked “How are knowledge and attitudes transmitted and acquired where the instruction is intentional, but the learning is generally unintentional?”

Community action groups are learning systems using planned educational strategies to raise public awareness for social issues, where the public are not, initially, intentional learners. This study investigated the educational efforts of the Boundary Bay Conservation Committee in raising awareness of, and promoting action on, two local issues concerning proposed housing and golf course developments in an environmentally sensitive area.

Data collection was by semi-structured interviews with representatives from the Boundary Bay Conservation Committee, the public, and the local media. Other data came from newspaper and magazine articles, publicity materials used in the educational campaign, correspondence between action group members and bureaucrats, and studies done in the area which were used for educational purposes by the activists.

Findings showed that awareness-raising needs to extend beyond the public to the politicians and decision-makers who, in this instance, were making decisions affecting the local population with which the electorate did not agree, and thus two changes of attitude were required. Firstly the public attitude needed to change from passive acceptance of ‘progress’ which had the potential to destroy irreplaceable wildlife habitat, and secondly the attitude of elected officials needed to be changed to reflect the wishes of the electorate.

Both these goals were achieved, helped by the educational strategies of the Boundary Bay Conservation Committee through the usual meetings, Open House and public debates, and also informal on-site educational workshops, fund-raising events and incidental information placed throughout the community. Through saturation of the area with information the issue became a high-profile topic of conversation. Council meetings and public hearings which are part of the democratic process also played a large part in raising public awareness, and much incidental learning occurred throughout the community on related matters such as democratic procedure, wildlife habitat, and the local economy.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ........................................................................................................... ii  
TABLE OF CONTENTS ....................................................................................... iii  
LIST OF TABLES ................................................................................................... v  
LIST OF FIGURES ................................................................................................. vi  
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT ........................................................................................... vii  

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION ............................................................................ 1  
Statement of the Problem ...................................................................................... 2  
Purpose of This Study ............................................................................................. 3  
Learning in the Community ................................................................................... 3  
The Research Setting ............................................................................................... 5  
Background to the Research Area .......................................................................... 8  
Demographic Description of the Area ................................................................... 9  
Outcome of the Community Action ....................................................................... 11  
Timing of Events .................................................................................................... 13  
Types of Learning Arising from Planned Educational Strategies ......................... 15  
Methodology ......................................................................................................... 17  
Overview of Contents ............................................................................................ 17  

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE ................................................... 19  
Contextual Meaning of Terms Used ..................................................................... 19  
The Role of New Social Movements in the Community ....................................... 21  
Educational Aspects of New Social Movements ................................................... 22  
Persuasive Communications .................................................................................. 25  
Social Marketing .................................................................................................... 31  
Attitudes, Values and Beliefs ................................................................................ 33  
The Learning Population ...................................................................................... 34  
Types of Learning Involved .................................................................................. 37  
Group Dynamics ................................................................................................... 39  
Summary ................................................................................................................ 41  

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY ......................................................................... 42  
Introduction to Qualitative Research Methodology .............................................. 42  
Use of Case Study Research .................................................................................. 43  
Choice of Subject Group ....................................................................................... 44  
Methods of Data Collection .................................................................................. 47  
Other Sources of Data ........................................................................................... 50  
Internal Validity .................................................................................................... 50  
Reliability ............................................................................................................... 53  
External Validity .................................................................................................... 53  
Summary ................................................................................................................ 54
CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH FINDINGS
Introduction
Underlying Causes of Community Action
Persuasive Communications
Role of Trigger Events
Vested Interests
Attitudes, Values & Beliefs
Getting People Involved
Encouraging Participation
Factors Affecting the Education Process
Summary
Coding Notes

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION
Profile of the Community as Participants in the Action
Role of Unplanned Events
Factors Affecting Communication Flow
How Awareness was Raised
Summary

CHAPTER 6: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS & IMPLICATIONS
Purpose of the Study
Methods Used
Data Collected
Findings
Conclusions Reached through This Study
Relevance of Research Findings to Other Educational Dimensions
Implications for Practice

REFERENCES
APPENDIX A: Schedule of Questions
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Chronology of Events ................................................................. 14
Table 2: Summary of Research Findings .................................................. 57
Table 3: Elements Promoting Community Action Group Success .............. 58
Table 4: Planned Learning Opportunities .................................................. 60
Table 5: Factors Affecting Communication Flow ...................................... 61
LIST OF FIGURES

Fig.1: Boundary Bay and the Fraser Delta – Geographical Location..........................7
Fig.2: Communication Patterns in Community Action – Planned Events................62
Fig.3: Communication Patterns in Community Action – Unplanned Events............63
Fig.4: Levels of Involvement in Community Action..................................................64
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This thesis concerns environmental conflict in the Boundary Bay, Ladner and Tsawwassen area of British Columbia, and could not have come about without the help of many residents who spent time participating in my enquiries. I hope this study will acknowledge their community achievements, and will be of use to other groups fighting for just cause.

My supervisors Gordon Selman and Tom Sork, committee member Judith Ottoson, and external advisor Michael Clague, all offered ideas to broaden my outlook, while at the same time helping to keep things on track and focused.

My thanks are due to two people in particular, each of whom were entirely instrumental in enabling me to be where I am now. To Andrea Kastner, who sowed the seeds in my mind that I should enter the Masters programme, and thus, without knowing it, set in motion a life transformation experience straight from the pages of Mezirow, and Dr. Patricia Vertinsky, Associate Dean of Graduate Studies in the Faculty of Education who, in her words “went to bat for me” when the going got tough in the jungle of university rules and regulations, enabling me finally to storm the bureaucratic wall successfully and be here at all. I can truly say she is my guardian angel! To both of them I will always owe much for giving me the chance, and showing faith in my abilities!

Thanks are also due to Sharan Merriam, for her help during the most motivating and inspirational summer school it has been my good fortune to attend, and for her support, advice and friendship, which helped this project to come to fruition. I would also like to thank my ‘thesis buddy’, Cynthia Andruske for her constant and invaluable support, and her generous sharing of time and ideas throughout the thesis process. To work on a thesis without such support would be a long and lonely process indeed.

Beyond the walls of Academe, my thanks in abundance are due to Terry, who tolerated and supported me in so many ways throughout this entire venture, and at the same time learned a few survival skills himself, and to Gary Shearman, computer guru, who taught me everything I know about computers and how to use them. Without this most valuable information none of my university papers could ever have been written!

And finally, a word of gratitude to those special people I have met along life’s way who have encouraged me to discover how much fun learning can be.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Education as a process to encourage learning takes place in many settings of a formal, non-formal or informal nature, but whether learning occurs depends to an extent on the subject matter being learned, the way in which it is presented, and whether the setting itself is learner-friendly. Much lifelong learning takes place outside the more formal educational settings, and may be a result of planned educational strategies or incidental experience.

In the late twentieth century considerable educational effort has been put into encouraging a change of attitude in the general population towards matters of social significance, and one target for such change is the environment which we all share. Initially the matter was brought into focus by radicals in the 1960s, at a time when many industrialized countries were just recovering from the effects of World War II. The general trend at the time was to build and develop land, reach for an ever-increasing standard of living, keep the economy booming with greater production of material goods, and complete the taming and harnessing of nature for the benefit of mankind which had been occurring since the beginning of the industrial revolution.

At first those who showed concern for the degradation of the environment, which included loss of natural habitats, a penchant for damming and diverting rivers, massive use of agricultural chemicals, and over-use of natural and non-renewable resources, were voices crying in a wilderness of prosperity and material gain. Their attempts to invoke a widespread change of attitude went somewhat in vain; the time had not yet come when a majority of the population was receptive to their words or ideas. However, they persisted in purveying their message until more people adopted their viewpoint, and environmentalism moved from the radical edge of society to almost mainstream ideology. Gradually social movements formed to give greater voice to the importance of these and other social issues of the late twentieth century which needed
wide support in order to change existing political attitudes and agendas in these areas.

**Statement of the Problem**

This study concerns informal and incidental learning strategies used by a community action group to raise awareness for a cause, and the learning which results amongst the general public, where the ultimate aim is to change existing attitudes. There are many instances where educational opportunities are created at an informal level, but whether or what members of the general public may learn depends entirely upon their reason for being there, and their state of mind or mood at the time. If they are there for social rather than educational reasons, the impact of exhibits may be only minimal. For example, a family may go to a museum because there is a display they really want to see and study, or they may be there because it is a very hot day, the museum is air-conditioned, and it provides an opportunity for them to socialize in pleasant surroundings while doing something different. The museum exhibit will have been carefully crafted and constructed to provide a meaningful learning experience to those who view it, but if the family are discussing which flavour ice-cream cones they will buy in the cafeteria afterwards they may only glance casually at their surroundings, paying little more than superficial attention to it. Thus their personal agendas control the amount of learning which will occur at any one time in such situations, and is beyond the power of the educator to alter except by creating such an attention-grabbing exhibit that the ice-cream cones are forgotten in the excitement of the learning opportunity presented to them.

Education of this nature is often ‘arm’s length’, having been carefully set up to attract attention, but people may or may not choose to attend, and if they do so choose, what and how much they learn is entirely up to them. Under such circumstances, learning objectives intended to result from contact with an exhibit may not be universally achieved. This applies also to many other forms of community learning, where education is deliberately planned and carried out, but learning is entirely
voluntary and even incidental to the completion of other tasks. The question this thesis sought to research is which educational strategies are effective in achieving a substantial degree of learning where most of that learning is informal, incidental and often unintentional in nature, the ultimate aim of which is to create and maintain a change of attitude.

**Purpose of This Study**

Education in the community may take place by direct means, face-to-face at workshops, seminars, community meetings and other organized events, indirectly through exhibits, media reports and conversation, and incidentally through just living and being part of that community. Often learning outcomes cannot be predicted and are difficult to quantify or determine because they are part of everyday experience, but if the education is aimed at short- or long-term change of attitude, learning will be manifest when a societal shift in attitude towards the new direction is evident.

The purpose of this study was two-fold; to determine how a community action group raises public awareness for its cause, and to show the importance of acknowledging the many ways in which people of all ages learn in a variety of settings and circumstances. These learning processes are so much a part of everyday life that most people take them for granted as ever-present and ongoing in one form or another, and result in acquiring what Fensham (1992) describes as 'commonsense knowledge'. Consequently little attention has been paid to analysis of the learning dynamics resulting from planned educational strategies which hope to achieve desired learning objectives, although the learners’ participation may to a great extent be unintentional and even incidental.

**Learning in the Community**

Informal, unintentional and incidental learning takes place continuously throughout life and across all sectors of the community. It may result from a deliberate wish to gain more knowledge, as a result of doing and experiencing, or peripherally as a
result of living and being a member of a community. Such learning may or may not be meaningful, it may be fleetingly retained and then forgotten, or it may become part of many small pieces of information which eventually become linked into a greater whole. Sometimes knowledge acquired incidentally and gradually over a period of time adds up to considerable expertise, valued not only by the individual learner, but by others who see this knowledge as an invaluable resource.

On the surface it may appear that some information learned incidentally is trivial. However, each individual will link pieces of apparent trivia in different ways. Every individual is a product of his or her own biography, and thus what is meaningful to one person may be meaningless to another. But because of circumstance, one individual may link two apparently unconnected incidents together, the ‘ah-ha principle’ comes into action, a connection is made, and learning occurs. The ‘ah-ha principle’ is simply a function of intuition, an acknowledgement of tacit knowledge, when some unknown acts as a catalyst so that two small items become one larger whole. Since no two people have exactly similar life experiences, it is not possible to predict which information will have what effect and on whom.

Although action group members do not generally have time to consider the theoretical aspects of informing and educating the general public, they use strategies which have been successful elsewhere, often having to act quickly, on the spur of the moment, to ‘rally the troops’. Immediate issues require immediate action and short-term education, while the overall problem often can only be successfully dealt with by long-term educational campaigns leading to an eventual change in attitude. In this thesis both the short-term and long-term educational strategies of a community action group are discussed, together with an analysis of the consequent learning which occurred amongst members of the general public.

Such groups usually carry out well-planned educational strategies in order to inform the public of a problem or concern within the community because grass-roots movements depend on numbers of people expressing reasoned opinion to exert pressure
on politicians and decision makers. This means gaining as much support as possible within the community for the action group’s viewpoint through the widespread use of education and information campaigns.

The Research Setting

The Boundary Bay Conservation Committee is an umbrella organization whose members represent 12 environmental and community action groups in the Vancouver and Boundary Bay area of south-west British Columbia. There are also about 200 direct members and supporters, representing approximately 27,000 people in the Lower Mainland. It began initially in about 1988, when a few residents in the Tsawwassen and Boundary Bay area discovered that applications were before the local council to develop 18 golf courses and a large housing development on lands which were either natural marshlands and valuable bird habitat, supporting millions of migrating ducks, geese and shorebirds during their semi-annual migrations up and down the west coast of the North and South American continent, or on local farmland which had been set aside by Provincial Government orders in the Agricultural Land Reserve. Land so designated in British Columbia could not be reclassified unless there were exceptional circumstances for removing it from farm use, and required Provincial legislation to do so.

It became known throughout the local community that land was being removed from the Agricultural Land Reserve apparently on a random basis and with no studies having been done, and development permits were being issued without community consultation or approval. The removal of farm land from the local inventory was contentious for several reasons. Firstly, it was against the law except for good reason, and housing development was not considered to be that. Secondly, only a small proportion of the land in British Columbia is suitable for arable farming, much of which is in this area, and it has already been considerably diminished by development to date. If further losses were to occur it might be very difficult to sustain an agricultural industry in the area at all, and a greater reliance on outside food sources would be necessary
(Boundary Bay Conservation Committee, 1992). Thirdly, the high migratory and resident bird population relies on farmland and undeveloped upland for alternative food sources in the form of oldfield uncultivated habitat where raptors (birds of prey), owls, herons and eagles can find small rodents and mammals, grain and other fields planted for migrating and resident geese, and woodlands for shelter, nesting and roosting. If any one area were to disappear, it would create imbalance and imperil all the others which are interlinked.

The proposed use of marshlands for golf courses was equally contentious. Vast numbers of migratory snow geese and other waterfowl regularly stop to feed at Boundary Bay on their way north or south. There are protected habitats all along the west coast of South and North America right up to Alaska, except in Canada. The Boundary Bay area is a vital link in the chain of migratory stopovers, and if it were to be reduced or removed it could possibly have disastrous consequences for the waterfowl population of both the northern and southern hemispheres. In order to locate the area concerned, see Fig. 1, (Boundary Bay Conservation Committee, 1992).

Thus when some residents of Tsawwassen and Boundary Bay discovered these proposed changes to their environment they became concerned on many fronts. The most immediate reaction was one of anger and confusion that land in the Agricultural Land Reserve could be removed so easily for proposed development. Coupled with that anger was frustration at not having any community consultation on the development plan for the area. Many people living in the area commute to Vancouver to work on a daily basis, and were afraid that the main freeways, already overcrowded, would become chaotic with a huge increase in traffic as newcomers joined the commute. Others had chosen to retire from the metropolis to the quiet of a rural area and did not wish to find themselves subjected to a large population increase, while young families had also chosen to live in the area to bring up their children in a rural, rather than an urban setting. Any thought of a sudden and large population influx was seen as a threat to almost all sectors of the present community.
Fig.1: Boundary Bay and the Fraser Delta
Small independent action groups began to form to ward off the impending development. They included the Homeowners Association, the Delta Naturalists, the Great Blue Heron Society, the B.C. Wildlife Federation and many other groups, each concerned with their own aspect of the problem. But each was acting autonomously and independently, sometimes not even knowing the existence of the others, so a lot of energy was unwittingly being spent covering the same ground. It was at this point that the Boundary Bay Conservation Committee came into being, enabling all the smaller groups to send representatives to one central meeting where ideas and resources could be shared, and strategies worked out for creating public awareness and gaining public support in an effort to educate and inform the politicians who were responsible for making such unpopular decisions.

One of the first tasks of the Boundary Bay Conservation Committee was to plan a short-term educational strategy for informing those members of the public who were as yet unaware of the problem in order to pressure politicians to make immediate changes where issues were urgent. Secondly there was a need to implement a long-term educational programme aimed at engendering permanent public concern for the welfare of the local environment. Almost equally important was direct education of politicians at all levels of government through lobbying, presentations, meetings and discussions. Once members of the general public were made aware of the issues and became informed of the implications of both the proposed housing development and golf courses, they too were encouraged to lobby, inform and educate the politicians in an effort to change their attitude from pro-development to pro-environment. How this took place is discussed in Chapter 4, Findings.

Background to the Research Area

Fig. 1 shows the geographical area where the problem arose. The large-scale building development was to be sited near Tsawwassen, which is on a small peninsula, bounded on its fourth side by a major freeway. Housing would have consumed a
portion of farmland on that peninsula, and the resulting traffic could only move in and out of the area on the already-congested freeway. Fears were expressed that any housing development of the proposed size, which would almost triple the population in 5–10 years, would also require extensive additional infrastructure in the way of roads, schools, hospitals and perhaps even shopping centres, which would all consume more farmland than just the housing project alone. The people of the area stated repeatedly that, on the whole, they were not against expansion at a normal rate, but they were against rapid expansion on land which was valuable farmland when there were other areas of the Lower Mainland which could absorb such a project without endangering the local agricultural industry.

The eighteen proposed new golf courses lay all around Boundary Bay from Tsawwassen to Crescent Beach both along the marshlands just inside the dykes, and inland through Delta and Burns Bog, and along the Serpentine River complex. These were the very areas which play such a vital role in the Pacific Flyway, providing staging grounds and winter habitat for migratory waterfowl, and year-round habitat for large populations of resident birds. To destroy one part of the eco-system would probably endanger the habitat as a whole and threaten the birds that relied upon it.

Because the Pacific Flyway extends from Alaska to Tierra del Fuego, the viability of Boundary Bay as a wintering ground was not just a matter of local importance, it was of international concern, and as such the community action group and their supporters took their case to as many international agencies as possible in order to raise more than local awareness of the issue. This helped to raise the profile of the problem when drawing it to the attention of local politicians.

Demographic Description of the Area

A demographic study carried out in 1991 by MTR Consultants Ltd. shows that the Tsawwassen area has a substantially older, more stable population base than surrounding neighbourhoods, consisting of “mature, established families, as well as a
large segment of empty nesters—mature households in excess of 55 years of age whose children have left home”. Their average income is high, exceeding that of Vancouver by over 47%, and the population of the area in 1990 was almost 20,000 (p. 4).

Many of those who make up the “mature households” are retired managerial and professional people with high educational attainment, used to doing their own research and asking critical questions before accepting information at face value. They were in positions of authority, and have well-honed skills in dealing with bureaucracy. Now these abilities are used in working to support the movement to prevent loss of wetland and farmland to proposed developments by preparing and presenting briefs to council, lobbying politicians, and offering their expertise as resource persons when required. These people are certainly not radical, but they are not prepared to stand by quietly and watch the destruction of their neighbourhood. Many of the people interviewed during the course of this study were now retired, but were extremely active in defending a cause in which they believed very strongly.

A second section of the local population who were also very active were members of young families, with children growing up in the area. They have chosen to live in a rural environment rather than in nearby towns and cities, and wish to keep it that way. This has been described by the then Mayor of the municipality as the ‘drawbridge mentality’, not wishing others to come and enjoy the amenities you have yourself. But although that may be a factor, there is as much concern among them as among the retired people for retention of the local agricultural industry and the integrity of the Pacific Flyway. There is a wish to preserve these amenities for their children and future generations, not to cash it in for short term gain that would benefit mostly the developers, who stood to make a lot of money if the projects went ahead.

Because of the considerable expertise and ability to be found amongst the residents of the Tsawwassen area, the community action group had many resources available to it in mounting its campaign. Since the general population of the area is fairly homogeneous in that many people share the same beliefs and values, it was perhaps
easier to attract their attention to the problem and get their support than might have been the case in a more diverse community.

**Outcome of the Community Action**

The educational process upon which the community action group embarked was two-step. The ultimate target audience to be educated were the municipal and provincial politicians and decision makers to whom the public were appealing for a change of attitude and values towards the quality of life in and around Tsawwassen and Boundary Bay. Most of the general public were already aware that it was necessary to change political attitudes, but were not so aware of the way in which the development issue was being handled by the people in power, or what impact it might have on the community should it be approved.

The first step was, therefore, to inform and educate the members of the public about the area as it was then, and as it would be if the housing and golf course proposals materialized. Once they gained enough knowledge to make an informed judgment about accepting or rejecting the new developments, they then needed to know how to put pressure on the politicians who were supposed to be representing their views.

The second step was education of the politicians and bureaucrats, which was effected both directly by lobbying and presenting briefs and submissions to council, and indirectly through the media, radio and television open-line discussions, letters directly to politicians, and gathering petitions. The ultimate aim of all the educational processes was to persuade those in power to heed the wishes of the majority of the electorate and act accordingly by rejecting the large-scale housing proposal, and retaining only those golf course applications which were not ecologically harmful.

Evidence that learning had taken place was manifested in a change of behaviour or attitude, which in this particular case study was shown in two ways. The municipal council in 1988, when these problems arose, was very pro-development and their decisions and actions were increasingly unpopular with many of the electorate. The
community in general felt that the greater majority were not in favour of removing lands from the Agricultural Land Reserve for building purposes, nor were they in favour of so many golf courses in a small geographical area. Council, on the other hand, felt that the 'silent majority' who were not speaking out against the projects would prove to be in favour of the proposals and would back the decisions made by council to go ahead with these plans.

Public hearings were a part of the democratic process when people at large can present briefs and written submissions to council supporting or opposing decisions council were about to make. During the summer of 1989 a total of 354 people spoke at these hearings, of whom 315 (89%) were against the proposal and 39 (11%) were in favour. Fifty-two more people were registered to speak but had no opportunity as the hearings were abruptly closed, and of that number, 49 were opposed and 3 were in favour. By the close of oral presentations 465 written submissions had also been received by council, of which 80% were anti-development. Before the matter was finally closed a total of 3,748 written submissions were before council, of which 94% were against council approval of the development by-laws and only 6% in favour. It may also be of interest to note that it was women who spearheaded and played the most active roles in the anti-development movement. (J.R. Gagnier, personal communication, Sept. 13, 1992).

However, council still did not learn from this outpouring of opinion and emotion, and maintained that the 'silent majority' had not yet been heard and would speak in their favour. The community, on the other hand, did not believe the silent majority existed, let alone supported council. Almost no-one in the area had no opinion, or had an opinion which they had not yet expressed, and in order to demonstrate that this was so the community organized a non-municipally-sanctioned referendum. Although this referendum was unofficial in nature as it was instigated by citizens rather than by the municipality, it was organized and overseen in just the same way as if it had been officially sanctioned. There was a voter turnout of 6,500, which was higher than for any
municipal election, and resulted in a vote of 94% against council’s proposed decision to allow development to go ahead (Gagnier). Shortly afterwards, when council had to vote on whether or not to pass the contentious by-law they voted it down, despite having been entirely in favour up to that point. Public pressure had finally achieved its goal and the politicians learned that it was in their interests to listen to the voice of the public.

However, their actions were too little, too late. When the next municipal election was due, grass-roots environmentally-aware political groups were formed to promote ‘green’ candidates to stand for election. Slates of potential new officers were proposed and supported by the anti-development lobby in an effort to replace the pro-development incumbents, in the hope that the next council would be more sensitive both to the wishes of the electorate and the needs of the environment. On the morning after the election, only one member of the old council remained—there was an almost complete changing of the guard.

As the citizens of that area are, on the whole, fairly conservative, such a radical change of council would not have been expected under normal circumstances. It can therefore be surmised that the educational campaign run by the Boundary Bay Conservation Committee to encourage local residents to learn more about their area and what they want by way of future plans, and to encourage them to take power into their own hands, worked sufficiently well to achieve the desired result of stopping the development by-law and removing an unpopular council from office.

**Timing of Events**

In order to set the research period into a time-frame, Table 1, shows the order of events which are described in this study. Research, which took place from April to July, 1992, covered the period from the founding of the Boundary Bay Conservation Committee during 1988 to the change of council in November, 1989, looking back over the educational process and community learning which occurred during this particular segment of the Conservation Committee’s history.
Table 1
Chronology of Events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1988:</strong> June</td>
<td>Order in Council permitting golf courses on Agricultural Land Reserve.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boundary Bay Conservation Committee formed sometime after this decision by council to unite many smaller environmental groups and work together to fight both the golf course and pending housing development applications, and support the protection of the Boundary Bay ecosystem.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1989:</strong> May–July</td>
<td>Public hearings before council to present briefs and submissions regarding proposed housing and golf course applications.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>Community-organized referendum on the issue of whether the community generally was in favour of the proposed housing and golf course developments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6,500 qualified electors voted, 94% against council’s pending approval of high-density development (Gagnier).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>Civic elections. All but one member of the present pro-development council replaced with a pro-environmental slate backed by community political pressure groups.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Since the change of council, the Committee’s work has become less reactive and more proactive, putting forward proposals on the community’s wishes to see Boundary Bay either receive Ramsar designation (an internationally recognized acknowledgement of wetland’s environmental importance) or to work towards creating a Biosphere Reserve. This is another internationally recognized environmental designation, acknowledging a core area which receives maximum protection, surrounded by a buffer zone which is managed in such a way that it protects the core, and thirdly a zone of co-operation lies beyond the buffer zone, where reasonable development compatible with the area is permitted (Boundary Bay Conservation Committee, 1992).

The priorities of the Boundary Bay Conservation Committee have now shifted from urgent action to cope with immediate, short-term problems, to an on-going emphasis on long-term educational strategies to keep environmental awareness alive, while encouraging the community to participate in pro-actively planning the future of the area and lobbying the present council to consider adopting plans emanating from the community as a whole. The attempt to promote the idea of a Biosphere Reserve is one such plan being put forward by the Boundary Bay Conservation Committee on behalf of the community.

Types of Learning Arising from Planned Educational Strategies

Learning takes place in many ways among the community at large. Some people prefer to attend well-organized meetings, listen to speakers, and have an opportunity to ask questions or share personal thoughts on the matter. Others get their information mainly from the media—local newspapers, community television, radio open-line programmes, sometimes even national newspapers and magazines that have been persuaded to write about the issue. Where environmental issues are at stake, as was the case in this research study, on-site workshops are popular, where learning is more experiential, through sight, sound, smell, and feel.
Events are also organized by core group members which lead to learning, albeit incidental and even accidental. In order to be successful in getting a message across to the community there must occasionally be an element of fun involved, and people participate in informal community events for reasons other than to specifically learn about an issue. Fund-raising dances, barbecues, fairs, sponsored walks, bicycle rides and other fun events are more of a social occasion than a serious learning opportunity. Learning may however take place incidentally, although education is neither the main reason for holding the event, nor the main reason for attending. Often such gatherings provide light relief and a chance for people to take a break from the constant round of serious hard work while trying to resolve perceived or real threats to the stability of the neighbourhood. Victories large or small along the way need to be celebrated; those who have worked so hard for so long to achieve success deserve congratulation and time for recognition by others, while the community at large also needs to be reminded at such moments that although a battle might have been won, the war is not yet over. It has been stated by members of various dedicated action groups that it is only the odd fun occasion which keeps them going during the daily grind of maintaining pressure on those in power to alter their modus operandi.

Incidental learning among the public is, however, a carefully planned outcome of educational strategies used by community action groups. Posters, placards, bumper stickers and t-shirts, as well as the social events referred to above, are all part of the way in which messages are conveyed incidentally to living one’s normal life and they can have great impact by providing another channel by which information is diffused. If a single message is noticed in enough ways in many different places within a short space of time it is likely to make some impact on the individual, intentionally or otherwise. We all receive and discard information all day, every day, but if the same information is received often enough, it may eventually be retained and become meaningful.
The various ways in which the Boundary Bay Conservation Committee used educational strategies, and the ways in which learning took place in the community, are discussed at length in the findings which emerge from the raw data, and from analysis of those data, (Ch. 4 and Ch. 5).

**Methodology**

This research is a case-study of one particular action group at one particular period in their history, and the educational strategies used to create learning opportunities in an attempt to raise awareness amongst local citizens of problems arising from apparently conflicting views of council members and local residents on a community development plan for the next decade. Members of that group, the Boundary Bay Conservation Committee, the media, and the general public were interviewed in an attempt to discern the educational strategies used, the role of the media in disseminating information, what learning occurred amongst the general public and how evidence of that learning was made manifest.

**Overview of the Contents**

Chapter 2 explores literature relevant to this study regarding new and old social movements, persuasive communications, social marketing, and attitude change, which comes from many fields associated with adult education such as health and community education, sociology, psychology and anthropology. The learning population is also considered, together with the types of learning which the literature suggests occur in community settings, and the influence which group dynamics may have on the flow of information.

Chapter 3 discusses the methodology on which the research was based, the criteria for data collection and evaluation, and the way in which this particular study was carried out.

Chapter 4 presents the findings resulting from coding and categorizing the data and excerpts from that data to illustrate the points made.
Chapter 5 outlines a profile of the community, discusses and analyses the findings, and shows how learning in the community was promoted by events planned by the Boundary Bay Conservation Committee and other happenings which were part of the day-to-day routine of the municipality which became, incidentally, some of the most effective learning opportunities of the entire campaign.

Chapter 6 summarizes the research findings, discusses possible applications for informal and incidental learning in the near future, and considers the ways in which this particular community action group was successful in its campaign.
CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

There are many aspects of the literature to be reviewed when studying community action and raising awareness. There are definitions of the terms used to describe the main participants and the dynamics of interaction within the community, the types of activities undertaken, and the educational philosophies underlying those activities. There is a wealth of literature on many aspect of education with which this type of study is involved, but it is found spread out over a wide area, in the fields of anthropology, sociology, health education, adult education, psychology, and communications. Some can only be found through searches of unpublished manuscripts and conference proceedings, and some information leading to further literature appears through discussions on electronic mailing lists such as Qualitative Research for the Human Sciences, based at the University of Georgia or the Canadian Adult Education Network from OISE.

Some of the literature reviewed discusses the obvious matters which arise when studying education in the community, such as that relevant to community action groups, lifelong learning, and informal and incidental learning, but before such a study can even start there is much to be discovered about communications generally and how to be an effective communicator, the way an idea is ‘sold’ to people, how information diffuses throughout the community, which channels of communication are used, how people inform and educate themselves in such situations and how they use that knowledge to encourage the participation of others.

Contextual Meaning of Terms Used

The very word ‘community’ has many meanings, depending on the context in which it is used. It can refer to a geographical neighbourhood, or it can equally be used to describe a group of people unconnected by physical proximity, but sharing a common background, experience or qualification. But when referring to community action
groups and the community in which they work, the most commonly-used interpretation of the term is that of a geographically confined locality, the people who live within that locality, and the common interests they share. Roberts (1979, p. 27) describes a community as existing “when a group of people perceives common needs and problems, acquires a sense of identity, and has a common sense of objectives.” This definition accurately reflects the situation in this case study, and therefore defines the word ‘community’ as it will be used throughout.

Community action groups, therefore, are gatherings of people who share a common need or problem, and a common sense of objectives towards providing for that need or solving the problem. But not all action groups are alike. Armstrong (1972) suggests there are three main types. Firstly, there are those groups which form in response to what appears to be excessive or unacceptable exercise of power by an authority, that is, groups with a mainly political motivation. Secondly groups arise to fulfill an unmet social need which has been neglected by the authorities, and thirdly, yet other groups exist to satisfy what Armstrong describes as “some kind of identity demand,” working on behalf of language rights, or minority interests.

The Boundary Bay Conservation Committee are clearly a group which is politically motivated by what is perceived as the undue exercise of power by local authorities, for their aim is, as Armstrong states (p. 24) “to end its operation or to amend it in a way congenial to themselves.”

Although some types of community action can be described as class- or status-specific, as sometimes happens when groups deal with minority rights or ethnic problems, where a majority of those involved in the action are mainly of a single minority or ethnicity, other issues transect the boundaries of class or status. Armstrong (1972), sees community action as occurring at any level vertically in society or in any area, but acknowledges that some areas of action may have a hierarchical correlation, as studies show that some issues, such as those concerning the environment, often get most support from members of the middle-class. Although such issues concern everyone, the
Boundary Bay Conservation Committee bears out Armstrong's contention, but it must also be said that in this case it is almost inevitable since the residential area involved in the dispute is demographically predominantly middle-class.

**The Role of New Social Movements in the Community**

New social movements, a phenomenon first appearing in about the 1960s (Martin, 1988; Selman, 1990a), are groups working to educate the general public who then form a critical mass that can exert pressure upon politicians and bureaucrats. ‘New’ social movements differ from the earlier ‘old’ social movements in that their educational strategies are not aimed at eventual self-actualization of participants, but to enable them to take part in social action to alter or improve their situation, by means of “participatory democracy” (Selman, 1990a, p. 333).

Formerly, social movements arose to provide citizen and self-actualizing education on a wide scale in non-formal and informal settings in the liberal tradition. The dynamics of such movements were fairly simple in that an educational theme was chosen or provided by a leader, and the topic was discussed by members of a group, often in settings of their own choosing. They may have been following a programme designed by others, as in Farm Radio Forum, the Women's Institute, and other similar groups, or they may have had some input as to what they studied, such as in the Great Books programme or citizenship study circles. Leaders may have been from outside the group, or be chosen from within the group by the members. The aim in most cases was to provide education leading to personal enrichment that was enjoyable and beneficial to the individual participant, or citizenship education which enabled learners to better participate in the democratic process, and was seldom aimed at upsetting the hegemonic equilibrium. These educational movements were ideologically conservative, and “there was little truly radical activity in the adult education movement” at that time. (Selman, 1991, p. 38). There were exceptions to this, notably the Highlander Folk School in Tennessee, which taught workers how to fight for their rights in the workplace, and was
also deeply involved in training leaders for the civil rights movement. The school operated between 1932 and 1961 (Zacharakis-Jutz, 1991), and was thus in the forefront of radical action for the era, and an example of the power of learning in the field of social action.

New social movements, however, originated for different reasons. Following in the footsteps of Highlander, needs arose within communities for action to obtain social justice or to create an impact on politicians and decision makers who usurp their power. The educational policies of these new movements were aimed at informing and empowering the public to take action (Finger, 1989a), rather than providing education for self-enlightenment and enrichment only.

Environmental action groups fall within the category of new social movements, and generally form in response to an immediate threat to the local environment. They are often, but not always, the product of middle class, well-educated neighbourhoods (Armstrong, 1972), where people already have the ability to organize and educate both themselves and members of the immediate community around them.

A comparison can be made between the ‘old’ social movements, which worked within the equilibrium paradigm as defined by Paulston (1977), and new social movements which are in conflict with, and set about changing, hegemonic equilibrium and improving the status quo. They are not usually so radical as to be revolutionary in wishing to replace the present hegemony with another, but aim to alter and improve the situation without completely overthrowing the existing system. This phenomenon is described very succinctly by Alex Comfort, quoted by Armstrong (1972, p. 22) as “…a change in the nature of revolution; away from revolution as a single event and towards militancy and protest as constant civic activities.”

Educational Aspects of New Social Movements

Several forms of education occur within new social movements. In the first instance, when a group of citizens begin to notice a perceived threat to their
surroundings, in whatever form, they take steps to learn more about the situation and all the implications in the impending change. According to Martin (1988, p. 206) "a vital first step for any movement is internal education ... so that the case can be presented and argued to the wider public through leaflets, talks, letters, broadcasts and so forth." This self-directed learning may take place through peer discussion or personal research, until such time as enough information has been gathered to enable a credible case to be presented to the community (Martin, 1988). Much has been discovered about the way this occurs by McCreary (1984).

The next step is to take that information and educate the general public in the surrounding community. Numbers of voices are needed in order for pressure to be brought to bear upon politicians and decision-makers, because numbers represent voters, and for every person who speaks out on an issue, politicians frequently assume there are ten others who feel the same way but have not acted publicly. It is therefore in the interest of those who are elected to power to listen to those who put them there.

Methods by which the community are informed and educated may vary from one action group to another, but they all tend to follow a similar basic plan. There are a variety of ways by which information diffuses, including through the media, organized meetings and discussions, and planned learning opportunities (Martin, 1988). General conversation also serves as a means by which information spreads, and this includes the grapevine, which is a particularly specific aspect of conversation carrying unverified facts and rumours, often found to be substantially correct (Zaremba, 1988), through a community in advance of official statements.

Information, by whichever means it reaches the community, must be accurate, reliable, current and credible in order to be effective. It is therefore most important that members of the community action group who are responsible for providing such information should keep themselves up-to-date with events and proceedings, and ensure that, as far as possible, whatever they say about the issue can be independently verified from reliable sources.
Like the ‘old’ social movements, the new social movements, of which environmental community action groups are a part, have a high educational component (Finger, 1989a; Selman, 1990a). Learning takes place on three levels; self-directed learning is found amongst the original core group members, who learn about the issue and the problems involved in solving it before the action group becomes official; informal learning takes place within the general community, together with some self-directed learning as people wish to find out more for themselves; and incidental learning occurs continuously as a result of living and being in that community setting. Action groups usually have a well-planned educational strategy for informing the community in order to get their support which is not just incidental to the group’s initial reason for being. Armstrong (1972) goes so far as to suggest that community action groups are a fertile area for adult educators to investigate, since knowledge will be needed by members to deal with social processes, effective communications and how to be effective educators of the community at large, stating that “this field of community action and the individuals and groups within it could be the operational centre of gravity in the future for adult and community education” (p. 26). At present, these matters are learned experientially, by dealing with the task at hand, rather than through any formally organized learning outside the context of the community action group itself.

Learning strategies used in community settings vary from formally organized lectures and information sessions, to the informality of the grapevine, about which Zaremba (1988, p. 10) states “it is particularly important to understand the nuances of the informal network (the ‘grapevine’) because so much information travels along these non-prescribed channels.” Other means by which information is disseminated include public hearings, meetings, forums, the media, and personal conversation (Durrance, 1980; McCreary, 1984). Knowledge of how to use these strategies to best advantage is a skill discussed under two headings in the literature, persuasive communications and social marketing.
Persuasive Communications

Persuasive communications is a very large topic to consider. Although there is not
a great deal of practical literature on the subject, it is clear from what there is that
persuasive communications can be pictorial, verbal, or songs (Stewart, Smith & Denton,
1984). There are three aspects to the art of communicating persuasively; firstly the
subject matter of what is said, sung or depicted, secondly how the communication is
composed—the words chosen, or the picture illustrated, and thirdly, how, where and by
whom the message is conveyed. All these aspects have an important, but often unstated,
effect on those to whom the message is targeted. The Yale theorists maintain that for
persuasive communications to be effective they must create four internal responses;
attention, comprehension, acceptance and retention (Trenholm, 1989).

Chants or songs also may have an effect on strengthening attitudes or opinions
of members within activist groups or social movements, while at the same time informing
those who listen of a message the group wishes to convey. Some songs have even
become specifically associated with social struggle, and are sung at rallies and marches
to strengthen the conviction of members of the movement, almost as an unstated
warning to those against whom action is being taken that social movements are serious
about their intentions. One of the most well-known anthems associated with social
justice movements is "We Shall Overcome," popularized by Myles Horton, director of

Other songs are used to draw attention to the cause and activate the audience
(Stewart, Smith & Denton, 1984), as is seen in a group known as "The Raging
Grannies." Members are self-styled older women, who dress in stereotypical granny
outfits to draw attention to themselves, set new words to well-known folk tunes, and
sing wherever they see a need to convey messages on matters of social importance. This
group not only illustrates the literature on persuasive communications, but also Boggs'
(1992) exposition that many older people are now actively engaged in new social
movements and working for social justice.
Chants are a type of slogan, and slogans, either written or spoken, can be very powerful purveyors of messages, attitudes, values and beliefs (Stewart, Smith & Denton, 1984). Written slogans can appear in many places, on t-shirts, bumper stickers, posters or lapel buttons, and thus can reach a very wide audience. They get the message across by being witty, rhyming, memorable, puns or other forms of a play on words, which become specifically associated with particular action groups or movements as a 'trade mark'.

According to Stewart, Smith & Denton (p. 178)

*Slogans act as social symbols and symbolic justifications. Social movements employ them to create impressions, to alter perceptions, to elicit emotional responses, to make demands, and to pressure oppositions. The ambiguity of slogans enable them to serve as verbal bridges from one meaning to another and allow individuals and groups to interpret them according to their own perceptions and needs. They simplify complex problems, solutions, and situations while demanding instant corrective actions. Many slogans are unique to and readily identifiable with specific social movements or social movement organizations ... and they apply both indirect and direct pressures upon oppositions.*

And slogans, because they are so mobile, provide excellent opportunities for incidental and accidental learning to occur as they are noticed, deciphered and decoded by those who come in contact with them. People rarely mention how much information they gain from slogans, but the fact that slogans are effective, ubiquitous and widely read is acknowledged by the t-shirt sold by a public library which stated “Read books, not t-shirts!”

Although persuasive communications, as such, is not always recognized as a necessary skill by those involved in community action groups and the educational strategies used to raise public awareness, persuasion is certainly a very large part of any educational campaign. There is also evidence that those who try to persuade others to accept a viewpoint or belief are very conscious of the wording used to create maximum effect. Pictures and illustrations can also be used persuasively, as, for example, with a before-and-after scenario, where one aspect may have been greatly exaggerated to draw immediate attention to it. This exaggeration is not an attempt to make the beholder
believe that this illustrates reality, since most people will instantly realize that exaggeration has been deliberately used to create effect. It does, however, draw attention to the point being made and awaken the recipient's faculties for critical thinking. But there is much more to effective persuasion than just careful use of words or illustrations, which is tacitly acknowledged by those involved in creating informal and incidental learning opportunities in the community at large.

Creating a change of opinion or attitude demands a different type of learning from other types of learning (Hovland, Janis & Kelley, 1953). Attitudes, values and opinions are bound up with emotions and feelings which is why, in many environmental issues, tempers can become easily inflamed when opposing views meet. The conditions under which learning takes place are usually those of everyday life, when persuasive communication has to compete for attention with everything else going on in the world around.

The success of being able to communicate persuasively depends not only on how messages are crafted, the channels through which the audience is reached, and the ability to gain attention, but also on how recipients of the information decide to accept or reject the ideas being put forward (Lamble, 1984). If the message is not congruent with the recipient's present ideology it may be very difficult, if not impossible, to create a change of attitude, even using the most persuasive tactics. If the recipient of the information shares the same opinion as the communicator, then it has been found that there will be a greater shift in favour of that opinion, whereas those whose opinions differ may shift only slightly in the new direction, if at all (Hovland, Janis & Kelley, 1953).

Another factor influencing message acceptance is peer group affiliation. People tend to adhere to group norms or standards, they conform with the attitudes and values of those around them in their everyday lives, for it is very difficult to maintain allegiances and friendships when values, attitudes and beliefs are different from those with whom one works or socializes. This may perhaps explain in part why there are so many
confrontations on environmental issues such as logging, or in labour-management relations, where each side adheres to its common ideology, which in turn stems from individual deep-rooted convictions in beliefs and values.

A person's mood or emotional state at the time of hearing a communication will have an effect on how it is received and understood. Selective perception may 'tune out' those things an individual does not wish to hear, or alternatively one may read into what is said more than is meant, "...while an audience is being exposed to a message, they are picking out of it just those things that fit their own outlook, and disregarding much else" (Abelson, 1959, p. 55). It has also been suggested that people do not expose themselves to communications with which they do not agree (Hovland, Janis & Kelley, 1953). For example, it is very unlikely that many loggers would attend a rally to save the Stein Valley, and consequently where opinions are polarized, communicators will inevitably find themselves 'preaching to the converted', or being heckled by those who do not agree. Abelson (1959, p. 54) states that "the people you may want most in your audience are often least likely to be there."

How the communicator, or the originator of the communication, is perceived by the audience also affects the extent to which any message is accepted and retained. Degree of trustworthiness and affiliations of the originator must be beyond question in the mind of the recipient, otherwise suspicion, distrust and rejection cloud the listener's interpretation of what is being said. This is commonly seen in the political arena, and as many community action groups are political in nature, this fact will also have a bearing on the way they must conduct their affairs. To be seen as trustworthy, fair, reliable and truthful is very important in projecting a positive image to the target audience, but no matter how successfully this is done, it is still not usually enough to help persuade those who are opposed to whatever idea is being put forward. Cynicism colours reason, and those who do not wish to accept a message will find ways to refute what appears to be reliable, factual, verifiably truthful information, thus justifying their rejection. However, studies have shown that the effects on the recipient of distrusting the messenger do not
last as long as the effect of the content of the message, so in the long run, really persuasive communications may eventually be positively received (Hovland, Janis & Kelley, 1953).

There are many aspects of communication that require attention, and many people involved in community action will intuitively be aware of them. The manner and dress of the messenger must fit in with the accepted code of the target audience in order to create affinity and to indicate congruence with the audience's value system. Jargon or language used must be acceptable and familiar to the audience, the method and length of presentation suitable, depending on situation or circumstance. Hovland, Janis & Kelley (1953) state that the nature of the source of the communication will affect the way an audience will respond to any appeals and arguments made.

Appeal to emotion provides great incentive for acceptance of a new opinion, and one of the emotional responses often invoked is that of fear. The communicator can then allay these fears by suggesting a recommended course of action to be taken in anticipation of averting the threat. This creates a form of reassurance that the problem can be alleviated by 'doing something', and people may become participants in whatever action is deemed necessary to achieve the objective (Hovland, Janis & Kelley, 1953). Community action group members and their supporters are in just such a position, recruiting people to take action to ward off whatever is creating an impending threat to that society.

Hovland, Janis & Kelley (1953) and Abelson (1959) are in agreement over many aspects of the communications process used by action groups and social movements to persuade the general community that they have a message worth listening to. All the topics regarding persuasive communications discussed below are elucidated by both Hovland et al, and Abelson, and in order to avoid constant repetition, these two authorities will not be acknowledged further.

Although such processes are not referred to specifically by respondents when trying to ascertain how awareness for an issue is raised, they are obliquely evident in
what is said about the way in which information is presented to the public at large. Most aspects of communication as discussed in the literature occur in real life, they are not just theoretical concepts, but are taken for granted, commonsense knowledge, and it is presumed by activists that people know by intuition or instinct which are the most suitable and effective ways of communicating for the culture in which they live. Culture, in this sense, often refers to micro-cultures, the immediate community in which members of activist groups live, work and play.

When presenting information by whatever means to an audience it is essential to take the collective character of that audience into account. If listeners are sophisticated, well-educated, and friendly towards the presentation, it is probable that only the action group's point of view need be put forward, as it can reasonably be assumed that members of the audience are in a position to make themselves aware of the other side of the argument. However, if it is judged that the listening public is not well informed about both sides of the issue, or are not well-disposed towards the message they receive, it is suggested that both sides of the issue should be discussed, bearing in mind that the argument which is presented last will probably be more effectively retained by the audience.

Studies have also shown that greater change in opinion is effected if the presentation is drawn to a conclusion by the speaker, rather than leave the audience to interpret the message in their own way (Hovland, Janis & Kelley, 1953). Selective perception may enter into what individual members of the audience hear, or perceive they heard, and they may come to a conclusion which differs considerably from that which was intended. It is not enough for a speaker to assume a high level of education or sophistication among members of the audience is sufficient to lead them to draw the conclusions required to strengthen the possibility of making an affirmative change of opinion.

Eventually the effect of any persuasive communication will diminish. An original change or strengthening of opinion will be reduced with lapse of time from the receipt of
the message unless there is reinforcement and repetition to remind the recipient of their original thoughts and feelings on the matter. However, bound in with this lapse over time is the fact that there may also be a time-lag between receipt of a message and maximum change of opinion, so one may presume that there is a learning curve associated with acceptance of a viewpoint which will eventually revert to zero if left unattended. Repetition will help to raise the profile of the issue, and if an individual can also be encouraged to take some form of action connected with the matter, or to increase their learning through direct personal experience in some other way, affirmative opinions can be strengthened or change of opinion consolidated.

It is important for speakers to know their audience, if possible, in order to be able to present their message in the manner most appealing to that particular sector of the population. Present opinions likely held by an audience, level of education, present knowledge on the subject, and general background should all be taken into account when trying to maximize the effectiveness of any communication. Many community issues cross class and educational lines, affecting all equally. Other issues relate particularly to one specific sector, so that the audience is more homogeneous hierarchically. But whether the shared concern extends vertically or horizontally through a community, the diffusion of knowledge will flow more smoothly if there is some compatibility between those involved (Rogers, 1983).

Social Marketing

Although the field of education is somewhat loath to admit that it can gain anything from marketing, there is much in common between them. Marketing wishes to promote a product by creating a need for it through the use of persuasive communication and other strategies. Education wishes to promote the acquisition of knowledge in a variety of ways, one of which is to ascertain the need of the learner and then fulfill that need by means of communication which is relevant to that learner. Social marketing is defined as “the design, implementation, and control of programs seeking to
increase the acceptability of a social idea, cause, or practice in a target group” (Kotler, 1982, p. 490).

In social marketing, importance is placed on how an audience reacts to a communication, and emphasizes the fact that the communicator must not just think he or she knows the audience, but must be able to see things from their perspective if the communication is to be relevant and acceptable. No teaching material, however creative, will reach the target audience if it tackles the wrong issue in the wrong way (Hastings & Scott, 1988).

The origins of social marketing stem from anthropology, sociology and social psychology, taking theory from each of these disciplines to create a problem-solving systems approach which can be used to promote public or social policy. But since the name ‘marketing’ has “crass commercial association, use has been made of such euphemisms as social communications, nonformal education, social promotion, and political technology – virtually any label that avoids any hint of linkage to marketing” (Manoff, 1985, p. 31). Social marketing is seen as a strategy that can adapt the methodology of commercial marketing for educational use, which is being done quite extensively in the field of health education.

However, the field of education has problems accepting the notion of social marketing since there is often a distrust of the way in which the mass media are used to inform, or misinform, their audiences, and the connections of the mass media with commercialism. Manoff (1985, p. 12) states that “the notion that they (the mass media) could be useful for education was considered unseemly.”

Those who work in the field of community health realize that social marketing may have a role to play when attempting to change attitudes towards alcohol, tobacco, drug use and other issues of concern today, and ongoing research at the University of Strathclyde, in Scotland, shows that the promotion of commercial products is very similar in intent to the promotion of social issues (Hastings & Scott, 1988). Consequently advocacy groups actively use the mass media and other commercial promotional
techniques to create awareness for their goals. The main emphasis is on the use of clearer communications between communicator and the target audience, with a widening use of non-traditional channels by which communication is conveyed.

Social marketing theory maintains that, where possible, the target audience should be researched to discover whether they receive the message in the way in which the communicator thinks they will receive it. Research provides insights into audience response to educational materials, and may show that the views of a target audience can be quite different from what would be expected, even by those who feel best able to judge (Hastings & Scott, 1988).

Positive messages have been found to be more effective in promoting a change of opinion than negative messages, which may be a concern to many community action and advocacy groups. In many cases these groups are trying to create a new attitude towards an issue, away from what has been socially acceptable and often beyond question, and in many cases the overt message is “Don’t.” There are anti-drug, anti-tobacco, anti-logging, anti-development groups all working to change a way of life, and it is sometimes very difficult to find an effective positive message to put forward.

**Attitudes, Values and Beliefs**

To be effective in creating a climate for attitude change, social marketing and persuasive communications must be used together, presented in a meaningful way to the target audience, and repeated frequently to reinforce positive reaction to the messages being promoted. But attitudes are very complex, and to change them significantly takes time. It is generally accepted by theorists that attitudes consist of cognitive, affective and behavioural components, and since these are connected it is often possible to change one by changing the others (Trenholm, 1989). This has considerable bearing on the way community action groups promote their messages, as people learn in many different ways. Since a combination of the three facets of learning are required together, events can be planned to include the presentation of informative messages to appeal to
the cognitive component of attitude, discussion of what might ensue if effective action to solve the present social issue does not occur may appeal to the affective component, and involving the audience in some form of relevant participation and action could provide the behavioural learning opportunity. Making all three types of events available for target audience participation at the same time will probably be more effective than if there is a concentration on one or two components only.

As important in changing social attitudes is the changing of values. Trenholm (1989, p. 11) states that "Attitudes sum up clusters of beliefs, while values sum up clusters of attitudes," all of which are culturally deep-rooted. Changing values from what was socially acceptable to what is now socially acceptable presents a considerable challenge to any educator, since values are so central to people's everyday lives that they are very difficult to alter. Community action groups very often find it is the values of one group within society which are incompatible with, or contradict, the values of another group within that same society, causing a clash of ideals and a difference of attitude over the way to proceed.

Beliefs are acquired through the culture in which we live, developing as life is experienced. Any one belief is inter-related to all other beliefs as individuals try to make sense of the world around them. Beliefs are constantly in flux, and understanding the individual or societal belief system is essential to understanding the response to persuasive communications (Trenholm, 1989).

The Learning Population

Everybody in a community is a prospective learner when dealing with most local issues. Unless the matter is very specific, affecting only a particular group of people, such as a playground matter affecting mainly children and their parents, or high voltage electricity cables which are only of immediate concern to those living nearby, most citizens living within a geographic area could be affected equally by the more usual general community issues.
Who becomes interested and who does not depends on many factors. Some people are just not politically-minded and will be reluctant to become involved. Others have family or personal commitments which preclude them from participating at the time although they may otherwise have done so. The great majority of community members will probably become aware of the issues, and hold a definite opinion if asked, but take little active part in trying to solve the immediate problem or right the perceived wrong. Then there are the active supporters of the community action group, who give of their time, money and knowledge in support of the cause, and the core-group of very active members who originated the movement to mobilize the community. These segments are described by Houle & Nelson, (1956, in Selman 1990b,) as the specialist, the actively concerned, the attentive and the inattentive citizens. Martin (1988, p. 203) reclassifies the community as dedicated activists, active members, occasional participants, and passive supporters. This latter classification most nearly correlates with results found in this research.

The mention of community action groups and their supporters usually brings to mind a picture of a segment of the population between school-leaving and retirement ages, but this overlooks two very important age groups which can play major roles in the action, both now, in the present, and in the future. Older people are now taking a much more active role in community affairs than had been the case in the past. People are retiring healthier, better educated, more concerned with civic affairs generally, and have time to do whatever research is necessary to keep them individually, and the community generally, well informed with regard to the contentious issue. Boggs, (1992, p. 395) states that “it is no longer uncommon to find older citizens both knowledgeable about civic questions and problems and in the forefront of efforts to promote specific solutions to them.” They not only have a personal interest in the welfare of the community in which they hope to be living for quite some time, but where environmental matters are concerned, they also have the welfare of the younger generation at heart as their claim for bettering society is often to make the world a better
place for their children and grandchildren to live in. They attend civic meetings, court hearings and other day-time events which those still in the workforce are unable to do, acting as watchdogs and information gatherers. Not only do these activities help the community at large, but includes seniors as useful and productive members of the society in which they live. It is beneficial to older citizens to remain, or become, active in many ways, since they have much to give in the way of lifelong experience and knowledge, and have much to gain from keeping active and informed.

The second sector of the population which is usually overlooked completely when it comes to community action is the children. Children do not have the vote, they do not have the wisdom of years which enables them to participate to any great extent in civic activities, and their opinions and participation are rarely solicited. However, today children are potential educators in their own right, as they absorb attitudes and values which are comparatively new to society, such as the present move to more efficient use of resources by recycling, gradually incorporating them into their home life and often encouraging their parents to adopt the new attitudes also. Whereas children in the past were often expected to be seen and not heard, they are now encouraged by teachers and social activists to speak out at home to try and modify family behaviour patterns to those which are now more socially acceptable. Children are, therefore, a segment of the population which should not be overlooked for the influence they can have now, and for the potential power of their learning on the community at large when they become adults.

What children learn informally and incidentally in their early years can also have a profound effect on their attitudes, values and beliefs as adults. Smells, sights and sounds of childhood are very meaningful, and experiential learning as a child may provide a platform upon which much is built on the way to becoming an adult. Things we care about as adults often stem from something we learned as children, or may have been a taken-for-granted part of the childhood environment. Finger (1989b, p. 27) states that "learning is understood as a process which is closely linked to the total life of a person."
Finger illustrates the power that incidental learning in childhood can have on attitudes, values and beliefs carried into adulthood when describing the life history of Alain, (p. 25).

Alain, 43, is active in the field of environmental protection. He has built a house for his family according to sound ecological criteria and he tries to live as simply as possible. His childhood was characterized by deep nature experiences in the Swiss Alps. Even today these memories are extremely strong: ‘I can still smell the herbs, I still hear the strange noises of the insects, see the coloured butterflies and flowers, the steep hills...’ From this childhood time Alain brings a feeling of being closely linked to nature, as well as the desire to live simply. ‘... The longer I live the more I become aware that my commitment to the protection of the environment appears to be one of my main aims, if not my raison d’être’ ... Alain’s life history illustrates the process of becoming an environmentally aware, concerned and committed person.

**Types of Learning Involved**

Learning which takes place in a community setting is usually referred to as informal, incidental, even accidental, vicarious, experiential, commonsense, or learning “en passant” (Reischmann, 1984). By whatever name, the teaching process may be carefully planned by the ‘instructor’, but learning outcomes cannot be organized, regulated, planned, quantified or depended upon. These forms of learning are the most common in the everyday world beyond the formal education system, to the extent that Carlson (1980) has argued that unplanned and unorganized learning accounts for three-quarters of all the learning done by adults. Jarvis (1987, p. 164) suggests that “… learning is the transformation of experience into knowledge, skills, and attitudes.” This definition matches the aims of community action groups in creating learning opportunities which raise awareness of an issue.

Learning which takes place informally or incidentally in a community setting is sometimes not recognized as such because people generally associate the term ‘learning’ with more formal and organized experiences (Rossing, 1991). Nevertheless, learning that just happens without trying is part of everyday life, is referred to by Cann & Mannings (1987) as incidental learning, and is seen by them as the way in which the majority of people learn.
This type of learning is referred to by Reischmann (1986) as learning "en passant." Rossing, Cann & Mannings and Reischmann each use different terms to describe the type of learning which occurs as a result of accomplishing an ordinary task, when the task is undertaken for its own sake and not for the learning which may accrue from it. Such learning can be intentional, but often is not, but when learning opportunities are planned by community action groups and others interested in trying to ensure specific outcomes, informal methods are often used where learning on the part of the participant may be incidental to the reason for their participation. One of the main problems with this type of learning is that, unlike events in more formal settings, the outcomes cannot be prescribed. Cann (1984, p. 47) goes so far as to say that "much relevant learning takes place when information is gleaned from the stubble of informal contact, rather than from harvesting the wheat of Academia." Learning of this nature occurs because it is relevant both to the task at hand and the individual performing that task, and in many cases the experience is also fun and enjoyable.

Learning also takes place through everyday conversation and personal interaction. By trying to persuade another person to accept a particular viewpoint the speaker is not only creating a learning situation in which the listener may hear something new, but the speaker is also confirming the belief to himself at the same time. Thus such conversations are two-way transactions, where learning is occurring in both the listener and the speaker at the same time but for different reasons. Just to re-iterate in one's own words an argument heard previously stated by someone else may make it clearer and more meaningful and easier to assimilate into an existing framework of attitudes, values and beliefs (Hovland, Janis & Kelley, 1953).

Learning is no longer believed to be a one-way transaction where the instructor informs the learner, who just assimilates the knowledge. It is now acknowledged to be an interactive phenomenon, even when no apparent, physical instructor is present. Learning can occur through reflection and interaction between the learner and the learning material; for example questioning as one reads, or thinking about and analyzing
a documentary film as it is being viewed. Some learning is commonsense knowledge, which is absorbed intuitively by participation in and observation of the everyday world around, it is not ‘taught’ or specifically learned, it is unstated knowledge shared generally by members of the community. An example of this is the way one gets a feel for how the community at large thinks about an issue. How people really think is not known for sure, because nobody has discussed the matter in any depth, but one’s general assessment of the way things are emanates from being a part of that community and knowing something about what makes it ‘tick’.

Learning is also constrained by socio-cultural conditions. Any widespread change of attitudes and opinions in society will take time, and those attitudes which have support in one era will be out of favour in another. When any new idea as to societal mores arise they are generally given little heed at first. People holding that particular viewpoint are considered radical, and sometimes new ideas go no further than to gain popularity amongst a small minority of supporters. However, it has been suggested that when 5% of the population accept an idea it becomes ‘embedded’, and when 20% accept it it develops a momentum which becomes unstoppable, gaining supporters until the formerly radical idea moves towards the mainstream and gradually becomes the norm (Senge, 1990).

This gain in momentum can only happen if the time is right, if the groundwork has been carefully laid so that tacit knowledge surfaces, and people discover that they had already partially adopted the new attitude without acknowledging it, even to themselves. This process can be seen in a number of social changes which have occurred in the 1980s and ’90s, stemming from radical action in the 1960s and ’70s.

**Group Dynamics**

There are many interacting factors within a community and any community action group that affect the success of any group in trying to change or improve the present situation. Dean and Dowling (1987) suggest several criteria for success. The first
concerns the number of people who are actively involved in trying to solve the community problem. If there are too few people in the group there will not be enough to share the work, act as resources, and motivate the community at large to become active in support of their cause. New participants must be encouraged to join the core group to replace those who drop out, and to bring fresh outlooks to the problem under discussion, which will probably change focus as time proceeds.

Secondly, the group must be active for quite some time. Usually community issues are not solved quickly, and constant work is required to keep the general public informed, and to maintain a reasonable energy level within the group to cope with new problems related to the initial issue as they arise. Some groups which arise quickly also die quickly as members burn out and the original high energy level cannot be maintained. To be successful, an overall slow and steady pace is required, with occasional bursts of energy when necessary to cope with emergencies.

A third requirement is that members of the core group should be able to organize both themselves and the community they hope to influence. Organizations must be flexible, and able to cope with whatever arises when it happens—rigidity and lack of ability to respond to a situation quickly will dampen enthusiasm both of the active members and the community on behalf of whom they are acting, and reduce the perceived and actual efficacy of the action group.

Fourthly, knowledge of, and ability to use whatever resources are available when they are most needed is essential in being able to raise the potential to deal with the issue successfully. Failure to know about such resources may mean duplication of effort, loss of momentum by the group while they are seeking help or advice, and lack of ability to act quickly and decisively. This in turn leads to loss of credibility and possibly loss of support amongst the wider community. Well organized, credible and persistent groups have the power to change local or even national laws, and improve the quality of life not only for their immediate neighbourhood, but indirectly for many others through the example set in eventually achieving their goal.
Summary

This chapter reviewed the literature relevant to social movements, community action group dynamics, general demography of participants, the particular role of seniors and children, and a variety of learning styles which must be attended to in order to raise public awareness for the cause. It was shown how persuasive communications and social marketing play a very important part in raising awareness, but in themselves are aspects of awareness raising to which very little spoken acknowledgement is given, although their importance is tacitly understood.

Although informal and incidental forms of learning are the means by which most learning outside the organized educational system takes place, they are topics to which little attention has been given in the literature, in some cases being arbitrarily dismissed in favour of discussion on the more formal, systematic and organized forms of knowledge acquisition. There is, however, a growing movement to pay more attention to informal, incidental and commonsense learning and the value it has to the individual in particular, and society in general. Cann and Mannings (1987, p. 129) observe that “learning incidentally from equals is our normal way of learning and formal education relates to only a fraction of each individual’s learning needs.” Rossing, (1991, p. 45) adds “a number of indicators suggest that it is time for the study of everyday learning to gain acceptance as a proper and valuable topic of adult education research” while Cann (1984, p. 47) suggests that “the structures of adult education need bursting apart to provide greater opportunities for this kind of (incidental) learning.”
CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

Qualitative Research Methodology

Qualitative research methodology tries to discover how organizations function, what people do, what they know and how they know it, and what they feel about the situation (Patton, 1990). Case studies, in particular, focus upon understanding a specific situation, and the processes involved rather than the outcomes achieved. Research of this nature approaches the problem from a holistic perspective (Merriam, 1988), gaining insights from interactions occurring in real life which can be recognized and recorded, so that where applicable, elements from one situation may be transferable to similar situations elsewhere.

Data are collected through interviews, perusal of documents, records, and relevant artifacts, participant observation or the use of unobtrusive measures in order to elucidate what is actually happening in everyday-life situations. Merriam, (1988, p. 67) describes data as “nothing more than ordinary bits and pieces of information found in the environment. Whether or not a bit of information becomes data in a research study depends solely on the interest and perspective of the investigator.” Qualitative data bring out depth and detail in a situation by using rich, thick descriptions obtained by a variety of means during research. ‘Thick’ description is

*more than mere information or descriptive data: it conveys a literal description that figuratively transports the readers into the situation with a sense of insight, understanding, and illumination not only of the facts or the events in the case, but also of the texture, the quality, and the power of the context as the participants in the situation experienced it. (Owens, 1982, p. 8)*

Information obtained this way is later carefully analyzed for content, meaning and implication.

The methodological guidelines set out above were those upon which conduct of this study was based. Members of a community action group, the media, and the general public in the research area, were asked what they knew, how they knew it, and what
they felt about the situation, providing much thick description in the resulting data. Documents were consulted, local newspapers carefully read for further insights on the matter, and people were asked for their recollection of what was going on in the community at the time. As a result, all sorts of “bits of information” were collected which, at the time, did not seem to fall into any particular order of significance. The way in which these data became significant and meaningful is discussed at the end of this chapter, in the summary. There are many good texts which suggest how coding and categorizing can be done in order to make data meaningful, but ultimately it is up to each researcher to discover ways that work best for them. In this instance it was Post-it notes stuck all over the transcripts indicating phrases expressing similar sentiments, from which rough coding the final categories eventually emerged.

**Use of Case Study Research**

The research question chosen for this study concerns the way in which informal and incidental learning takes place within the community, where instruction is intentional but learning is unstructured and generally unintentional. A case study was chosen to explore this phenomenon because the aims and intentions of the community action group studied were not only to solve a problem through members’ own efforts, but also to educate and inform the community in order to enlist aid and encourage participation in the action. The specific action group researched was chosen because part of their activism was aimed at removal of incumbent municipal councillors and replacement by a new slate with different philosophical ideals from the old council. This did happen, and since voting patterns in that election were quite different from trends to be expected if past experience was relied on, the change of heart amongst the electorate seemed to correlate with the ongoing educational activity of the studied group. Qualitative research can never result in categorical assumptions and conclusions, but can indicate possible cause and effect, bearing in mind the many variables that might have intervened.
Activities by the community action group from its inception to the time of the municipal election referred to created a well-defined period which could be researched in depth, and the action group itself is a self-contained social group which can reasonably be studied. Thus the focus of the research study was limited to events taking place in a particular segment of society and within a limited historical time-frame, enabling in-depth investigation of what took place.

Qualitative research does not deal in random samples which are microcosms of the universal, but rather concentrates on the particular, from which it may be possible to generalize should similar situations arise elsewhere. This aspect of qualitative methodology will be dealt with in greater detail when discussing external validity.

Choice of Subject Group

The Boundary Bay Conservation Committee was chosen as the community action group to be researched because a particular goal had been achieved, apparently as a result of their awareness-raising activities within the local community, thus creating a finite time period in their history which could reasonably be investigated. The area with which they were concerned is also within easy reach of Vancouver, enabling research to be conducted conveniently over several months. Sources of data were easily accessible and available, which is an important factor when limitations of time are involved.

Originally data collection was envisaged as coming from two segments of the community. Firstly it was intended to interview members of the Boundary Bay Conservation Committee in order to discover what strategies they planned to use to inform and educate members of the local community about the issue, and how pressure would be brought to bear on politicians to conform to community wishes. Secondly members of the community who were not involved activists would be asked what they learned, how they learned it, and how it affected their original thoughts on the matter.
One important aspect of qualitative research is that the design of a project must be planned, but it must also be flexible enough to include alterations as deemed necessary to procure further information required. In this instance it soon became obvious that there was a third segment of the community, apart from the core group of community activists, and the general public whom they were trying to influence, that played an important role in the dissemination of information, and that was the media. It therefore became essential to include the two local influential media, the local bi-weekly newspaper and the community cable television station, in the research enquiries, and representatives of each were interviewed. Reviewing back numbers of the local newspaper not only provided details of what took place, but was also a way of accessing members of the general public who might agree to be interviewed with regard to the way they learned about the issue and became actively interested in it.

It is not difficult to find local community leaders and members of any community action group to ask for an interview. Their names are well-known and well publicized, and a few general enquiries will find them fairly easily. Such people are usually very approachable and willing to talk about a subject which, at the time, may be of all-consuming interest, thus providing a wealth of rich, thick description for later analysis. Members of the public who do not make up the community action core group, but are active supporters in one way or another are also fairly easy to contact, since they put their names on volunteer and mailing lists, attend meetings, are known to the core group and to each other, and once the first person has been contacted, further recommendations can be obtained by snowball sampling (Johnson, 1990) or network selection (Merriam, 1988), where each person interviewed suggests the next person who may be contacted. This is a convenient way of gaining entrée through mention of a name familiar to the person being contacted.

However, finding members of the interested general public, who are not involved in volunteer activities, and who do not sign up on mailing lists, is more difficult. They have their own definite viewpoints, but they do not necessarily know how anyone else
is thinking. Snowball sampling is not very effective in this section of the community because an initial contact tends to recommend friends or relatives who live nearby, who all share similar views and gain their information from similar sources, so the information gained for research purposes is severely limited.

It therefore became necessary to search backnumbers of local papers which were circulating in the area during the period being researched to gather names and addresses of those who had written letters to the editor. This source would not be available in Vancouver, because no local paper in the city will print any personal information given by letter-writers. Such information is required by the newspaper concerned before they will publish any letter submitted, but is completely confidential, and is never printed with the letter or divulged to anyone who might ask. The research area of Tsawwassen, Ladner and Delta have different publishing policies, printing full names and addresses with all letters, and thus it becomes easy to contact such people by mail to request an interview.

That still does not address the problem of how average members of the public can be contacted who have definite opinions on matters of general community concern, but remain anonymous. It was decided for this research project that there was no easy way to find out who they were, unless random calls were made to numbers listed in the local telephone directory. This was deemed impracticable for the size of this research project, but might have been feasible in the context of a larger, longer study. Similarly there was no way of knowing who in the community had no opinion on the contentious matter, why they were disinterested, or how it was that perhaps they had not heard about it.

Methods of Data Collection

Semi-structured interview schedules using open-ended questions were prepared when seeking information from those interviewed. Questions asked of members of the Boundary Bay Conservation Committee were concerned with awareness-raising activities they organized and participated in, their educational policies, and the strategies
used to ensure widespread dissemination of information throughout the community. Questions asked of members of the general public aimed at discovering how each person learned of the contentious issue, why they became interested in the outcome, and if they could recall details of how they came to the opinion they now hold. The two representatives of the media were asked about the way in which their particular vehicle of information connected the core group with the general public, and how they saw the role of the media in the dissemination of information throughout a community.

Although the interview schedule (Appendix A) was prepared in advance of interviews to try to elicit information suggested as necessary by the literature review, questions were constantly adjusted as interviewing experience was gained, altering them as necessary to obtain the information sought. It must be acknowledged that the way questions were framed and asked dictated, to some extent, the information received and the responses given.

There is no way to avoid researcher bias in the way this is done, and it is hoped that the use of open-ended questions allowed respondents to add whatever they felt illuminated the matter. The question schedule was also adjusted as each interview proceeded, taking cues from the last reply when asking the next question, and probing in depth where the opportunity arose. Even if the interview appeared to be going slightly off track it is worth following the line of conversation to a logical conclusion and then reverting back to the schedule, because it is at unexpected moments such as these that valuable details can emerge. Care must be taken not to let the conversation stray too far, but if the interviewer is attending to what is being said the respondent can be successfully guided back to the original topic.

All interviews were conducted at a venue and time of the respondent’s choice; often at their home or place of work, occasionally at a coffee shop or shopping mall, and were tape-recorded, with permission, so that the conversation could be closely followed as it proceeded, without having to make detailed notes at the same time. It was useful to jot down key words as the interview progressed so that respondents could be
asked to follow up on something mentioned earlier which might prove to be a fruitful avenue of pursuit.

Tapes were transcribed verbatim as soon as possible after the event, at which point very early stages of analysis could begin to take shape. If it is possible to transcribe one's own tapes it starts the process of familiarization with the data which is so essential in the analysis stage. As transcription proceeded it was possible to notice where alterations to the question schedule might be made in order to obtain clearer information from the next respondent, and also beginning with transcription, a comparison of one interview with another occurs so patterns of events begin to emerge, suggesting possible coding categories (Bogdan & Bicklen, 1992) to be noted for closer examination later. This is the start of the constant comparative method of data analysis (Merriam, 1988; Bogdan & Bicklen, 1992).

One aspect of qualitative analysis is that the data should speak for themselves, if findings are to be congruent with reality, and thus categories are created from the patterns that emerge during analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), although it must at the same time be borne in mind that the researcher's own knowledge and experience will guide, to a great extent, how data will be interpreted (Merriam, 1988). Some initial categories become obvious fairly quickly, as a particular aspect of the research is mentioned many times, perhaps in different ways, by several respondents. Other categories become manifest only as familiarity with the data increases during the analysis process.

The first person interviewed was a founding member of the Boundary Bay Conservation Committee known to me personally. This made contact easy, and meant that the interview schedule could be given a trial run in a friendly environment to see if it produced the information required. From this respondent I then obtained a long list of other members of the Boundary Bay Conservation Committee and its affiliated organizations who were involved in planning and carrying out community educational activities to increase awareness of potential consequences from housing and golf course
development in the area. Although everybody on that list had a very full schedule, those who were contacted to arrange interviews were happy to spare the time, and talked enthusiastically and at length with little prompting about the events with which they were involved, bringing to their narration personal insights, thoughts and feelings about the contentious issue which enriched the data considerably. Each person interviewed from this group was then asked to recommend several others I might contact.

When interviewing began the main logistical question from a research standpoint was when does one have enough data to work with, how many interviews are enough? As research progressed, the point was reached where very little fresh information arose and respondents reiterate what others had said before. This provided a form of triangulation, but it became evident that the effort involved in interviewing reaped very little that was new by way of reward, so that was the time to change focus and presume that no further benefit will accrue from interviewing more members of the same group. The point of data saturation (Bogdan & Bicklen, 1992) had been reached.

At this stage the editor of the local newspaper and the director of the community cable television station were approached for their impressions of how they helped to inform the general public, and to what extent they saw the media as an essential part of community education. Several days were spent in the newspaper office, reading through backnumbers which covered the period of community activity being researched to see how it was presented through this medium, and whether the reporter’s representation of events reflected what Boundary Bay Conservation Committee members had already said. Names and addresses were collected from relevant letters to the editor, and the writers were contacted by mail to ask if they would be prepared to meet in person or give their impressions by telephone. Everyone contacted agreed, and went out of their way to be very helpful, providing documentation, and sharing results from their personal research when appropriate.

Interviewing and collection of data from other sources ceased after several months, by which time seven members of the Boundary Bay Conservation Committee,
twelve members of the general public and two representatives of local media had participated. Interviews lasted between 1-1½ hours when visiting respondents personally, or between 15–20 minutes if being conducted by telephone.

Other Sources of Data

Information was obtained not only from interviews, but from many of the artifacts produced by the Boundary Bay Conservation Committee to promote their educational campaign, including brochures, information leaflets, a Christmas card sent out to all households in the municipality, correspondence with bureaucrats and others, newspaper and magazine articles from local and national publications, briefs and submissions to municipal council and personal correspondence. These all helped to verify and expand the information obtained through interviews, and acted in part to triangulate data, that is "the use of multiple sources of data, or multiple methods to confirm the emerging findings" (Merriam, 1988, p. 167).

Internal Validity

Internal validity, or credibility, of qualitative research is established by using several strategies, including triangulation, member checks, peer examination, and clearly stating researcher bias (Merriam, 1988). These measures are taken in order to confirm that findings emerging from the data reflect what really happened, as seen by the participants, rather than as interpreted by the researcher.

One form of triangulation occurs when information is re-iterated by several respondents independently of each other and then backed up by documentation which originated at the same time. In other cases information may be confirmed from three different sources. In the case of this study, respondents very often mentioned the same events, and confirmed what others had said, in the general flow of the interview without specifically being asked about the topic, and in some cases there was also documentary evidence.
Member checks take place when the data, together with the researcher's interpretations, are returned to those who provided them for confirmation that their words and thoughts have been interpreted correctly to reflect the intended meaning. This was done in this research project, when three respondents were asked to perform this task. However, one copy of the manuscript was returned with extensive suggestions for correction of style, but no remarks as to correctness of substance and subject.

Another copy of the manuscript was handed to two respondents, for one person to annotate before passing to the second, and was returned with a number of very useful comments. In particular one respondent added greatly to the information given during her earlier discussion-interview when first approached to give her account of events as they occurred. Consequently a great deal more became known about peripheral learning which occurred incidentally as a result of becoming familiar with the subject matter of the various contentious issues which had arisen. Member checks are important because no one reality is right or absolute, but the aim is to reflect the reality as seen by the participants, not as the researcher thinks the participants saw it. Constant checking was also done throughout the interviews, when respondents were asked to give their views on aspects arising from earlier transcripts, so that many aspects of the same event were collected in the course of different discussions.

Peer examination involves discussion of findings as they emerge from the data, and this was done throughout with a faculty member who is a qualitative research methods expert, committee members and a fellow student. Their examinations of the data confirmed that the categories which evolved were logical and rational, helping to obviate the problem of making mistakes from being too close to the data and not seeing gaps, omissions or faulty logic.

All research, and especially qualitative research, is subject to researcher bias. The subject chosen for investigation usually stems from personal interest in a particular aspect of life, and the questions asked and the methods of investigation used are subject to personal preference and cultural constraints, even if these are consciously reduced to
a minimum. In order to increase the internal validity of any work, it is essential for the reader to have a background knowledge of those forces which drive the researcher to make the decisions which were made, and interpret events the way they are presented in any report.

I have always been interested in environmental issues, and have been a member of various action groups involved in social and environmental problems. However, the fact that this study involves an environmentally-oriented community action group is not really of great consequence, since it is the creation of learning opportunities which is under investigation, not the subject matter of the action. Questions asked at interview were concerned with discovering what learning opportunities were created by the Boundary Bay Conservation Committee, and whether, where and how knowledge disseminated throughout the community. The segment of action being researched for this study occurred between mid-1988 and late 1989, and as field research did not take place until 1992 it was being investigated in an historical context, concluding with the elections resulting in an almost total replacement of the incumbent councillors.

Reliability

Reliability, which is also referred to in qualitative research as consistency or dependability, is concerned with the extent to which findings can be repeated. In any of the social sciences it would probably not be possible to duplicate or repeat a project. The object is not to verify results by repetition or duplication of a study in the same way as is expected of scientific enquiry, but to try to describe and interpret the events under investigation (Merriam, 1988). Even if the whole project were to be replicated exactly there are still variables such as reflection of participants due to the progress of time which would change the way respondents would recount the narrative, a change in outlook of the individuals involved, and the fact that one can never step into the same river twice, as the original water has long since flowed on to the sea.
Qualitative research has different aims from quantitative research. The latter seeks to determine a set of rules which can be followed rigorously in order to reach a constant and dependable result. The former involves attitudes, values, beliefs and emotions, and the interplay between people, events and time, involving countless uncontrollable variables, making repetition almost impossible. Merriam (1988, p. 172) suggests that a study can be considered reliable if outsiders reading it concur that “given the data collected, the results make sense—they are consistent and dependable.”

**External Validity**

External validity, in quantitative terms, refers to the extent to which research is generalizable from the particular to the general. In order to be valid, such studies involve the careful selection of a random population which is small enough to study, but is large enough to accurately reflect a similar population on a very large scale. This cannot be done in qualitative research, since no two people are the same; they have different biographies even if brought up in close proximity, and therefore what one person thinks or how they behave is not necessarily representative of anyone else. The goal of qualitative research is to understand the particular in depth, not what is generally true of the many (Merriam, 1988).

Generalizability exists in qualitative research in the same way as precedents are set in medicine or law. If part or all of the results found in one instance can be transferred and used in another similar situation, it is up to the reader of the research to take what is useful in one circumstance and apply it as appropriate. There are universal truths evident in the study of the particular which can be applied to the general elsewhere, so that comparisons can be made between two cases, but it is up to the individual to make that bridge.
Summary

The practical methods by which this case study research was carried out were determined almost entirely by the extensive literature on qualitative methodology. There are some aspects of the work, however, which have to be learned through personal experience. Occasionally intuition plays a part in the way things are done, sometimes following a hunch may lead to an unexpected motherlode of information, and the value of such extra-sensory perceptions should not be overlooked because they cannot be explained academically. Each researcher needs to bring a certain creativity to his or her project in order to gain access to resources which may not immediately be obvious. Each research question poses its own specific problems with regard to sources of information, and the researcher must be prepared to be ingenious in seeking these out.

One must also be prepared for the fact that analysis of the data might provide categories which were unexpected, and there are sometimes sub-findings which emerge, such as occurred in this case study. There was no attempt to openly seek out the dynamics of information flow through the community, but it became clear that this was an important part of the learning process, affecting how, when, where and for whom learning opportunities occurred. Such information would never have surfaced through a questionnaire or survey, where the answers given depend on the questions asked. When open-ended discussion interviews take place there is no limit to the material which can be covered, and what may seem to be irrelevant digressions can, on analysis, provide some of the most fruitful details.

A literature review done before any field research begins may suggest the type of questions which should be asked of respondents, but it quickly becomes apparent that not only is it possible to seek out information which the literature suggests might be available, but the research has a life of its own and provides avenues of interest which can only come as data collection proceeds, and may lead one to return to the literature in different academic fields to pursue openings created as interviews progress. However, there is a danger here that too many avenues can be followed too far, leading away from
the original focus of the study, but sometimes these alternate points of interest can become suggestions for further studies to be undertaken in the future.

As a beginning researcher, it is difficult to know how many respondents should be interviewed, and how one will know when the point of information saturation has been reached. As data collection progresses, however, these questions begin to answer themselves in that one rarely has access to an infinite number of respondents, or the time to interview more than a few of those who might be available. Qualitative research does not deal with random samples of a population, and therefore information obtained from a few people might be just as relevant and insightful as that obtained from many, and as data collection proceeds, there comes a point where little new substance is obtained, and the effort of collection exceeds the rewards in terms of new material resulting.

After data analysis takes place there may still be a few gaps which need filling, in which case further focused interviews can be arranged for this purpose, but at that stage fieldwork ceases and thoughts turn to initial coding and categorization. This is what Merriam (1988, p. 104) refers to as “mining the data.” In this case, once the data had been well dug over, there were still little gems of information found in the mining tailings which only became noticeable as data were referred to over and over again and familiarity increased.

It is one of the rewards of this type of research that, initially, there can be few, if any, preconceived ideas as to categories arising from the data, the satisfaction comes from careful coding, leading to realistic categorization. It is almost as if data metamorphose from a caterpillar-like surfeit of information into the butterfly of truths emerging from the chrysalis.
CHAPTER 4
RESEARCH FINDINGS

One of the main sources of information in qualitative research is the collection of 'rich, thick data' which is then analyzed by coding and categorizing, and from whence findings finally emerge. Data in this case study came mainly from interviews with those who were involved with the action, supplemented by extracts from newspapers, magazines, reports and publicity material used by the action group to promote their cause. As the coding process took place, many excerpts from interview transcripts began to fall into a few major categories, which eventually became the main findings relating to the way in which awareness was raised in this instance. These are summarized in Table 2, and are extensively elaborated upon in this chapter, drawing on raw data—unedited extracts from interview transcripts—to illustrate how the findings were arrived at. It is in this chapter that respondents tell their own stories. Analysis resulting from the data collected is reported in Chapter 5, Discussion.

In order to make the ways of raising public awareness outlined in Table 2 successful, there were many underlying elements present in this case study relating to the way in which the community action core group created and maintained its own profile which seem to be important for the success and survival of the group itself, shown in Table 3. Several of the actions deliberately or incidentally undertaken by the core group are also reflected in the literature relating to persuasive communications and social marketing, such as maintaining congruity with the target audience (Hovland, Janis & Kelley, 1953), encouraging critical thinking, becoming thoroughly knowledgeable on the issue before presenting arguments to the wider public, and awareness of the danger of burn-out (Martin, 1988).

For an explanation of how the final categories emerged from the data it is necessary to look closely at the types of learning opportunities created and educational strategies used by the community action group which raised public awareness of the
### Table 2
Summary of Research Findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Saturate key areas with information</td>
<td>Use many means of disseminating information so people cannot help hearing about the matter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get people involved</td>
<td>By volunteering time &amp; expertise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>By letter-writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Organizing petitions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participate in radio/tv phone-in programmes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use multi-faceted educational strategies</td>
<td>Meetings/open house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Seminars/workshops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>On-site experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Involve the five senses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Encourage critical reflection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximize/create vested interests</td>
<td>Capitalize on individual personal interest in eventual outcome of issue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take advantage of the unexpected</td>
<td>Use unexpected/unplanned learning opportunities when they arise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take advantage of socio-cultural trends (the time is right)</td>
<td>Use current trends, if applicable (i.e. rise of environmental movement in 1980s and '90s).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3
Elements Promoting Community Action Group Success

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Reason</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Encourage critical thinking.</td>
<td>Opinions formed on emotional appeal only are often not as well-founded or long lasting as those arrived at after careful consideration of the facts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourage active participation in the democratic process.</td>
<td>Discussion of the issue(s) in informal groups or 'study circles' creates vested interest in the political outcome - the process serving the people - as well as the issue outcome.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Try to 'read' the deeper community feeling.</td>
<td>It may be possible to appeal to the higher moral authority of the greater common good rather than the individual 'Not in my back yard' syndrome.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
various issues of concern at the time as shown in Table 4. Apart from major findings, there were several sub-findings of interest concerning dynamics of communication flow within the community. Various factors affected the way in which communication was instigated, propagated or received, as shown in Table 5, and the dynamics of that flow depended upon whether events were planned by the community action group (Fig. 2), or whether the community as a whole was learning together from unexpected sources which incidentally became valuable teaching tools (Fig. 3). A further sub-finding was the demographics of community involvement, which relate closely to those described by Martin (1988) and is depicted in Fig. 4.

Because many of the respondents interviewed for this research were involved in more than one community action group, and the many problems of proposed housing development, building of golf courses and destruction of environmental habitat were all very closely intertwined and interlinked, it is difficult to tease them out into separate entities. As people told their stories the many events happening at the same time impinged on one another, but the main emphasis remained throughout that the many community action groups which were invited to come under the Boundary Bay Conservation Committee’s umbrella were all working, in the long run, for the protection of the Boundary Bay ecosystem.

The immediate danger of high density housing has now passed, but some golf course development is still at issue, but the thrust of the BBCC and their supporters is still the preservation of the Pacific Flyway by designating it a Ramsar Site or a Biosphere Reserve. Community education and political lobbying continues, in order to continue the information and education campaign begun previously, and to further educate and gain the co-operation of politicians at all governmental levels to protect the last unprotected major wildfowl staging ground on the West Coast of North and South America.
Table 4
Planned Learning Opportunities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting</th>
<th>Learning opportunity</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-formal</td>
<td>Town Hall meetings</td>
<td>Exchange of ideas and information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Open House</td>
<td>Deliberate intent to learn.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Forums &amp; debates</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal</td>
<td>On-site workshops</td>
<td>Outcomes unpredictable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cognitive, affective and skills learning through participation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Deliberate appeal to sensory learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(common sense knowledge).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incidental</td>
<td>Social events.</td>
<td>Outcomes unpredictable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Everyday life in the community.</td>
<td>Learning “en passant”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Placards, posters, conversation, the “grapevine”.</td>
<td>“Pre-conscious” learning. Persuasion of others through conversation, confirmation of own ideas while relating to others in own words.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5
Factors Affecting Communication Flow

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>From the Community Action Group</th>
<th>From the Media</th>
<th>From the General Public</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Available individual time</td>
<td>Education of media by community action group</td>
<td>Impact of ‘trigger event’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Available person-power</td>
<td>Editorial policy</td>
<td>Previous knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources - from within</td>
<td>Availability of staff</td>
<td>Personal attitudes, values, beliefs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- from outside</td>
<td>Availability of print/air time</td>
<td>Meaningfulness/personal importance of outcome (vested interest)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coalition with other</td>
<td>Timing of story</td>
<td>Degree of concern for greater good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>interested groups</td>
<td>Newsworthiness</td>
<td>Personal networks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading of community feeling</td>
<td>Perceived value to the community</td>
<td>Serendipity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identification of personal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(vested) interests involved</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socio-cultural appropriateness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(time is right)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creation of group credibility</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Fig. 2: Communication Patterns in Community Action (Planned Events)
Fig.3: Communication Patterns in Community Action (Unplanned Events)
Levels of Involvement in Community Action

- Politicians
- Core Group
- Active members, volunteers & other participants
- "Lurkers" (interested but not active)
- Non-participants (not interested, or do not care what happens)
Underlying Causes of Community Action

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed it is the only thing that ever has.
Margaret Mead.

This quote, taken from an environmentally-friendly coffee mug in use at a meeting of the Boundary Bay Conservation Committee, reflects the feelings of many involved in community action today, except that committed citizens now often try to prevent change rather than allow it to occur unconditionally. It is oddly paradoxical that the wish to maintain the status quo now creates a conflict, and education is not needed to press for social change, but to prevent it. Boggs, in his discussion on citizen education and action (1986, p. 2) refers to this:

A remarkable phenomenon in the 1980's, however, is the citizen group which employs educational processes associated with community development and combines these with social action in order to foil social planning. Such groups form not to bring about change, but to prevent it, and to awaken in the minds of fellow citizens an appreciation for what they already have.

That is not to say that change was prevented, but the then-chairperson of the Boundary Bay Conservation Committee noted that the community action researched in this study reflected a need to change from passive acceptance by the public of so-called 'progress' which was actually destroying the community/landscape to a watch-dog role, which sought to guard, educate, change attitudes and lobby politically. Keeping things the way they were (before community action began) equated with allowing natural habitat to fall into the hands of property developers and speculators, politicians and bureaucrats, operating on the profit principle rather than assessing community values. (3:2:2)*

The Vancouver Sun, (1st March, 1990) reported a recent land inventory showed 2,700 hectares of farmland immediately adjacent to Boundary Bay were held by Lower

* Figures in brackets indicate the respondent code number followed by transcript and page number.
Mainland realtors or offshore interests, amounting to more farmland than that held by bona fide farmers.

Politicians and decision makers sometimes try to implement unacceptable decisions, creating a conflict situation within a community. Members of that community then find themselves struggling to remove the source of conflict by persuading those in power to discontinue the proposed course of action. This involves the community working to change attitudes among the powerful in order to implement the community’s wishes rather than accept changes proposed by the politicians that appear to be unacceptable to the electorate.

The ideal of democracy has changed, and politicians often do not voice the views of those who elected them to power, instead imposing change unilaterally without consultation. This creates conflict within the electorate, who see themselves as powerless to control their own destiny, and may lead to the formation of grass-roots social movements and community action groups, whose aim is to take back the power they appear to have lost.

Because there is power in numbers, these social movements and action groups must work to gather support from the community generally in order to be able to exert pressure on the politicians to undo the perceived wrong. Thus community actions which are an accepted part of our society today are a manifestation of this paradigm paradox, in that they are in conflict with equilibrium because they want to improve the present situation rather than replace it with some unacceptable alternative. The purpose of this study is to ascertain how a particular action group, the Boundary Bay Conservation Committee, raised awareness of potential problems threatening their community, and what could be done to remove that threat.

Data analysis in this case study showed several ways in which the Boundary Bay Conservation Committee raised public awareness of a proposed housing development, and also a change of land use which permitted golf courses to be developed without removing the land from the Agricultural Land Reserve, which had formerly designated
specific areas for agricultural use only, in order to protect the local farming industry.

It was interesting to note while interviewing respondents that some high-profile awareness-raising events staged by the action group were not recollected by those members of the general public with whom I talked. Members of the action group felt sure that these particular events must have made a considerable impact on the community, whereas those members of the general public I talked with neither mentioned some of these events spontaneously, nor recalled them with much clarity when questioned specifically about them. This was surprising, because when in the thick of things, one is certain that everyone else must know about these all-consuming events, when in fact other people hardly recall noticing them.

**Persuasive Communications**

Members of community action groups need to know who the experts are in connection with the issue who could be consulted and asked to act as speakers at public meetings and forums, or be willing to prepare and present submissions to council or other official bodies. Experts are needed in fields such as public relations, printing, and communications, or core-group members themselves must become sufficiently informed to take on those roles. Dealing with the on-going daily creation of persuasive communications in many forms is vital to successfully raising awareness, and involves a great deal of consistent hard work. The founding chairperson of the Boundary Bay Conservation Committee stated that:

*I know certainly we have spent enormous amounts of time writing pamphlets and trying to get them right, doing draft upon draft of visuals, and using inside and outside help, and professional and non-professional people, all combining and agonizing over how to get things right. And then afterwards, of course, not everybody's happy with it. There've been times when we've been screaming at each other about the idiotic things that have gone out. Numerous people have worked on putting those together and trying to get the words right. (1:13)*

However, it occasionally requires some creative thinking in order to gain attention. Another Committee member who is also an artist and designed many of the pamphlets,
posters and flyers used during the campaign described one particular piece of her work.

The (municipal) election was very much an environmental one. We (community activists) backed a slate for Mayor and full number of candidates, and a pamphlet came out with pictures asking 'Do you want Delta to look like this?' and it's all green and pretty, with birds and things, 'Instead of this ... if you don't vote for these people?'— a black-and-white picture hand drawn by an artist with aeroplanes and cars and freeways and high rises and golf courses—a total exaggeration with this beautiful landscape. Very, very vivid image, just to create awareness. (3:12)

In order to be persuasive, information must be correct, factual and credible. Without credibility no action group will gain support, and this is something the Boundary Bay Conservation Committee was scrupulous about. While admitting its biases, it also tried to present all sides of the issue, so that people could make up their own minds. A member of the committee reported that:

You have much more credibility if you can say that this report here says ... So we've always tried on the Committee to base everything on facts, so everything we've put out is factual, coming from recognized reports. It definitely has an environmental bias in that we're not particularly looking at other angles of it, we're standing very much for the preservation of the environment, but we're going to recognize scientific reports on the value of it. I've never had anyone come along, even our worst enemies, and say we've exaggerated here, or this is a load of lies. (3:5)

Getting the facts correct requires a great deal of careful research. A very active worker with the Committee stated:

I think the big secret here was that we did incredible research, and we did a lot of photocopying to get information out. That's the secret, work from the facts. Every time we had a public meeting we'd set up a table, and we'd photocopy newspaper and magazine articles, we'd do research and put out factual information on the Bay, and they could help themselves. (2:5)

And the information was tailored for the various types of public meetings being attended in order to present messages which were appealing to the audience, and congruent with their values and beliefs. In elaborating on this she continued:

Yes, but don't forget we kept putting out the information, so they had all the facts and all the sources. There were some Ph.D. dissertations and things like that, so we just gathered everything, and sought out the
expertise. So you're raising people's critical awareness, it's part of the movement, definitely. But it's very, very difficult, because we don't have paid people, it's very hard work. And when you're working with people with integrity they do very, very thorough research, hours and hours of work, and every time we go to a public hearing or meeting, the whole bent is different, so we have to do a whole new set of research and collation of information in another way. We go again and again and again to meetings all over the place, and each time we have to present material. We always take the angle with everybody that these are the facts on Boundary Bay, and this is why it needs to be protected. We always go from that angle, and then we will focus in on what that particular meeting is there for. So first we will reiterate the importance of the area, and that's the only way people really get educated, is to hear it again and again and again and again and again. (2:7)

Making the information available for people to pick up and read for themselves did not mean that it was necessarily accepted by the general public at face value, even though every effort had been made to ensure it was factually correct. Of the general public a Committee member said:

*I think they did their homework. I don't think it was something they just blindly accepted. People are very wary of environmentalists if they see them — 'greenies' — particularly in an area like Tsawwassen. They're very, very conservative people, they're very wary of radicals, so they would not take anything we say without questioning. So it was an educational process.* (2:8)

Once the public had become informed of the issue, debates and forums were held to give people the opportunity to learn more from experts in the field. Those on the Committee who spoke at public meetings were aware of the need to encourage critical thinking. The chairperson mentioned that:

*There are just so many more deeper questions, and I think the whole thing is to ask these questions and then have them discussed in the public forum. And by asking the questions that most people who are too busy with their daily lives to even think about asking, critical questions, you bring forward this whole discussion, and then people can make up their own minds.* (3:5)

It is also important that people believe in the messenger as much as in the message they bring, and this is where opinion leaders, people who have standing and credibility in the community, can become role models and educators. However, the public is quick to make judgments based on assumptions, as is recognized by this respondent, who was
one of the main players in the core group:

*I'm not the sort of person that can say a lot of that sort of thing in public because they'll listen to my English accent, even though I'm a Canadian citizen. They say you've only lived here 4½ years type of thing, and you come in with all your ideas. But I think it's because you've been somewhere else that you do bring ideas with you. They haven't examined these sorts of issues. (3:15)*

Selective perception of the content of the message also changes what was originally expressed to what the individual wants to hear. People tend to perceive information in such a way that it conforms with their own beliefs and values, remembering those parts of a communication which reinforce their own thinking at the time, or they interpret things in such a way it becomes congruent with their own ideas. For example, BBCC members reiterated that

*we're not against golf courses, although a lot of people don't notice that bit of the phrase, but they're being put in the wrong places. (3:5)*

Generally most people have their own opinions on a variety of public issues, and they get out of a speech or conversation what it is they want to hear, otherwise the message is deemed incongruent and may be discarded.

As with any form of persuasive communication, much depends on how each individual interprets the message. As one member of the BBCC put it,

*If you don't agree with the BBCC's approach, then everything we write is junk. (1:13)*

However, since many of the residents in the area share basic values, and were already prepared to consider both the common good and the individual good, the community action group was, to an extent, preaching to the converted.

**Role of Trigger Events**

Most members of the general public interviewed said that the trigger events which first brought the matter to their attention were unrelated to promotion work being done by the community action groups. Several people mentioned, amongst other things, that they had recently moved to the area, and joining one or other of the many
community action groups was a way of getting to know their neighbours. They may recently have retired, and now, having more time available, were able to put their energy into volunteering for whatever was needed. They also had special skills and areas of expertise, acquired through many years of education and participation in their professional work, which were valuable resources upon which groups could call.

Most trigger events were often something seemingly inconsequential at the time. One member of the Boundary Bay Conservation Committee moved to the area in 1988, just at the time when this particular issue was gaining prominence. Her interest in the matter arose from the fact that

I walked around Boundary Bay, and was amazed that so close to Vancouver you could see hawks and eagles, and my husband went down and saw owls. Never in my life had I seen these things, and so close to a big city like that. And then I heard they were going to put golf courses all in this area, so I thought I can’t believe anybody would do this. So I asked around, and when you start asking you get in touch with people who had been working in this area. The first thing we decided was that we needed more information before we could do anything, so we organized a meeting that fall of all the people who were experts... (2:1)

and things went from there. Before long she found herself involved as an early member of the BBCC, right in the middle of the action. Another very active member of the core group got involved almost immediately on arrival in the area by presenting a brief to council on behalf of the local naturalists, but soon joined the newly formed Boundary Bay Conservation Committee because she was deeply interested in the fate of the millions of migrant birds which would be displaced by the proposed development, and because the BBCC was much more pro-active in raising public awareness than the naturalist group she first joined.

I was used to much more active groups in the past, where you’re out there fighting more, so that suited me! (3:10)

Before long, she was chairperson. Although the two respondents quoted above are not ‘general public’ now, in that they are both deeply involved in the activities of the core group, at the time when their interests were originally piqued they were both newcomers
to the area and uninvolved in any local groups, but quickly became involved in local issues.

People also hear about things serendipitously. One newcomer found she had a heronry at the bottom of her garden, and thus began taking a personal interest in the birds' wellbeing. Through work she occasionally met another local resident who came to the office from time to time.

*I met her at work because she was a customer of ours, but I didn't know her before that, I'd just chatted with her. And then I bumped into her at the bank here, and she asked if I'd come to the annual meeting of the Great Blue Heron Society — they were looking for volunteers. So I did, and that was that. When you're new to a district that's a good way of getting to know people and know what's going on. I had a bit of time, and after seeing these magnificent herons, and heard that everything, the place where they fed ... you had to do something.* (4:9)

The Great Blue Heron Society was one of the groups that eventually came under the Boundary Bay Conservation Committee's umbrella. Other newcomers to the neighbourhood found they were quickly informed of local controversies soon after they moved in.

*It's a small community, and you hear what's going on. You certainly hear it from the neighbours, it was the centre of a lot of talk...* (9:1)

Even those who were long-time residents often first became interested quite incidentally.

*I was driving between Ladner and Tsawwassen with a friend one day and commenting on the beauty of the local farmland when my friend remarked that the land had been bought by a developer and was going to be developed for housing. From then on I paid more attention to the newspapers, and I called Agriculture Canada for more information to find out what was going on.* (16:1)

This respondent did not get deeply involved, but she did petition the neighbourhood, and in her words

*Although developers have to make a living too, they tried to do a snow-job through the press, which was pro-developer. So I petitioned the neighbourhood as to what they thought about the loss of farmland and the arrival of so many more people. Most were against it, some were apathetic, and one person told me if I didn't like it, I should move out! Many in the neighbourhood did not seem to be aware that there was a*
problem on the horizon, some hadn’t heard about the proposed development. (16:1)

So at this point, early in the proceedings, it was evident that there was a lot of awareness-raising to do. Once people become aware of something, they cannot become unaware, and start paying attention to incidental occurrences where the matter comes to their attention again. As was observed by the editor of the local newspaper,

*Everybody’s in their own worlds, and don’t know the issues. A lot of people came to it because of the extra traffic, and trucking and fill, and what it means in terms of the wildlife and so on.* (8:6)

**Vested Interests**

The fact that people were fearful for the fate of their community, their quality of life, and in the larger perspective, the fate of the migratory wildfowl which needed the wetlands as wintering and staging grounds was something which the BBCC could use to their advantage. Development, if it took place, was going to cause ever-increasing traffic problems, population density and infrastructure problems, and a possible degradation of the farmland to the point where it may no longer be viable for agriculture as an industry meant that most people had a personal and vested interest in maintaining the status quo. A resident spoke for many when he noted that

*If it affects your lifestyle, it isn’t remote...vested interests cause people to come alive.* (9:5)

Eventually it also began to matter to people, as individuals, that the environment was going to suffer if they were not careful. Thus the community action groups had hit on one of the most powerful teaching tools available to it, the empowerment of people who care enough about something to fight for it with all the resources at their disposal. As one core-group member said,

*People are not keen to save something unless they appreciate it...* (3:1)

so one of the first things to do is find a reason for the public to believe that they should become personally involved, and promote it until a sufficient number of people subscribe, at which point it will gain its own momentum.
Encouraging learning through experience and gaining skills was fostered by the many practical on-site events which were organized. Some of these included mud walks, bird watching with skilled ornithologists to teach beginners how to tell one wintering duck from another, nature walks and tours of threatened areas, school programmes and special events for young children. Even encouraging people to get out and walk with friends along the dykes provided them an opportunity to learn something for themselves, experientially, when they did so.

Attitudes, Values and Beliefs

All those interviewed emphasized the value placed on quality of life in the area, which was one of the main things they were fighting to retain. Impinging on this was the attitude of Not In My Back Yard, colloquially referred to as the NIMBY syndrome, where the major concern is for the individual good. The editor of the newspaper remarked that people, generally, were saying

*What's in it for us? For the people who are living here, to all of a sudden destroy all the farmland, and there's the whole other issue of how important farmland is for the future. But over and above that, I think that even if people weren't thinking that farmland had to be saved, they were saying they'd rather have farmland than 10,000 more houses, (8:7)*

and

*we're going to have pollution, we're going to have more traffic, where's the upside? (8:7)*

However, an interesting attitude shift became evident, perhaps as a result of long-term education, from one of concern for personal wellbeing to a more general concern for the good of the environment as a whole.

One of the main concerns was that farming should remain a viable industry in the area.

*B.C. only has 4% arable farmland, and much of that is here in Delta where the climate is favourable. If you sell off the farmland you put the province in a very vulnerable position in the future, and I just don't think we can afford to do that. What's the alternative? California can't feed us for ever. This is where the education is so important, because I think most people in their hearts don't want to see the environment*
destroyed. I don’t think it’s something you have to convince people of. I think you just have to show them where it’s happening, and ways out. (2:10)

Farmland statistics quoted by this member of the Committee are supported by the Canada Land Inventory (Boundary Bay Conservation Committee, 1992, p. 8).

Increasing environmental awareness is not only apparent in major issues, but in some of the smaller matters affecting everyday life, indicating how pervasive long-term education can be and how taking advantage of social trends is a very effective mean of continuing that education. For example, a BBCC committee member laughed when she recalled how that awareness was now being used politically by the community at large.

For instance, down at a housing sub-division right on the Bay there was a ditch which the people living there wanted to keep. They liked this little river bank, and it was an attractive area. So in making their case to council to keep the ditch rather than put it into a pipe, which was how engineering was seeing it, their argument was that ‘we have an ecosystem!!’ I know the people who live there, and they’re not really environmentalists, and if anything, they would have been in the business community and development camp. But when it suits them people will say ‘we’ve got ducks, we’ve got birds, we’ve got an ecosystem, and it’s part of Boundary Bay, and therefore we must save it!’ So people are beginning to see all this as a possible way of saving what they care about, and they’re using it because they think it might work. (3:9)

Quality of life was another thing greatly valued by all the people interviewed in this study, whether it was the recently retired well-off professional who valued open spaces and unlimited views across flat farmland to Mt. Baker every day, or the fisherman whose family had lived all their lives in close proximity in a low-lying and less affluent area, who got annoyed when their houses flooded every winter as the drainage system had not been updated to cope with the rapid increase in development. But equally important to all was the deterioration of their rural atmosphere and community feeling.

On the outskirts of the nearby fishing community of Ladner, which has been settled a great deal longer than Tsawwassen or Boundary Bay, a long-time resident told me

My wife is third generation here, and the reason we live here is for certain kinds of things. The more people that come in, then there’s no point in living here any more. There’s a lot of people who grew up here who’ve moved away. My father-in-law moved to Lasquiti Island, and he was born here. A lot of the people—that’s why they lived here and it’s
changed, and they don't see that it benefits them. It's not just that. In our case, for example, this house now floods regularly, because all the new developments, they're all higher. So where does the water go? It comes here, and the municipality just says 'tough'. So that's the kind of reason that people say 'no, we don't want any more.' Seems to be a reasonable position. (10:2)

Getting People Involved

Because those immediately involved in the action are passionate believers in what they are doing and the way they are doing it, their world, for the duration of the action, is entirely bounded by it. Their daily routine changes to accommodate extra demands upon their time. Even their families sometimes came second when dealing with urgent problems. A very active member of another of the community action groups existing at the time talked of her complete involvement with getting the message out to others:

So the first night, the Tuesday night, we made the posters, we phoned the people who were going to silkscreen some more for Wednesday morning, so they went on working for Wednesday morning silk screening, and we had the placards and everything. So from there on, we didn't sleep that night. There were five of us who never slept for like three days. And then on the Wednesday morning we organized people, we got them to get out on the exits and overpasses to the freeway with placards... and that is what we spent doing, Tuesday night and Wednesday night. (6:7)

This respondent was so excited and enthusiastic, even during the interview, which was some time after the event, that everything came out in a rush, and she was gesticulating wildly to illustrate her point. Boundless enthusiasm and untiring ability to work as long as was necessary are essential characteristics of individuals who become deeply involved in community and social issues.

Those people close to the centre of the action were not the only ones whose lives were disrupted. The issue became such a major topic of conversation within the community as a whole, and was of such importance to so many people that the summer of 1989 became a blur to many. City Hall and other venues where public hearings were being held became second home to some, who spent hours listening to proceedings, and hours more arranging pot-luck suppers when hearing times were suddenly scheduled to
start earlier than normal, making it difficult for commuters to arrive in time to participate. So a group of very active members of the public got together to solve the problem, as told by one of the organizers.

Because they moved the hearing earlier, to 7 o’clock, well, what we decided to do was to have the dinner and to invite the council to join us, right there, in the Hall. So we made a potluck dinner for, I don’t know, 500 people or something like that. We brought stuff, everybody brought something. We brought in the food, we started filling the Hall from 5 o’clock. It was just like we were having a picnic, there was food coming out of your ears. (6:5)

Speakers had their names on an order list, but no-one was given an approximate time, or even a day, when they might be called. People had to attend the hearings day after day, prepared to speak at any time and stay until council adjourned for the evening. Adjournment times fluctuated daily. If the next speakers on the list were not physically present, then the Mayor could call the hearings to a halt and declare that no further persons wished to speak. In an attempt to force the hearings to a premature closure council sat especially late one night. The Mayor noticed that relatively few speakers were still present, and thought he saw an opportunity to finally end the hearings, although there were still speakers on the list who had not yet spoken. So the telephone committee sprang into action.

What happened was that there was a long list and you signed up to speak and you had a number. So when your number came up you had to be there, or you’d missed your chance to speak. And then it became clear that if you were number 87 and they were only at 33 you wouldn’t get a chance to speak that night, so you wouldn’t go. But what the other side did, they signed up a bunch of people who had no intention of speaking, so when they came to the end of the speakers’ list then that would be the end of the public hearing. So people watching (on television) realized that all these names were being called out, about 50 names and nobody was showing up, so we all had to rush down there ... We had to get on the phones again, and get people out there at midnight in their pyjamas and slippers! ... the hearing became huge, it destroyed everybody’s summer in ‘89. Nobody had a summer because we were at public hearings every night or we were watching it on TV when we weren’t there. It was taped live, a lot of hours. (2:5)
Before long people were heading towards City Hall, even if they were still in their bedroom slippers. Another member of the phone committee who was present at the time related that night’s happenings this way.

It was really strange, we were coming to about 10.20, and at that time usually they stopped to vote that it’s going to go until 11 p.m. 10.30 - no mention of extension, so we started scrambling for speakers, because people knew it was going on to 11, and we had only two or three speakers who were left that were registered. So what they were hoping to achieve was to keep it open through the night, and then there were no speakers, even though there were registered speakers. So we sat on the phone and started calling people on the list that were registered to speak, and we started bringing them in, and bringing in more people and more people - this is like 11 o’clock at night! So we got the people, and after midnight the Hall started filling. We got people out of bed, they got other people out of bed, and we said before you leave home, wake up another five! And we packed the Hall back at around 1 o’clock at night, and we started ordering pizzas and other food, and people were bringing coffee and you-name-it, and they saw that there was no way that they were going to kill this grass roots movement. (6:4)

In discussions with representatives from all three sections of the community, the core group members, the general public, and the media, it became evident that many people were very actively involved in raising awareness both within the community and amongst the local politicians.

**Encouraging Participation**

People join organizations for many different reasons, for social contact, or because the cause is of paramount importance to them. Newcomers particularly wish to participate in community life.

As a newcomer to the area, I received a letter from the Tsawwassen Homeowners Association. They delivered simple bulletins to homes asking for people to become members. As a new person in the area I felt I should sign up and take an interest in what was going on. Shortly thereafter a member of the Board telephoned to let me know about a meeting that was coming up. When I arrived at that meeting the fellow who greeted me shook hands and said ‘how nice to have a volunteer’. I hadn’t volunteered for anything at that point! However, I heard during the meeting that flyers about the issue needed to be delivered, and I got involved doing that. Before long I found I was on the Board myself! (14:1)
From the community action group members’ point of view

Anybody who showed up at any public hearing or wrote in a letter, or wrote to the paper, we called them and asked them if they’d be on the phone list. Then we had lots and lots of public meetings and hearings, and we needed people out all the time. So these people were put on the phoning list, and they were called and asked to turn up at a council meeting, or write a letter to so-and-so, whatever. (2:4)

Not only were people involved in the everyday, mundane matters of disseminating information, but there were many people in the area with professional expertise in a wide range of fields who presented briefs and submissions to the public hearings. At one point during the hearings the Mayor said he believed he was hearing from a radical minority who were against development, but that he had the backing of the ‘silent majority’. There was a definite feeling in the community that the Mayor was mistaken, and to prove their point an unofficial citizens’ referendum was organized.

There was a very high voter turn-out, culminating in a 94% vote against the development proposal. The idea of a plebiscite was a community one, not emanating from any action group in particular. There was never a shortage of volunteers to help organize it, as related by a BBCC member.

Somebody decided to call a public meeting, and the place was jammed. So that’s when they started to organize the plebiscite, the referendum, the first public referendum in Canadian history. People were asking ‘where do I sign’, ‘what do you want me to do? You name it, I’ll do it.’ It was organized by a group of people, they didn’t belong to anything particularly. But it was run officially. We had lawyers and judges there, just like a municipal election. I think they did it voluntarily, just to see that it was carried out in a professional manner, so that it was a genuine plebiscite. The ballot boxes were all sealed, and there was a team of lawyers who took affidavits from those not on the electoral roll, but that had moved to the area and wanted to vote. So we had a team of lawyers there and a judge who would sit there and take these affidavits from people. They had two polling booths and people lined up and waited to vote - it was incredible. I think about 6,000 people voted! (2:5)

Another active member commented on the lesson learned by council after the referendum:

The plebiscite showed that the silent majority was not all development. Council had misjudged that one! (3:9)
As in an election, people went around from door to door on the day of the poll, encouraging everyone to go and vote. One member of the general public said

*Oh yes, we were involved in it. We went out, my wife and I, and we went from door to door, encouraging people to get out and vote, whatever way they had to.* (9:2)

Almost everybody in the community was so angry and frustrated by this time that there was no shortage of volunteers, or voters, on referendum day.

People also became involved by means of the radio and television phone-in opportunities. The local television station ran programmes in which politicians from Federal, Provincial and municipal levels appeared and afterwards were available to take questions from anyone who wanted to call in. This inter-active television was watched by many, and even if they did not have the opportunity to see it live, it was rebroadcast several times during the week at different hours. One member of the public who gradually became more and more actively involved commented of the television shows

*Occasionally I'll watch it while I'm ironing. I often watch the live question-and-answer programmes where they have the mayor or the aldermen and a phone-in show. That's very good, I find that very interesting.* (4:12)

Seeing a repeat precluded viewers from phoning in, but they could still benefit from information given by politicians and questions asked by callers. Radio talk shows gave much the same opportunity. In some cases callers were those who just wanted to speak on the spur of the moment, but from time to time these communication channels would be used by members of the community action groups who had drafted in advance a few points they wanted to make, taking advantage of free air time. Committee members mentioned that

*We did phone in to phone-in shows. Some people did that, every now and again there's an on-line thing with aldermen etc. on local television.* (3:2)
Factors Affecting the Education Process

The amount of education that a community action group can do depends on many factors. Because of the need for many things to be done at once, and as much expertise as possible to be available, the core group needs to reach a certain optimum number of constant members, with other equally knowledgeable people available who can be contacted to contribute when needed. If a group is too small, the load placed upon each person is often heavy enough to cause rapid burn-out, and the group cannot be maintained long enough to achieve its objectives. As one member said:

*Again, it was a matter of wanting to run a public education thing, and we still do want to keep it going all the time, but all the time you've got these crises cropping up, and you've got the same pool of people.* (3:4)

To what extent this education process, both of the general public and the politicians, is successful depends greatly on the personal individual time core group members have available for the cause. At first it takes a great deal of dedicated hard work, and belief in what one is doing to get the group noticed and to establish credibility in the community. But

*Some of the people in Tsawwassen were very quick learners and came onside very quickly, and were spurred into action over a very short period of time. Certainly there was a very big snowballing after the rezoning process got under way (to allow the use of agricultural land for golf courses). And certainly with the creation of the Boundary Bay Conservation Committee the public consciousness just exploded on the issue, but it did take a lot of hard work putting pamphlets together and speaking, and getting into the public eye.* (1:8)

People must also be prepared to speak out on the issue at whatever stage in their learning process, because

*There have been some people who've known a lot less about an issue, but have made a lot of noise, and have had a greater immediate public education impact.* (1:8)

It is therefore necessary to create as wide a base as possible of core-group members and supporters, because a lot of hard work is constantly needed for a sustained period of time. The cost to committed individuals is enormous, yet the whole success of fighting an
issue depends entirely on the strengths of such people. One very active member of the Boundary Bay Conservation Committee, lamenting the lack of funds community groups have to fight corporate powers, and expressing her personal feelings about the part she played said:

*They (businesses and large corporations) have the resources of expense accounts, slick advertising, everything's going right for them. It's impossible to keep pace with them on a level playing field. All you can do is hope that people's underlying wish to do the right thing by the environment will force them into action. You're fighting all the time, and I don't feel at all that we've won, or got anywhere particularly. I think all the time we're just staving off the next disaster, and we've been fairly successful at staving off disasters over the past few years. But the toll, in terms of our time and our energy and the stress involved is enormous, and it falls on quite a small core of people who did a lot, and though we can rely on the support and good-will of a large amount of the community, in terms of actual time or financial support, there's not an on-going level that's very sustainable from the point of view of fighting everything that comes up.* (3:7)

Thus if the education process is to continue beyond the short-term and into the long-term it is essential to keep recruiting new, but well-informed members to the core group to replace those who have to drop out, permanently or temporarily, for whatever reason.

**Telephone Committee**

One factor mentioned by many respondents as aiding the education process for both members of the core group and the general public, was the efficacy of the telephone committee set up to pass on information of upcoming meetings, reminding people to attend, and to find and co-ordinate volunteers for whatever work was required. Anybody who put their name on a sign-in sheet at a meeting, or expressed verbal interest to a member of the Conservation Committee was immediately listed, to be phoned when needed, even if it was midnight and they were in their pyjamas, rather than in the council chambers awaiting their turn to speak. A new resident to the area very much appreciated the networking which resulted from the phone committee:

*... there was a good phoning committee, there was a lot of phoning. 'Get out to the hearings' or 'get out to the referendum, don't forget today's the day we're voting', and this kind of thing. So there's a lot of that community effort, real networking.* (9:2)
It was very effective in informing the community what was happening, where the meetings were being held, and where help was most urgently needed, serving three purposes in one. Firstly it bound the community together and got strangers talking to one another because of a shared common interest; secondly it was a fast and efficient way of keeping people informed and up-to-date, and thirdly it motivated people to attend functions and support the cause in whatever way they could.

**Strategies to Create Learning Opportunities**

Strategies used by the core group to raise awareness fall into two sub-categories, planned activities and unplanned events. Planned activities have two main aims; to encourage immediate short-term action, and to achieve a lasting change in attitudes, values and beliefs in the long-term with regard to the environmental well-being of the area. Unplanned events cannot be relied on to occur, or to have any value as learning opportunities, but any action group should be aware of other things happening in the community at the same time which might be used to their advantage if at all possible.

**Short-term Planned Activities**

**Non-formal events.** Planned activities were many and varied. They were aimed at increasing awareness immediately, gaining membership for the community action group to increase funds by way of subscription, which pays for some of the educational projects, and to increase availability of volunteers to spread the workload. Open House presentations gave the public an opportunity to become better informed through reading display material or asking questions, and public ‘town hall’ meetings provided a platform from which core group members and community opinion leaders may speak. Questions and comments from the floor also help to clarify the issue and provide learning opportunities for those attending to get the facts, as seen by the speakers. The public usually attended these sessions with the intention of learning more, and perhaps expressing their views, and thus were predisposed to listen and learn.

At these events there was always a table of information, photocopies of magazine
and newspaper articles, or flyers and brochures produced by some of the many groups for which the Boundary Bay Conservation Committee was the umbrella organization. These handouts were eagerly taken by those attending, were usually well read and not trashed in the nearest wastepaper basket. One member who attended many meetings said:

*We did a lot of photocopying to get information out, and people were always looking for more information. It wasn't us trying to force it on them, every time we had a public meeting we set up a table, and we'd photocopy newspaper and magazine articles, we'd do research and put out factual information on the Bay, and they could help themselves. People were there saying 'I haven't seen this, or this', and they're very grateful for the information we got out. They were very happy.* (2:5)

This information also spread widely beyond the bounds of the local area;

*It spread out all over B.C. and into other provinces. People would phone for interviews or more information, because people have relatives in the east. It was very much an issue, it still is.* (2:9)

One fairly formal method of presenting facts and information was through making public any reports and studies pertaining to the issue and its possible impact on the community. Bearing in mind that these documents were commissioned by one side or the other, and occasionally by independent bodies, the public could then decide for themselves what was really being said, and by whom. One almost endless source of learning and information was the many briefs, both written and oral, presented to council at the marathon public hearings which became famous locally for being

*the longest public hearing ever, anywhere in the Commonwealth. There were something like 180 hours of oral submissions, there were I-don't-know-how-many written submissions; they went well past midnight many times.* (1:4)

As another respondent who attended most of the hearings said:

*you go to the public hearings for one hundred hours, you learn something!* (2:8)

**Informal events.** As a contrast to the more formal approach to disseminating information, there were many informal ways of getting the message out into the wider community, as described by the founding chairperson.
There were bikathons and birdathons, bird watching afternoons and the Vancouver Natural History Society of course had regular birding trips to Boundary Bay; auctions, art auctions, these sorts of things. Don LeLegere donates art from time to time, and there's art auctions and raffles and wine-and cheese parties, which are both fund raisers and educators. There's Evelyn Roth, with the inflatable animals. She has a heron that inflates up to thirty feet, and so on. (1:4)

There were 'mud walks' and other on-site activities, to encourage people who do not normally venture out into their community backyard, for whatever reason, as recounted by an active member of public.

Mud walks are basically for children and families, to get them aware of what's on the beach when the tide's gone out; the crustaceans, and what's a dunlin? and a sandpiper? and what do they feed on? and how important it is to save the foreshore and not to have pollution? If you put a golf course right on the foreshore and all these pesticides and whatever are leaching into the land and the water, and that's going to affect everything that lives there - the crabs, everything in the food chain. You'd be surprised how many people, young families will come out. And that's a good way to get people involved. And we had an owl watching night in the fall, there are lots of owls down here, so far... (4:10)

This respondent did not actually take part in the mud walks but

...we sell cookies and hot chocolate (there) just as a way to make money, and juice and things like that. We have to have these money-raising things because there's postage and printing to pay for, and money is needed for rent for the office. (4:11)

Community education is not confined solely to adults, it encompasses true lifelong learning, from the youngest children to the oldest adults. Children are particularly important in the education process, for any learning opportunities enrich their knowledge and values, and children's environmental values can often change and influence those of their parents. And the children of the present are the environmental custodians of the future, so it is very important to encourage a respect for it at an early age. A local resident who helped with mud walks and other family events observed:

With public awareness I think you have to start with the children, because they're much more environmentally aware than the adults. The little six- and seven-year-olds. A lot of the teachers are getting involved with interpretive programmes, and we're trying to get this interpretive centre mobile going so we can go to the parks and schools, and have it
available for the teachers so that we can get the children on our side. I think that's probably the answer. (4:10)

Adults acknowledge that they do learn new values and attitudes that their children bring into the home, so teaching children to value their environment is a route to raising awareness in adults also. Safeguarding the future of the area became important, so the community's children became part of the awareness-raising process too. One young mother who became very active in raising awareness recounted her story.

I got involved through the daycare that my son goes to, because mothers decided to stage a protest. There were hundreds of kids and mothers, in strollers etc., and in the daycare we signed a petition which was I-don't-know-how-many-feet long. It spanned the width of the gym in the rec. centre where the hearings were taking place, and so we did a presentation. One of the mums did a presentation at the public hearing. They were deciding not to let the kids and the petition in because, I guess, it was too spectacular. You know, you have a hundred kids and mums and everything, and we had some problem getting in and unfolding this huge petition, which had kids' handprints and footprints and signatures and names and everything, and we asked that it be entered in the record. What we wanted to say, that for the sake of our children, we don't want to see that kind of traffic, this is why we live here, because it's peaceful and we can bring our children up in a safe environment which is still safe, but not as safe as it used to be. So the kids brought in the petition and unrolled it in front of the council. It was a real grass-roots movement, it was coming from everywhere. (6:3)

Incidental opportunities for learning. Many events planned by the core group were aimed at catching people's attention in passing. Posters around town and placards at traffic intersections may be noticed by the public, but whether or not the information was retained or they learned from what they saw depended very much on circumstance. The instruction was intentional, but any resulting learning was probably unintentional and incidental to the accomplishment of the task at hand. "Incidental learning is never intentional and seldom explicit. It is serendipitous or coincidental with some other activity and is always tacit, and takes place without much conscious reflection" Marsick & Watkins (1990, p. 6).

Knowing this, but hoping nonetheless that their actions might make a difference, members of one of the action groups put posters all over the high-traffic areas,
Teaching the public, in some instances, is as subtle as hitting them over the head with a two-by-four. It was difficult not to know what was going on. We sat all night one night, and made big placards. We scrambled for all the cardboard we could find. We made, I don't know, a few hundred placards, and there were crews for two nights going around Tsawwassen, sticking them as high on the telephone poles as possible, so that nobody could take them down. What was taken down the next night, we went out about 2a.m., and between 2 and 5 we hung everything back. We put the posters everywhere. I mean Tuesday they closed the hearings. Wednesday morning Tsawwassen woke up to hundreds of posters all over the place, inviting people to town meetings. And they thought we'd had this planned before, but we didn't. (6:7)

People were stationed at the major intersections and overpasses through which commuters had to travel twice daily, to inform people of the date and time of that meeting:

And then Wednesday morning we organized people. We got them to get out on the exits in Tsawwassen with placards, for the overpass at the Ladner exchange to come with placards, and then again on the cloverleaf of Highway 17 and 99. 'Town Meeting'; 'T.D.L. Hearing'; '7.30p.m.' One said Town Meeting, the other one said the time, the other one said the place. Come. So that was that, and of course the police came before 9 o'clock to pick us up, but we still stayed there. (6:7)

T.D.L. stood for Tsawwassen Development Ltd., the name of the development company wishing to build the houses on the Spetifore farmlands, which was one of the main land use issues in the campaign. Passing motorists, and there are many who commute daily to and from Vancouver, must have seen the placards, because traffic does not move very fast at those intersections in rush hour. They would probably have had plenty of time to read and absorb the message, but there is no certainty that any specific learning resulted. However, incidental learning does often result from repetition of the message many times and in many ways.

While the public hearings were in session, and were being televised in their entirety, some of those who were not presenting briefs or speaking that evening used the high visibility of community television coverage to move in with huge banners and stand at the back of the hall, behind the speakers, so they would be in full view of the television cameras. A member of the Boundary Bay Conservation Committee who
presented one of the first environmentally-oriented briefs to Council, and attended as much of the hearings as possible described the type of dramatic, attention-getting action which took place.

By about the fourth day, people marched on with banners with ‘Herons don’t eat golf balls’ and stood behind the public hearing which was being held in the Rec. Centre. It was absolutely packed, and people just walked in and stood around the walls holding these big banners, all about birds. (3:3)

Thus the many people attending at the hearings and watching on community television would also absorb the visual background message almost subconsciously while listening to the speakers who had carefully prepared their briefs and presentations. Pictures also appeared next day in one of the provincial newspapers, so that people who lived miles away from the action in other areas of British Columbia would be able to read what was going on.

As with any other incidental learning, the message must be repeated frequently to be noticed. This strategy was used by the core group to raise awareness amongst the public, and together they used the same tactic to educate the politicians.

One hopes that by having 40 people all saying virtually the same thing at the public hearings, you’d hope that those 40 afterwards would convince council that this was something they should investigate or look at. (3:6)

One member of the public who sat through hours and hours of hearings observed:

It just went on and on. And you got people just repeating the same thing. But I guess the point was the more people that spoke, the more it made everyone aware of how the community as a whole felt. (9:3)

Although the community had worked very hard to become well informed and reach a generally accepted opinion that council’s proposed development plan was not what they wanted, council members failed to respond and all except one incumbent was removed from office at the next municipal election. The newly elected councillors had never been involved in politics to that extent before, and were entirely from a slate supported by the pro-environment activists. The new officers probably would not have stood for election in less controversial circumstances, and thus it seems that the
educational strategies of the Boundary Bay Conservation Committee may have played a part in altering the course of political history in the municipality in 1990.

Use of the media. Media events were created, and flyers and pamphlets were delivered to every home in the area on many occasions. These types of activities took an enormous amount of energy and planning to be successful, and yet the outcome was completely unpredictable, because whether learning takes place at a conscious or pre-conscious level depends on the receptivity of the individual at the time.

Media reports and events were a favourite way of reaching the general public with information, since most people at least glance at the local newspapers which were dropped twice weekly on their doorstep, purchased one of the two main provincial newspapers, the Vancouver Sun and The Province, or read the Globe & Mail. Most of the events staged by the action groups were usually reported in the local papers, and if they were of wider significance, they might have been given space in the two metropolitan papers. Reaching the Globe & Mail is more difficult, but a founding member of the Boundary Bay Conservation recalled that occasionally the matter did gain the attention of that publication.

*My mother, who lives in southern Ontario, although I've given her information, she’s turned around and said 'oh yes, I read something else about Boundary Bay in the Globe & Mail.' The Globe & Mail is a very difficult nut to crack, they don't seem to have a strong Western office, but we did manage to get into there over something or another. Usually an event—it's got to be an event of some sort to get into the media. (1:4)*

The role played by the two Vancouver-based provincial newspapers was seen as quite effective by one respondent from the general public, who put it this way:

*Given the growth in the area in the last four to five years even, most of the people who live here probably don’t know much about the history of the area, and all the little groups, and various issues, so yes, I can’t see that it wasn’t the (Vancouver)Sun and The Province that didn’t turn them around, because they couldn’t have known what was going otherwise. (10:5)*

Getting air-time on the provincial and national television channels could be just as uncertain as getting attention from national newspapers. One of the main figures in
the community action group arranged for an on-site interview with the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, and had this comment about the experience:

*We told them about the crisis. The public hearing is coming up, and if the council decides to pass these by-laws this area is going to be destroyed, and it's important habitat. So there's a conflict story, and we're a little group that's set up in the community to try and stop this. And they have stories like that all the time. One of the first people that came down and interviewed me on the dyke was a reporter from the CBC, and he says he does these all the time, don't hold out too much hope, I've heard this story so many times - a small group of people who want to stop something. They use them for fillers or late at night. (3:2)*

However, if you know how to approach them, the media can be prevailed upon eventually.

*We got coverage out of Vancouver on BCTV and CBC simply by phoning them and bugging them enough times. Right at the start, when we wanted to get coverage about the golf course we made dozens of calls, telling them that there was something really important happening down here in Delta, and these golf courses are coming up, and they're going on internationally important bird habitat. And just keep talking like that, and eventually, after being phoned by a few people and after a period of days, for instance, I was on Almanac (a mid-day CBC radio programme) - there is this woman down there in Delta or somewhere who doesn't want a golf course. So I gave an interview for that, then other people got on just by keeping phoning. People like BCTV and UTV, they sent reporters down in the end. (3:2)*

Committee members discovered that delivering flyers directly to mail boxes was found to be more successful in getting attention than a general delivery with the local newspaper or other 'junk mail':

*We mailed out flyers to every house in South Delta and Ladner till we ran out of money. Mail is better than including with newspapers, because with newspapers a flyer gets caught up in a wad and people pick it up and throw it in the garbage. But when it comes in the mailbox it's separate, and you see the colour or whatever. It's more expensive to mail, but it gets out. The other way it's likely to get thrown out. (2:3)*

Another respondent from the general public agreed:

*I found when I was commuting I was gone from home eleven hours, and you really don't have time if you're working. And then you tend to pick up the flyers through the door and junk them without bothering to read them. Information is coming at you from all sides. They come with all the flyers from the local grocery stores and you just ... you just don't even*
look at it. People get fed up with all this junk landing on their doorsteps. It can get to be too much. (4:5)

There was also a concerted effort to reach people further afield through flyer distribution to many Lower Mainland nature parks and ecology centres, as well as provincial, national and international conservation organizations. BBCC members also went to all the tourist information booths and put flyers there. They went through dozens. We even put some on the ferries... (3:1)

and in this way it was hoped to reach visitors both from within province, from other parts of Canada and even from overseas, since the Lower Mainland area of B.C. is a very popular tourist destination throughout the year.

Social events. There is no formula that guarantees learning in any situation, but least of all when chance and serendipity play a large part in the message being received in the first place. However, once a person has seen something casually, and dismissed it as one of the many things one sees in a day, it may, in Jarvis’s term (1987b), become ‘pre-conscious’ learning, or tacit knowledge. An obvious, but usually unstated fact of awareness-raising was brought up by the Conservation Committee chairperson, when she said that

Once you become aware of something, after that you can’t become unaware of it, and you start noticing it more when it pops up again. (3:8)

This aspect of incidental learning is relied upon heavily by those who want to raise awareness, together with repetition, so that once something has been casually noticed, it is reinforced over and over again until it becomes meaningful.

You’ve just got to get it out there again and again and again and again. You’ve got to use all angles, there’s no one way. (2:5)

Social events and fund-raisers were also part of the learning environment. And here again it was a matter of chance who attended, why they attended, and whether or not they used the occasion to learn something new. Social functions were important as they provided an opportunity to enjoy a break from the on-going demands of community education, a recognition for all the volunteer work being done, and at the
same time created another media opportunity, as well as a chance for the 'lurkers' or the nominally active to give their financial and personal support.

One such event, held in the intervening period between the long and tiring public hearings and the handing down of the decision by council as to whether they would agree to the development proposal, was called the 'Last Straw Festival'. It had three aims: continued incidental education, raising funds to cover costs incurred to date, and an opportunity for everybody to enjoy some fun after weeks of tension. Such morale-boosters were very important in sustaining people's commitment to the cause.

This comment was made by an enthusiastic organizer of the Last Straw Festival, and some feel that her belief that 'three or four thousand people' attended may have been somewhat exaggerated, and a more correct estimation might be several hundred. There was no doubt that it was well attended, but by how many depends on who is telling the story. Of other social events which occurred from time to time a member of the general public said:

Some of the community organized benefit dances, which they advertised by posters in the shopping malls. We attended some of those, and they also had silent auctions during the dances of gifts given by local merchants, or art work donated, in order to raise funds for the costs incurred in fighting the issues. (16:2)

A great deal of individual effort and enthusiasm went into making these various events as effective as possible. The founding chairperson of the Boundary Bay
Conservation Committee is more conservative and low-key than radical, but was not afraid to let the community know that there was a problem to be solved. The founding chairperson of the Committee, who is very aware of the value of publicity, said:

*There’ve been all kinds of different theatrics performed. We made a video for Delta Cable and put it out, people carried placards at the public hearings, and there were certainly information booths in the malls, and everybody likes to stop by and read a petition. Just this spring there was a protest against the Brant shoot... Sure, we used every single kind of advertising, attention-drawing tactic that we could, short of guerrilla tactics!* (1:4)

**Unplanned Learning Opportunities**

*Taking advantage of the unexpected.* Incidental education can occur anywhere, any time, one just has to be in a position to seize whatever opportunity is presented. A member of the Boundary Bay Conservation Committee recounted his experience when visiting a Vancouver tourist destination.

*I stepped off the tram at the top of Grouse Mountain, and lo and behold! there was a clown performing. For some reason or another I had a Boundary Bay pamphlet in my pocket. I don't really remember how it came about, maybe it was in my hand, but anyway, the next thing I knew was this clown was talking to me about Boundary Bay and how he knew all about it, it was really quite hilarious.* (1:8)

and in another illustration of seizing the opportune moment a second member of the Committee said:

*Generally any comments I’ve had tend to be either positive, or if they start an argument, it’s a genuine argument. They have a different point of view and they want to put forward their point of view, but they will listen to mine, and quite often can be convinced. It’s a very common misconception that we’re against golf courses, full stop. Then they ask why are you against golf courses - they’re trees, they’re fields, they’ve got birds - our golf course has a lot of nice birds. How can you be against that? And then you have to explain the uniqueness of this position and why you can’t plonk another habitat on top of an existing one. But that, I think, is a genuine thing to argue with us. They’re looking for more information to make up their minds as to what is the right thing to do. I’m quite happy to discuss anything like that with people.* (3:8)
There were two major issues up for consideration at the same time; a housing development proposal for a parcel of farmland, known as the Spetifore lands, and proposals for 18 new golf courses in the area on both farmland and deltaic wetland around Boundary Bay, so if the public heard about one, they almost invariably heard about the other. The then-chairperson of the BBCC observed:

*Home owners had bumper stickers which were more towards the Spetifore thing, and they weren't particularly environmental, but raising awareness of the Spetifore issue caused additional awareness of the other things going on around that issue. We used every angle, t-shirts, bumper stickers, posters on telephone poles... (2:4)*

and later added:

*Bumper stickers saying “No to TDL” were real attention-getters. They were soon all over the Province. (2:2:1)*

There were several smaller issues also linked with the golf course and housing development proposal. One of these concerned the fate of a large heronry in nearby Point Roberts, as the herons depend upon Boundary Bay for feeding and fishing. Therefore to be interested in the fate of the heronry was also to be interested in the fate of Boundary Bay and the surrounding dykes, ditches and uplands as well. A respondent whose property lay on the Canada-United States border and abutted a large heronry just in Washington State did some research,

*And then I found out that the property of the heron rookery is owned by three Canadians, and if they decided to develop without concern for the herons we'd lose the herons. And also of course the herons feed in Tsawwassen, in Boundary Bay. And in winter they feed on voles in the fields, the farmers' fields or whatever, so we virtually have to protect the whole area for all the birds, not just the herons. (4:1)*

The fact that there were so many issues, large and small, arising at the same time meant that a great number of people were concerned with the eventual outcome, so there were many supporters who would rally against the potential development. These people were also interested in supporting the cause in whatever way they could, and were rapidly enlisted as volunteers when the Boundary Bay Conservation Committee
was founded. This organization was a coalition of many of the smaller groups already in existence, to make more efficient use of volunteers and resources.

**Newspaper editorial policy.** In the same way that the actions of the incumbent municipal councillors raised the ire of many people and thus became an inadvertent educational tool, the newspapers, or initially, the lack of newspapers, in the area also became a forum for learning. At first there was only one local paper being delivered free to all homes in the Tsawwassen and Ladner areas, and its editorial policy was so pro-development that many people became very angry when they could not get their point of view printed, or they could not find any reports of the public hearings which had become so contentious throughout the summer of 1989. Most of the briefs presented at that hearing were anti-development, so the pro-development owner of the local paper refrained from reporting them. This action then provoked some merchants to cancel their advertising in that paper, and the general feeling of hostility towards the development plans rose considerably.

At this time there were already plans to start a second local newspaper for door-to-door delivery. It was obvious to people in the business that a second newspaper would be in great demand because the pro-environment lobby maintained that they could not express their point of view through the only other local newspaper which presently existed.

*The emergence of the South Delta Today is important as it was set up in Tsawwassen just as the public hearings started. It finally gave the public a fair and equal say in the local newspaper. Mr. Siba, who set it up, eventually bought out the Delta Optimist much later. Mr. Siba's decision to start the South Delta Today played a very important role.* (2:2:1)

Although that new newspaper did in fact become a reality, the two papers eventually merged, so the area is back to having only one voice again, but a member of the Committee stated that

*the publisher changed, and it is a more reasonable paper now.* (3:2:1)

However, the emergence of this second paper did much to relieve the community tension, because now pro-environmentalists could have their say, read about the public
hearings which were so controversial, and get a different perspective on things through the editorial pages, and provide the community with an opportunity to learn about their point of view.

**Political problems.** One of the greatest learning opportunities in the community at the time came from the way municipal council conducted business. Councillors were development oriented, and the community felt that their interests were not being well represented over the issue of developing farm land for housing and golf courses. However, there are provisions between the third and fourth reading of a by-law for community input through public hearings, where written and oral briefs are submitted for consideration. It was at this point that the community action group encouraged as many people as possible to come forward and register as speakers against approval of the proposed development. People not only crowded into City Hall until the room overflowed and hearings had to be transferred to the local recreation centre to provide more public space, but they watched nightly on community television, monitoring the presentations and councillors' reactions.

Consequently, there was a great deal of learning going on during the summer of 1989. People not only learned about the issue as they listened to brief after brief being presented, but they also learned a great deal about the democratic process. Everybody in the community was learning together; core group members and general public alike, as the hearings progressed. Feelings became more heated as hearings were arbitrarily re-scheduled to start earlier, or finish later, than normal making it difficult for speakers to judge when they should attend. As was observed by a founding member of the Committee:

*I think that many of the residents and the voters of Delta had had it with the established group who were running the show down there. Certainly some of the most astonishing behaviour on the part of people, let alone politicians, had left some large impressions on much of the electorate.*

(1:6)

The theme of anger appears in every interview, whether with members of the community action group or the general public, creating a great deal of personal interest
in the way council was conducting business. Anger is a great motivating force—when people get angry, they get active. A former founding member noted that:

*People got so angry at what was happening in council that they found themselves attending council meetings and standing up to say their piece. 'I had no intention of speaking, but ...'* (5:3)

This was an unexpected learning opportunity the community action group could capitalize on as there was such widespread coverage on radio, television and in the newspaper that many more people were aware of the issue than might have been the case had the hearings not been so contentious. The recurring theme of anger was re-iterated many times by members of the Committee and the general public alike:

*... the people were so angry! The whole question of democracy came up, and people began to realize that things were not that democratic in Delta, they hadn’t been for a long time, but they finally realized it.* (2:6)

and

*People are going to have to stand up and be counted or it just won’t work, because the political will just isn’t there. And the only way you’re going to get the political will is for people to do a lot of yelling and screaming.* (2:10)

and a good deal of that went on in and around Tsawwassen at that time. The aim of the Boundary Bay Conservation Committee, and the other action groups, was to teach people how to “yell and scream” effectively. How much the council’s controversial actions had unwittingly helped in the education process was noted by one BBCC member when she said:

*I think anybody that got involved with any of the groups took the message out into the community, because it is something that has been discussed in the community so much. Especially when it got to the Spetifore T.D.L. issue, everybody was talking about it, and that helped us so much. Otherwise we’d still have been back at square one, because all this stuff is very admirable, but I don’t think it would have got us further along in public education, it would have burned out after a few months. so it was the political things that happened that helped our publicity, because we got the tv coverage over the issue of golf courses in Boundary Bay.* (3:2)

Council’s actions were becoming very unpopular. A member of the general public voiced a common feeling in stating that:
We got the sense that the council at that time was going to ram the thing down our throats whether we liked it or not, and that’s what stirred a lot of ire, and it stirred my ire. I don’t mind if a majority wants a thing, ç’est la vie, but it was so clear that the majority—a large majority—were against it. (9:1)

Because council still believed that the silent majority was in favour of development and the community wanted to teach them that this was definitely not the case, there was a spontaneous suggestion to hold an unofficial plebiscite after one particularly confrontational meeting. Another member of the public reported that

*The whole thing just caught fire and took off because people got so mad at the way they had been treated by those who were elected to represent them.* (14:1)

Reports of council meetings in the local papers kept the issue in the forefront. A reader observed

*I think our newspapers did a good job of getting people worked up, and the more people got worked up, the more they talked about it. We talked to everybody on the street—there was a lot of talk on the street, and so the more the people were motivated to go out to the hearings.* (9:2)

Eventually many respondents voiced the same feelings of frustration over and over again.

*They just got people so angry with their arrogance. I am not a political activist really, but boy, we got riled up. Look what he’s doing now. He can’t get away with that!* (9:3)

One of the Boundary Bay Conservation Committee’s interim aims was to replace present councillors with a new slate of officers at the next election. The present council’s actions had become such a focus of attention that many people learned a great deal, even if they did not participate in, or were aware of, any of the BBCC’s organized events, but the fact that council had upset the community was obvious. This local resident reflected the views of many respondents in saying

*... the attitude of the Mayor infuriated me. He was so arrogant and undemocratic. Any increase in traffic, loss of farmland, and increase in development is going to make life hell for the local residents, in spite of what the developers say. The Mayor accused the local citizens of having a ‘drawbridge mentality’ and that infuriated people even more. They were ready to explode with anger. The Mayor didn’t consider the*
general public, and suffered from illusions that the silent majority was on his side. Development has to happen, but slowly and in keeping with the surroundings. But the council were not going to listen to what the community had to say. (16:1)

The situation was summed up by the Boundary Bay Conservation Committee member who said sorrowfully:

_I don't think we did a good job of educating the council at all. You always hope that you'll educate people, but one had the feeling that these people had made up their minds to follow a particular economic path for the municipality, and they weren't convinced by our arguments. Although the public hearings are not legally a judicial thing, they're just allowed to hear from the public, but they don't have to listen to them in fact. There's nothing in law that says they have to take any notice of us. But one hopes that by having 40 people speak at the public hearings, you'd hope that those 40 afterwards would convince council that this was something they should investigate...but they went ahead anyway. But that was another thing that gave us good publicity; the 4th hearing of that by-law. Because it was so rowdy and so noisy, and everybody was so frustrated, because we saw that our education effort had totally failed. (3:6)_

But in spite of the publicity that the public hearing received, and the fact that the issue was one of the main topics of conversation around town, there were still corners of the community that remained unaware, and people who did not want to participate in the discussion. No matter how hard the Committee tried to inform all members of the community and encourage public participation in the action, the Chairperson acknowledged that it is impossible to reach everybody.

_As for the general population, there are still an awful lot who probably didn't know anything at all about the issue. I still find people that have heard nothing about it, even though they're living in this area. (3:2)_

There is always a section of the population that cannot be drawn into the argument.

**Long-term Educational Plans and Objectives**

Although short-term educational measures are very important in dealing with immediate crises, it is the long-term educational goal of the BBCC to educate the population generally about environmental issues on one hand, and political process on the other. Immediate action required to deal with urgent day-to-day matters can draw on
tacit or implicit knowledge and on-going learning which occurs as social priorities gradually shift over the years. The founding chairperson pointed out that

What shouldn’t be neglected, too, was that there were various processes that have gone on for many years around the Boundary Bay issue. For instance, naturalists have been lobbying for conservation measures for at least 20 years, if not much more, and various proposals for schemes to manage the area have been put forward by many well informed and eminent conservationists. So many of the modern expressions of our concerns really had their roots way back, and the public education process has been ongoing for quite a long time. (1:7)

So long-term education has not only built a base of knowledge which can be called upon immediately, it has also created a foundation for working towards changing or consolidating values, attitudes and beliefs in the future. In contrast to the time constraints involved in dealing with immediate problems as they happen, long-term education is acknowledged to be a slow but incremental process. This respondent continued that

We’re never going to get anywhere in conservation without education, and people cannot learn quickly. Issues are one thing, but there’s a much longer agenda that has been set by naturalists, and that is long-term education of themselves and the public, so inasmuch as you have short-term memory things that you have to do around issues, there’s much, much bigger concerns—long-term education of the world at large, and perhaps what we’re seeing in the environmental movement today is the fruits of those long-term efforts, because certainly the environmental movement has been around for a very long time in various forms and shapes. And all along we’ve been at the whim of fashion, and still so much of it is concerned with data gathering and data dissemination. (1:14)

The effects of long-term education can be seen to be working in this particular community. People do not easily forget what has already happened, so when the developer tries to resurrect the issue in a different form from time to time, long-standing residents of the area hastily inform more recent arrivals of the past history of the issue. A member of the public noted with a grin that:

The minute he (the developer) proposes anything, you can feel the energy level in Boundary Bay rising two feet. Everybody goes ‘no way, there he goes again. If it comes from him it’s got to be no good!’ He can’t do anything. They’re going to have to wait for all of us to die
before he can do anything, and he's as old as we are, so it's not going to work. Maybe our kids will forget, but not the people that live here! (9:3)

Before members of such a core group can create learning opportunities for the wider public, they themselves must be well informed on both the issue and the political process. The self-directed and peer learning which occurs in this initial stage has already been well documented (McCreary, 1984) and therefore is not included in this present research. But having become informed of the issue from as broad a perspective as possible, the core group members are then solely responsible for initiating a campaign in the locality to widen the group membership and encourage participation by volunteers in all aspects of the work to be done when the goal is to inform and educate politicians, who are the ultimate decision makers. The educational process was planned, deliberate, and very important to the BBCC.

*We had a policy, right from the start, that when we realized that Boundary Bay was worth saving, we then felt that to mobilize everybody and get people interested, they've got to realize what was there. So we thought the first step was education, because they're not keen to save something unless they appreciate it. So we did make a conscious effort to plot out a route, way back in '88. We were going to start by educating people as to what was there. We thought this should be our first step, a planned education scheme.* (3:1)

**The Media as a Source of Information**

The media, in this study, refers to radio, television, and printed channels through which information is disseminated into the wider community. Although at first it appears to be a one-way flow of information from the media to the public, there is considerable opportunity for active participation through Letters to the Editor, and live phone-in radio and television programmes hosting politicians who will talk with callers. Often local radio and television stations will offer community action group members the opportunity to participate in discussions or interviews either in the studio or on location, and to present their own videos. However, phone-in programmes sometimes generate such heat that people stop listening because, as one respondent remarked,

*I don't listen to the radio shows, I find that I have a low boiling point and I get so worked up that I can only take a little!* (4:7)
Like everyone else wanting media coverage, community action groups also use press releases and photo-opportunities whenever possible, which helps to keep their cause in the news and in the minds of the community. Media information propagated by community action groups is aimed in two directions at once; both at providing information for the general public, and also as a means of informing and applying pressure to politicians to take notice of community wishes and feelings.

Community television. Local community television played a large part in the dissemination of information throughout the area. Everyone interviewed said they watched it avidly at the time of the controversial public hearings during the summer of 1989, to learn, to monitor, or even to judge how long it might be before they had to get to Council chambers in persons to present their submissions. Everyone had been given a number, but no idea of time or date when they might be called upon to speak. Because the length of the hearings varied daily, it was impossible to tell when you might be required to speak, and since most people lived a reasonably short driving distance from City Hall, it became essential to watch the televised proceedings carefully.

It became routine for many that summer to come home from work, grab supper, and either get to the hearings in person, or watch them on television at home for the remainder of the evening. Several respondents had indicated how much time this took up, and how summer that year went by in a blur for many who were watching the daily drama. The director of the community television station indicated that, unobtrusively, it was possible to estimate a high daily viewership of the local channel since much of the conversation in and around Tsawwassen at that time was about they way council had acted the night before at the hearings, and what had been learned from the most recent submissions. It was therefore assumed that people were indeed watching the community channel at that time rather than any of the many other channels available to them. He said,

_We don't do surveys, but after a while you get a pretty good idea who watches. We could have everybody watch the channel and nobody calls next day, so you don't know they're even there. One of the most comical things the manager here said to me, he said he was driving home one_
night through Tsawwassen when the hearings were on, and he said that everybody was off the street. 'Nobody was shopping, no cars were around, I couldn’t figure it out. I looked around and hardly anybody was out, and it was a time when most people would be driving home, seven o’clock (in the evening), and everybody was off the streets.' And then, he said, it finally dawned on him that everybody was home watching community television, and that’s when the hearings were on. I thought that was funny, because that’s when you’ve reached the ultimate in community tv, where everybody in the community was watching. (7:5)

And the editor of the local newspaper, which has offices next door to the television station said:

Give cable tv full credit, they broadcast gavel-to-gavel municipal council and the public hearings, and I think that was as big an education process as anything for anybody who wanted to sit there and watch, because there were some terrific submissions made. People really did their homework. I think it (the hearings) started in May and ended in maybe July—it was the longest hearings in Canadian history. So they went on and on and on, and became very much an educational programme, and very much the issue in town. (8:5)

This, in turn, led to people doing their own research to verify what was being said, and to follow the hearings throughout the summer. Because of the intense interest in the matter people were even choosing to stay in and watch what was happening on television rather than participate in the many outdoor activities which normally make up a west coast summer social life. As the newspaper editor said, televising the hearings was certainly one of the most important means of education. Without the educational effect of local television the Boundary Bay Conservation Committee would have had a great deal more hard work to do.

The controversial nature of the events did much to stir people into action. As the founding chairperson of the BBCC noted:

Certainly some of the most astonishing behaviour on the part of the politicians had left some large impressions on much of the electorate, I think. Things like cutting off debate, and some of the council meetings, certainly they were often well attended and they were disseminated on the cable tv and were watched closely by people at home. And people were getting transcripts and responding to the comments of the politicians, and some politicians were flip-flopping on issues and doing about-turns and this sort of thing, so certainly they were very much exposed to the community and were closely scrutinized by a portion of the community, and then those people would voice their opinions in
ways that would be again disseminated throughout the community. Lots of letters to the editor, tons of them, talk show commentary, phone calls into the talk shows ... (1:6)

Of the many awareness-raising strategies used in the community generally, televising hearings certainly became a major factors in informing and educating the population.

Like the editorial policy of the newspaper, the television station does try to maintain a balanced presentation on both sides of an issue, but unlike the newspaper, it does not edit or interpret events, it simply acts as a mirror reflecting back exactly what is happening. The Director of the community television station explained that

What we do is facilitate awareness through the community channel to look at issues from both sides. It often happens that the people who are against any particular thing get the most press, because they take the most interest in the particular subject. If you're for something, you're generally not as keen to get involved as if you're against something. (7:1)

The fact that those in favour do not make themselves publicly visible was mentioned by several respondents, and is, perhaps, something of which people supporting an issue should be more aware. If they do not make their opinions as well known to the public as those against the issue their viewpoint does not become the focal point of conversation, few hear about it, and the majority view swings toward that aspect of the issue which is apparently held by 'everybody'. This is a manifestation of the phenomenon that learning is a function of the social milieu in which one lives and interacts. (Jarvis, 1986)

Community television is widely watched and sees itself as an important method of disseminating information. Like most newspapers, it tries to remain fairly objective in its presentation of matters of interest. The director said:

We realize that people look at the community channel as a vehicle for the community to use, and to disseminate the information the community is looking for, so we try to keep that in mind, because the community perceives us to be as unbiased as possible. We don't want people to think that we are for or against something. And that, I think, is the case for most broadcast facilities, they try even in the editorials, to do one side and then the other, they try to balance. (7:1)
Dissemination of information by television is one of the multi-faceted ways of appealing to individual learning styles, and it is essential to use this medium to its best potential if maximum learning opportunities are to be created. The director is very aware of this and mentioned that

*We try to present programmes in a visual manner. Television is a visual medium, and the worst type of television is to sit in the studios and discuss it. You constantly try to stay away from that so you are making as visual a presentation as possible. Information is very beneficial, you can’t help but enlighten the voters, who perhaps may not know enough about an issue to vote intelligently. So that's where community television comes in, where we show the whole thing and we don’t editorialize and we don’t edit, and viewers can make up their own minds.*

(7:2)

However, representing all sides and presenting many points of view in an effort to be fair and unbiased can also be thoroughly confusing. Convincing arguments from both sides of the issue are not always as helpful as they might appear at first.

*It’s good to hear from the experts, but it seems that they’re all experts in one area or another, and you don’t know who to believe now!* (7:7)

Acknowledging the value of his community television station he added

*It wasn’t just chit-chat. People aren’t wasting their time if they watch. They’re not hearing people who don’t know what they’re talking about.*

(7:9)

**The print media.** Often a community action group will create media events, photo-opportunities, or give the press ready-prepared news releases with accurate information. However, these news releases almost always get edited, either to meet space requirements or editorial policy, and the usual comment to be heard from those who have had experience with giving information to newspapers this way is that editing may remove a vital word or sentence, or just slightly alter the punctuation, which can change meaning of the whole message.

An important action to be take when wishing to bring an issue to prominence is to convince reporters and journalists from all aspects of the media that there is something worth taking an interest in because it is newsworthy, and of interest to the community at
large. If they can be so persuaded they may be amenable to reporting issue-oriented events, and announcing upcoming meetings and other events as they are planned. Without media help, it would be very difficult to generate the widespread publicity necessary to create a groundswell of opinion. There are other effective ways of passing the word around, but in this information age where mass markets can be reached very easily, efficient use of facilities offered by widespread broadcasting of information, is very important.

The effect of disseminating information in the newspaper can trigger almost instant reactions. The community’s response to a newspaper article was discussed by a member of the Conservation Committee.

_There were some very serious problems, it appeared, in the whole finances of Delta that showed that we’re not gaining anything by having all this development, it’s not making us better off, which is the line that’s been fed to us. The local newspaper did an article on that, because the findings were presented to council and the newspaper had a reporter there. And then you started to see the letters to the editor coming in. ‘What, the developers are not paying their way?’ That one rattled a few bars! (3:14)_

Then the dialogue in the papers started as the letters to the editor came pouring in. Even though the pro-development and pro-environment factions sometimes found it difficult to talk face-to-face, communication between the two took place through the letter columns of the local newspapers, at times quite heatedly. This all fueled the discussion which was occurring throughout the community, as people consolidated their views or obtained new information to consider.

**Critical thinking.** Because, in general, the people living in the area have been used to searching out and receiving a great deal of information in the course of their careers they tend to have developed sharp critical thinking abilities. Many people add to what they have heard or seen in the various information arenas by doing their own research to confirm or deny information already received from other sources, to add to it, or shed light on it. They are not prepared, for the most part, to take everything without question. Even the experts’ briefs and submissions presented to council were not
beyond investigation since, knowing the way politics works in British Columbia, people were cynical enough to suspect that not all was always what it seemed to be. A member of the Committee who did a great deal of the research for their campaign felt that they were hardly on a level playing field because

The people on the other side were getting paid to do so-called environmental assessments, and we feel they were doing a very shabby, incomplete, nasty job of it, and they were getting paid a lot of money to come up with wrong conclusions deliberately. And what we (the BBCC) had to do more than anything was get our experts to critique these phony environmental assessments and prove them incorrect and incompetent. (2:7)

However, proving the opposition wrong does not necessarily mean that you are right either, so people got enveloped in an information jungle that needed a great deal of critical thinking to sort out. She continued that

... the whole movement in our society is to start questioning the garbage that we're given from the so-called government experts. So you're raising people's critical awareness, it's part of the movement, definitely. (2:7)

Although not overtly stated by all respondents that they went to some lengths to verify for themselves everything they heard or saw concerning the issue, it seemed to underlie their passion for learning as much about the matter as possible in their own individual ways. They took their duties as citizens very seriously, deeming it to be entirely in their own interests to be as well informed as possible in order to make a reasonably unbiased decision based on their findings. One respondent from the general public did put it into words, stating that

In reading the newspapers and listening to what was being said, I judged everything on its merits and asked questions all the time, weighing the evidence as to whether or not what I was reading or hearing was the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, and doing my own research on the matter before deciding what I felt about it and what I believed or disbelieved about the presentation. (16:1)

Casual conversation. One of the main channels of communication for both teaching and learning is conversation in one form or another. Casual conversation between friends and neighbours conveys much valuable information, can create, affirm
or change opinions and viewpoints, can enlighten or confuse, begin, maintain or kill rumours, and in a buzz-word of the '90s, is what 'networking' is all about. Conversation enables an individual to get to know facts, to try to sort out true from false, and make contact with others who share similar thoughts and opinions. Talking with others about one's own point of view often acts to confirm and consolidate one's belief in that viewpoint, and thus is a very valuable tool by which the individual will not only try to convince the person with whom they are conversing, but will be confirming to themselves the correctness of their belief at the same time. In this way new beliefs become entrenched, and old beliefs become stronger. Casual conversation is one of the most common means by which learning takes place in daily life, and its place and importance in the educational scheme of things cannot be ignored.

People in Tsawwassen learned a great deal this way, through contact with friends and neighbours, and through the rumour mill. In any community news travels fast along the unofficial network, the 'grapevine', and on the whole it has been found that although things may get exaggerated along the way, basically the information transmitted along this route has a considerable degree of truth in it, rather than being pure gossip or unsubstantiated rumour (Collins, 1982; Zaremba, 1988).

Newcomers were welcomed to the neighbourhood, and almost immediately initiated into the local controversial issues.

We noticed how efficient the networks were from the very first day that we moved out here from Vancouver. We found in Vancouver people didn't get to know each other. But we'd barely moved in here but the neighbours were welcoming us one way and the other. We'd only been here a day when a neighbour came over to get us on side about a road issue right here. (9:4)

Because the development and golf course issues were, it seemed, almost the only topic of conversation in a large segment of the community at one time, recent arrivals said

Our attention was drawn to it, I guess, by the fact that we live right beside the point at issue, it's right in our back yard. And it's also an issue that's felt very strongly in this community, so that you can hardly help but hear about it, in one format or another, from the neighbours. (9:1)
People did not have to know each other, or even be acquainted, to find themselves embroiled in a conversation about the issue. A Committee member observed that:

*The developer's intended actions have been a subject of discussion in the community all the time. But nobody really knows what he's going to do, so rumours abound on that one. You could just bump into anyone in the supermarket and discuss that, you didn't have to know anybody very well.* (3:9)

Casual conversation may not always make a big impact on people, but may start the process of awareness-raising by what Jarvis (1987b) calls pre-conscious learning. This member of the general public admitted:

*I'm very vocal, I can't be quiet when I believe in something. And every time you had a chance you got on your soapbox. Even my family, who are not that keen, they don't really want to get involved. I think you just make small inroads, you plant the seed in their minds, and I think, maybe not major, but it gets them thinking.* (4:9)

The importance of conversation and contact with neighbours was stressed by a member of the general public who lived in a very close-knit area of Ladner, a small town a few miles away from Tsawwassen. Although it was not in the centre of the action, the people there 'kept tabs' on things, finding out through their own tight network all that was necessary to be well informed. When asked how he heard about what was going on this respondent said:

*We look at the paper, but it's the sort of thing that people do talk about around here. A lot of people, they grew up together, they know each other. My wife grew up here, so she knows what's going on in the general area. They tend to know what's going on, and they talk about things. My sister-in-law is friends with the former Mayor's wife, see. It's quite a close-knit community, and they know about things even if it's not in the paper. They talk about stuff.* (10:1)

In an attempt to draw out more information on this networking, which was very different from the way things appeared to work in Tsawwassen, because the two areas are demographically quite different, the respondent was asked how the people in his immediate circles were keeping tabs on things.

*Hmm, he replied, Here it wasn't so much that you had people actively getting out, but we just make a point of finding out what was going on, and then tell each other, and things like this. You'd phone somebody*
Because the development issue got so much prominence in the local newspapers and on community television for so long, and mattered so much to so many people, conversation was mentioned by most respondents as one of the main conduits of information dissemination and diffusion. The learning associated with such unplanned, unsystematic sharing of knowledge is entirely incidental and informal, but played a very large part in achieving the ultimate outcome, which was education of politicians as to the wishes of the community they were elected to represent.

Evidence of Raised Awareness Amongst the General Public

Several respondents remarked on the fact that they observed subtle changes in the activities of the general public which indicated that perhaps awareness was being raised, that people were taking a personal interest in the matter and wanted to experience things first-hand for themselves, or were pro-active in reaching for further information. People were asking for transcripts of the public hearings, so they could re-read for themselves what was presented at the latest session. Others were walking along the dykes where they had never been before, even though they may have lived in the area for years. This would enable them to see the vast numbers of wintering wildfowl which inhabit the area for almost six months of the year. They went on mud-walks and owling expeditions organized by some of the action groups. It was important to get people to care what happened to these irreplaceable habitats. One of the Boundary Bay Conservation Committee felt that

_A lot of people didn't believe there were too many birds there. But on the other hand we've noticed an increase in the number of people using the dyke and walking along—we feel there has been an increase just over this whole period of time that people are getting educated. There's a lot more articles in the newspaper about it._ (3:9)
Another way that the core group could tell that at least people had paid attention to the media, whether or not they had actually learned anything, was the number of times they heard remarks such as “I saw your name in the newspaper again”, or “I saw you on the television last night.” As one member of the BBCC said,

*many people sat up and took notice when they saw mention of a local name in the newspaper.* (5:1)

Another observed that

*I quite often get comments just from people that I don’t see regularly on the conservation circuit – ‘noticed your name in the newspaper quite a lot.’ See, they know that things are going on, and they’ll ask how it’s going, and they’ll give us their support.* (3:8)

The director of the community television station commented on the number of callers who would phone in during an open-line discussion with local, provincial or federal politicians—another form of evidence that people were watching. If they were watching intently enough to cause them to call in, they were probably learning something.

**Education of the Politicians**

The ultimate goal of any community action group education and information campaign is to educate the community generally so they may in turn educate and pressure politicians to make decisions acceptable to the electorate. Community action group members raise awareness within the general public in order that strength in numbers can be achieved, for it is this sort of strength to which politicians respond.

Once more it is to some extent appealing to vested interests. Politicians have a personal vested interest in staying in power, but they will only stay there if people vote for them, and people will only vote for them if they feel they are getting fair representation. As happens with confrontational democracy, pressure has to be brought to bear by lobbying, through various forms of media, and from individual letter-writing campaigns, amongst other things. Education of politicians is a two-step process for the community. Those wishing to inform and educate politicians need to learn both what it
is the politicians need to know, and how to deal successfully with the surrounding bureaucracy.

There are the direct channels of access to politicians through radio and television phone-in shows in which they participate, or through personal meetings and discussions. But making appointments to meet can in itself be a learning process for those trying to make the initial contact. There are many gatekeepers to go through and barriers to overcome, and it takes persistence and patience to learn the rules. This example was given by one of the founding members of the Boundary Bay Conservation Committee.

We learned very quickly that if you submit something to the staff at City Hall many times, depending on their whim or opinion, it may or may not make it to the Mayor, let alone to the council. And similarly, if you address a letter to the Mayor, more likely than not it won’t make it into the councillors’ packages of information, you have to address it to the Mayor and council, because that’s in fact who you want to address.

(1:9)

Often

the only way you’re going to get the political will is for people to do a lot of yelling and screaming (2:11)

so community action groups arrange for that to happen too, and is a strategy now used to attract attention to many community causes. The referendum organized in Tsawwassen was a very successful way of informing the politicians that the silent majority which they had assumed must be out there somewhere, and would be on their side, did not in fact exist. Sometimes messages are purveyed indirectly for one politically-astute former Committee member put in words what many activists know almost by instinct, that

if an issue gets media attention, the bureaucracy start taking some action towards solving the problem at hand. (5:3)

That is, the yelling and screaming takes place consistently, but more quietly, through newspaper, radio and television messages which will reach politicians and public alike.
It is also important for the general public to learn such mundane things as how to write the letters which will gain attention. As one former member of the committee found out:

*It is good to know how to write and present things to ministers, the format, style and so on, so they stop to read your presentation or give you access to talk with them. You have to learn of any stumbling blocks which might prevent access to a particular minister. Prime their staff first, and then they will have the information you want them to get! ... Ministers often pay more attention to handwritten 'salt-of-the-earth' letters rather than sophisticated computer productions or mass-produced postcards which only need a signature.* (3:4)

**Intervening Factors**

Several factors happened to exist at the time which may have had some impact on the awareness raising process under discussion. None of them could be deliberately recreated, they were all circumstantial, but they nevertheless have been pointed out consistently throughout data collection, overtly or covertly.

**Coalition with other groups.** Strength lies in numbers, and although Boundary Bay and surrounding townships had many people interested in preserving the local environment, they belonged initially to a variety of interest groups, each with their own reasons why the development project should be stopped. It was soon acknowledged that linking all the groups together would have greater effect in order to pool expertise and knowledge and work together towards the same goal. One member of the newly-formed Boundary Bay Conservation Committee suggested that

*The first thing was to bring all the groups together, and even though they may have had some differences and a little bit of a different agenda, say let's work together, and do something about these threats which were coming to the Bay. So I tried to find out all the names of the groups and tried to put out a Christmas card in Delta from all the groups. There were very great silences at the end of the phone, so I said I'd show them the card and ask them if they'd like their name on it. Fine if you don't, there's no strings attached to this. It was very difficult for people because there'd been a history of different groups, and when elections come, groups split and that kind of thing. So the end result was that we did put out a card. We sent it out to all of Delta, the population generally. It went out to a lot of people. It was from all the groups and the big thing here was to get all these groups to agree to have their names together.* (2:2)
Many local residents belonged to several groups, so it was important to pool resources by the formation of a coalition, instead of fragmenting them as each small group tried to solve the common problem independently.

**Community cohesion.** Geographically, Tsawwassen is separate from its neighbouring towns and cities because of its location on a peninsula. It seems that its rural atmosphere, self-contained nature, and a slower pace of life than is found in nearby Vancouver, add up to community cohesion and neighbourliness which the residents find not only attractive, but essential in times of conflict. The newspaper editor thought that

> as much as anything it was a coalition of a variety of interests, and very bright and articulate people who were opposed to this who weren't afraid to do their homework and get the issues on the table and prevent the development from going through as it was constituted, so it was actually quite an amazing coming together of the community. Probably that was the catalytic factor which you don't normally see unless you've got a really big issue. (8:6)

One of the newer residents observed:

> It's very much a friendly community. We've been here four years, and just about everybody knows each other. It's not that they're nosing in on each other, but it's just that it's a small community, and you hear what's going on. You certainly hear it from the neighbours... Even when the city fathers tried to tell us what was good for us they didn't take into account that it's a small community, and it makes a heck of a difference that they sure didn't reckon with! (9:3)

Another respondent, who moved to the area from Europe over 20 years ago, was prompted to remark that

> Because the area is still small and self-contained there is the nearest thing to a European village feel to it, and in adversity everybody closes ranks and pulls together, while if everything's going well, the place remains a bunch of individuals going about their everyday business. (15:1)

Several other people also commented on the European-like atmosphere of the community, which added to its appeal.

**The time is right.** Steady growth of the environmental movement in recent years has brought out the need to consider the good of the commons as well as the good of
the individual in situations like the one at Boundary Bay. If people feel their common environment is under assault, even if their personal surroundings are not in immediate danger, a vested interest in the future will encourage participation in action to remove the perceived threat. Once a social trend has gained momentum, individuals tend to subscribe to the new attitude because ‘everyone else does’. We are presently moving out of the industrial age, where nature was to be tamed and exploited for the benefit of mankind, into the post-modern technological era, where an interest in environmental ethics, ecological economics, and sustainable development are coming to the fore, bringing with them a less anthropocentric attitude towards the world in which we live.

At first the development issue and the request for 18 new golf courses in the area to be built on wetland “which was no good to anyone until you drain it and do something with it” was only seen in terms of an increase in population density, the loss of valuable farmland, the probable social problems caused by a rapid influx of newcomers and the inconvenience of an over-burdened infrastructure. But then one speaker presented a brief to council putting forward the environmental argument, followed by another the next day.

When the hearings began they started with the main points that had been trotted out before, traffic, housing, too large a population, but the environment hadn’t really been mentioned as a consideration. I put forward the whole environmental question on behalf of our committee, and one of the radio reporters there called me out afterwards and said ‘this is a new viewpoint, this isn’t an angle we’ve had on this issue before’. (3:3)

and with that a whole new approach was taken to the matter, which proved to be very successful. The newspaper editor observed that

Rather than being environmental on the fringe, it became the forefront, with everybody saying it was very important, and that was always repeated. Do we need another 10,000 or whatever homes, and what does it do in terms of water quality, and what does it do in terms of the waterfowl going through Boundary Bay every winter, and what does it mean for the lost habitat in the Fraser River. So these all became major issues. (8:6)
Once these concerns came to light many people realized that, deep down, they knew these things mattered, but as is often the case with tacit knowledge, you do not know that you know it until someone brings it to the surface. This concern for the environment became the theme of a Christmas card sent out by the Boundary Bay Conservation Committee on behalf of its member groups which depicted a sunset shot of Boundary Bay and Tsawwassen, “Home of 18,000 people and 1,250,000 birds.”

Summary

The raw data obtained through interviews with members of the core group of the Boundary Bay Conservation Committee, their supporters, and interested people from the general public set the scene in which the action occurred. It shows that there was a significant amount of self-learning taking place, encouraged by the efforts of the Boundary Bay Conservation Committee which, as part of its mandate, attempted not only to inform the community about the contentious issues, but to educate at the same time in order to increase individual knowledge and awareness of the holistic nature of the problem. This desire on the part of the action group to stimulate self-learning was also aimed at generating ongoing individual lifelong interest in the environment and its many components, with the ultimate aim of creating a more caring society in the future.

The data illustrate how individual awareness is first aroused, and is built upon by the many learning opportunities which were, and still are, available within that community. It is also shown how informal learning takes place by appealing to cognitive, affective and skills learning domains, and how important emotions and vested interests can be as motivators. Much is learned informally and incidentally, some of which may be self-generated personal enrichment. This may then create vested interests, motivating people to become active to achieve the eventual outcome consistent with preserving that interest.

Not every educational strategy planned and carried out by the Boundary Bay Conservation Committee was equally effective. Some specific activities appealed more
to one segment of the community than another, so learning opportunities were created in a wide variety of formats, times and places in order to reach the widest possible audience. Whether or not the audience responded depended on many variables, which the data tried to elicit by interviewing those who partook of different learning opportunities as well as those who planned and promoted them.

The data also show the importance of the media and the effect they have in promoting awareness. If something is always headline news, or a considerable part of media output it will almost automatically gain prominence in the minds of the community, whereas if the media decide not to include the matter in their particular forum it may not ever reach high community profile. It can be seen from talking with members of the community that the media play a very important part in informing and educating, but at the same time the reader, viewer or listener must exercise judgment as to the validity of what is being read, seen or heard.

Lifestyles also dictate how information is received and remembered. When many people are involved in an ever-increasing pace of life, community action groups must be very aware of how to reach people with a message that will be retained. For this reason, too, learning opportunities must be multi-faceted and repeated many times in many places.

The literature suggests that persuasive communication and social marketing are important agents in raising awareness, and although these aspects are not acknowledged by those names, it appears from the data that community group activists are in fact aware of them and using them, albeit sometimes unknowingly. These are also matters that are learned experientially, through being an active member of a core group, since a great deal of peripheral learning takes place in order to get the job done successfully.

It can thus be seen that informal learning takes place in many ways and in many areas, not only regarding the issue in debate, but how to reach the public, how to reach politicians, and how the system works in order to be able to put the planned educational
strategies into action. The fact that the development issue became a major topic of conversation and discussion in the area for a considerable time indicates the extent to which learning did in fact occur.
CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION

Raising public awareness of an issue requires a deliberate attempt to educate the public by a core group, whether it be a community action group concerned with a social issue, or a government concerned with a constitutional one. The problem is still the same—how to ensure that carefully planned learning opportunities, created to encourage an amorphous public to become better informed, successfully reach their target. The instructional process is intentional, but the learning resulting from it is often unintentional and unpredictable.

This unpredictability of outcome separates learning from education, in that educational outcomes are usually reasonably predictable as the target audience, the students, are present in educational situations primarily for the purposes of gaining knowledge. In community settings, however, learning opportunities may be created and presented, but the potential learners may not participate, and if they do, the intention to gain information may not be their prime purpose for attending. Some knowledge acquired through being part of a community is what Fensham (1992) classifies as ‘commonsense knowledge’—knowledge which is taken for granted, seemingly obvious, and assumed that everyone else must surely know it too.

To ascertain what it was that people learned, and how they learned it, interviews were conducted firstly with members of the community action core group who created the learning opportunities, in order to find out what sources of information were available to the general public, and then members of that public were interviewed to discover which of the learning opportunities had impacted them, and why.

Non-formal events such as Open House presentations, town hall meetings, forums and debates, provided situations where both learning and teaching were intentional. Presenters and public alike attend to exchange ideas and information and to learn from one another, and are usually there more for the business aspect of the meeting than to socialize. By contrast, many types of informal learning opportunities were arranged to
encourage participation by a wide variety of people, interested not only in finding out about their surroundings and having fun while doing so, but perhaps participating more for the social aspect of being with friends in pleasant surroundings than for the primary purpose of learning. A third type of learning to be found in such community settings is incidental learning, described by Rossing (1991, p. 47) as “resulting from transactions in natural settings where the primary intent of the transaction is to accomplish the task, not to learn. Such learning may be intentional, but often is not.” Pre-conscious learning may also result, which is a term Jarvis (1987, p. 31) uses to describe “a form of learning that occurs to every person as a result of having experiences in daily living that are not really thought about, but merely experienced.” This is what Fensham (1992, p. 17) calls “common sense knowledge,” that is, “knowledge to be experienced, not described in words.” These forms of knowledge may have a particularly profound effect on creating vested interests, and Finger, (1989b) speaks of the importance of sensory perceptions of childhood and the desire to be able to return to or recreate those situations in later life.

Although not overtly stated by members of the community action group when discussing educational strategies planned to raise the profile of the problem, these many aspects of learning underlay events and opportunities presented to the public at the time. Table 2 summarizes settings, learning opportunities, and possible outcomes of the various types of projects undertaken by the Boundary Bay Conservation Committee during the period covered by this research.

Profile of the Community as Participants in the Action

The community studied appeared to divide into four sections which are similar to, but not the same as, those described by Houle (in Selman, 1990b) and Martin (1988) (Fig. 4). In this instance those four sections were firstly the core members of the Boundary Bay Conservation Committee who first saw the need to raise awareness within the community of a possible loss of natural environment in the face of development. This core group was supported in their efforts by the second segment,
consisting of active members, volunteers and other participants, who gave of their time, expertise and money to help spread the message throughout the community that there was a possible threat to be averted. A third section of the population was interested in what was going on, concerned, and involved in self-learning in order to reach an informed opinion, but was not actively engaged in creating learning opportunities or participating in the action directly. These people make up quite a large proportion of the community, but it is difficult to ascertain how much since they are the readers of newspapers and viewers of community television who do not write letters to the editor or call in to the television station. They may attend community events and meetings, but do not leave their names on mailing lists, or make themselves known in any way. Thus in this study they are referred to as ‘lurkers’, a term used in computing referring to those who read newsgroups but do not participate actively or identifiably. The last segment of the studied community are referred to as ‘non-participants,’ those people who for some reason do not hear about the issue, or do not have an opinion one way or the other. Again it is difficult to tell just how large a group this might be, for like the lurkers, they do not identify themselves in any way.

Outside the four main community groups are the politicians, who are the ultimate target audience for the community information, learning and education that occurs. The core group and supporters try to educate and inform the politicians directly through meetings, submissions and presentations, and indirectly through the media, and pressure from the general public. The dynamics of these communication patterns are shown in Fig. 2.

Role of Unplanned Events

At the same time as many planned learning opportunities and events were being organized by the core group, there were, as has been discussed in the previous chapter on Research Findings, other occurrences within the community which also became educational and from which much was learned, causing the issue to become very high profile through means over which the community had no control. In this instance it was
the long public hearings and actions of the municipal council which drew much
attention to the matter, causing it to become a major topic of conversation for many in
the community.

Although the core group could capitalize on the way things happened, it was the
media which disseminated this information and made it accessible to the community at
large, thus playing as large a part in the educational process as the organized efforts of
the Boundary Bay Conservation Committee. The core group, the general public and the
politicians were all learning the same thing at the same time, mainly from media sources,
the dynamics of which are illustrated in Fig. 3. This shows that the patterns of
information flow through the community are very different as a result of the two distinct
sources of learning. In the planned events sources of learning emanate from core group
activities, whereas in unplanned events the main source of information is the media.

Factors Affecting Communication Flow

From the Community Action Group

There are a great many uncontrollable factors impinging on the ability of a core
group to communicate successfully and consistently with the media and the public at
large (see Table 4). The size of the core group of activists is important, since too few
members will result in an overload of work to be done by each, leaving little time to do
all that may be necessary to ensure wide and constant dissemination of information.
Some social issues may be very specific, attracting only a small group of workers who
are prepared to put the necessary time and energy into the matter. In other communities
there is a limited population from which to draw, probably resulting in the same people
being involved in many roles. Few people can give unlimited time and energy to any
one cause, and thus it becomes essential for success to spread the load between as large
a number of committed workers as possible, constantly recruiting new members to the
core group who will replace those who have to drop out for one reason or another.
Another necessity for success is the availability of resources which can be consulted when necessary. Initially core group members must familiarize themselves with such resources, knowing who, what or where they are, how they can be accessed, and how they can best be used as educational tools in the campaign. This knowledge must also be kept current, and becomes part of the self-directed learning or peer-learning in which core group members must constantly engage in order to keep on top of the situation and be in the best position to help others learn.

In the case of the proposed housing development and golf courses at Boundary Bay, there were many small, independent action groups which sprang up to defend particular interests, such as the Homeowners Association, the Great Blue Heron Society, the Fraser Wetlands Habitat Committee and others. These groups were all drawing on the same small population for members, were all concerned in their own way for the health and welfare of the same area, and in many cases were duplicating their efforts without being aware of it. Forming a coalition, which became the Boundary Bay Conservation Committee, gave all these small groups a forum for sharing concerns, knowledge, resources and members, creating a strong working group which could draw attention to itself, and to the issues it was trying to promote, gaining credibility through its actions. Situations conducive to forming such coalitions do not always exist. Some community action groups spring up to defend one particular concern, and there are few, if any, other groups forming around the same nucleus, and thus the work which must be done both to attain the goal and to achieve credibility is much greater in terms of demands on the core group involved.

In order for communications to be successful, a community action group must be able to ‘read the mood’ or the feelings, of the community in which they are working. This is important if messages are to be meaningful to listeners, gaining their attention and support. It is very much an uphill battle if the community as a whole is not particularly upset about a problem around which the action group is working, and the effort may soon fade for lack of support. Not only must the community share the action group’s
concern, but the general social climate must also be conducive to whatever action is planned. Some groups fail initially because the time is just not ‘right’, those who are ahead of their time must give the rest of the community time to catch up before trying to raise the issue again. Much depends on the critical mass of support available in the first instance.

Finally, any action group must be credible in the eyes of the community it is trying to reach. It must not be so radical that it fails to attract mainstream members, and it must work within the currently acceptable limits of the society of which it is a part. Once the general public feel they can trust an action group to act in their best interests they will provide support in many ways, and the action group in turn has the benefit of being able to make whatever moves are necessary within those limitations. Eventually, people will begin turning to such action groups to seek help for similar concerns, since groups with experience of working on an issue over a period of time have themselves become a resource for others. One member of the Boundary Bay Conservation Committee recalled that

*I had a phone call from somebody I know who was phoning on behalf of his brother-in-law who was trying to fight Barnston Island golf course, and wanted to know how to set about it. So I told him to start with public education, get people wanting to save it, and then just hope that that’ll multiply to have the effect, plus, at the same time you’ve got to do your political lobbying, and write your letters, and get your facts.* (3:4)

From the Media

With regard to media dissemination of information on events planned by the community action group, there are many variables which affect whether or not a particular event gets column space or air time. A few of these can be controlled to some extent by those who initiate the information, but many cannot. Some cannot even be controlled by the media themselves, as plans may be pre-empted by unforeseen circumstances.
One of the main concerns of the Boundary Bay Conservation Committee, and it seems to be a concern shared by others who generate press releases, is the way in which the media edit material they are given, or take extracts out of context, reducing the effectiveness of the message. As well as trying to educate the community by using press releases as a channel of communication, members of the core group were equally concerned with educating media personnel individually, trying to determine how to write press releases which would not get edited. If editing was necessary, then core group members were concerned that the media should know enough about the issue to edit without rendering messages ineffective before being published or aired. At the same time, members of the media are concerned with column or air space available, political correctness, and providing a balanced viewpoint, and are thus reluctant to publish verbatim, any press release they receive. According to the present publisher of the local newspaper:

*News releases are good to have. Sometimes they are a little self-serving. We edit them—we might get news releases from businesses or environmentalist groups which you wouldn't run verbatim. If they're in the news pages they're supposed to be balanced.* (8:3)

Editorial policy also dictates what is published and what is not. As was seen in this case study, the original local paper in the area was at that time owned and run by a developer who would not report on the public hearings and did not accept press releases or letters from those who opposed his stance. That was one of the factors which angered the community and became a motivator for developing pro-environment sentiments. The other newspaper which started operations during that period adopted more of an environmental editorial policy, although they tried to maintain balance in their reporting and in their Letters to the Editor column.

*Initially, when the hearings were going, and the vast majority (of the community) were opposed to the development, the bulk of the letters we got were in opposition to the development. So we didn’t run all of them—some of them were submissions which had been made to the public hearing, c.c. to the newspaper, and they went on and on and on—so we didn’t run those. But we made a point of running any letter that we ever got in support of the project. The vast preponderance of those that came in were opposed, so those were edited down or not run. Anything that*
came in supporting the project we ran. There weren’t that many, but it was fair to put the other viewpoint. (8:5)

There were other instances where availability of staff played a role in whether or not some important piece of information was reported. Local media are quite limited in their personnel, and may not be able to provide coverage of events which the community action group was staging. Not only were planned events sometimes not reported as hoped, but serendipity also played a part on what was reported at the public hearings which were such a large part of local life at the time. A member of the Boundary Bay Conservation Committee reported that

The environment hadn’t really been mentioned (at the hearings) as a consideration. People weren’t thinking of it in terms of the environment and Boundary Bay, they were thinking of it in terms of houses. ... The first person to speak on the environment was something like the last speaker on the second night, and he was the first one to start listing out that this was a good area for birds, and part of the Boundary Bay ecosystem. But I spoke earlier on in the evening on the third day, and even things like that are crucial in terms of media coverage. The first speaker (on the environment) was giving a really important speech, but it was late at night, 10.30 or whatever, so it wasn’t covered in the media because they’d all gone home. But I was lucky enough to be on at just after 7 p.m., so you had tv. coverage, and the reporters were there ... In fact one of the reporters called me out afterwards and said this is a new viewpoint, this isn’t an angle we’ve had on this issue before. (3:3)

For the media to have covered an event, received a letter to the editor, or been given a press release was still no guarantee that the information will be published or aired. As with the letters referred to earlier, those which were repetitious of others or unduly long were not considered for publication in view of space limitations. Another criterion by which articles and information are judged is their newsworthiness, appeal to the target audience, and whether or not items will be obsolete by the date of publication. Local newspapers and community television are more likely to find space for matters of limited interest to a wider audience, but provincial or national media have to be much more selective. Television stations may relegate local news to the late night edition, and owing to early printing deadlines, articles published in large-circulation magazines may
not appear for several months, by which time their immediate motivating effect is lost, and they become more a matter of benign general interest.

**From the General Public**

Much information is diffused through the community by way of social conversation. When a matter becomes a common talking point it is discussed by many people in many places, even strangers engage in exchanges at bus stops, supermarkets, or anywhere else where casual contact occurs. It becomes the focal point of discussion around the dinner table, at coffee break, whenever people gather at home or at work. In this way those who had not been previously drawn into the issue become cognizant of it and aware of the feelings of those around them, until before long it is assumed that ‘everybody’ knows about it, and is discussing it.

Among the ways in which the general public shares knowledge is to initiate newcomers to the district in matters of local importance. This occurred readily in Tsawwassen, which was felt by residents to be a friendly neighbourhood, where people cared deeply about their personal and general environment. It seems in this instance that alerting newcomers to a potential problem provided motivation to conduct personal research into the matter, initiating self-directed learning through enquiry and observation. Having become more knowledgeable, people then converse with others on the subject, confirming their own internal viewpoint in so doing while perhaps changing or strengthening the beliefs of their conversational partner at the same time.

In any community there is also a conversational undercurrent flowing in the form of rumours via the ‘grapevine’. Information diffused in this way is usually unsubstantiated, from sources which may or may not be acknowledged and probably cannot be verified. Nevertheless, knowledge shared this way is more often right than wrong, and the efficiency of the grapevine should never be overlooked as a source of information. “It is particularly important to understand the nuances of the informal
network because so much information travels along these non-prescribed channels” (Zaremba, 1988, p. 10).

As knowledge of a subject grows, so attitudes, values and beliefs become adjusted in light of new information received. Many people in the area started with values favouring enhancement of the natural environment as it was at present rather than developing productive farm land and bird habitat for housing while there were still areas elsewhere in the Lower Mainland which, if similarly developed, would involve less drastic impact on present conditions. The Boundary Bay Conservation Committee was therefore promoting a message congruent with their beliefs, and found little, if any, opposition, as was evidenced by the result of the citizens’ referendum, which resulted in a 94% poll against rapid development of the area.

How Awareness was Raised

There were six main findings, about how awareness was raised in this particular case study, each of which will be discussed in turn.

Getting People Involved

There is more than can be done by any one small group of people, no matter how energetic or dedicated, when trying to persuade politicians or bureaucrats to alter unpopular decisions or adopt new ways of thinking. Decision-makers are no longer seen as paternalistic benefactors of community welfare, or even as putting the concerns and interests of their constituents first when deciding on a course of action. For this reason citizens challenge unpopular decisions, or lobby for change which may be slow to arrive. Consequently hostility in the population today often replaces docility, and thus we have seen the growth of citizens’ action groups over the last thirty years.

Politicians respond to pressure, and pressure comes from several sources. One source is numbers of constituents voicing dissatisfaction, and another is wide media coverage of unpopular decisions that have been made and the actions being taken by the community to overturn them. Thus community action groups have learned that
gaining wide support throughout the population is essential to getting their message heard and acted upon. The Boundary Bay Conservation Committee is no exception, educating and informing members of the community to become knowledgeable firstly for their own sakes, to encourage adopting or strengthening shared attitudes, values and beliefs by which decisions should be guided, and secondly so those common attitudes and values could be transmitted en masse to the decision makers. Volume and numbers are important in making such appeals, and therefore actions which produce volumes of noise or numbers of letters are those which attract the attention of both the media and the people in power. For each voice heard, or letter received, politicians assume that there are ten others who feel the same way but remain silent, and these numbers represent votes at the next election. If enough people represent a single point of view their appeals have a greater chance of being heard by those who make decisions than if only a few people speak up.

Thus getting the community involved is very important for the success of any grass-roots movement. People in Boundary Bay were encouraged to become volunteers for one of the many community groups which abounded in the area. They were asked to help with distribution of flyers, with participation in letter-writing campaigns, and with public speaking anywhere from town halls to shopping malls. Because the community in Tsawwassen is fairly homogeneous and share many of the same values, it was not difficult to enlist volunteers, who in turn persuaded their friends and neighbours to become involved also. As one respondent pointed out, in good times the community goes about its own business, each person an individual, while in times of need they close ranks and pull together towards a common aim. So when one person asks another to volunteer help they are likely to get a positive response.

Involving people not only serves the purpose of sharing the work load, but it also means that the community issue is the centre of their attention and therefore important to them, often leading them to self-directed or peer learning to find out more. It may also
lead to the creation of personal, or vested, interests in the final outcome if one does not already exist. Martin, (1988, p. 210) states that

*It is generally thought that knowledge by itself would lead to changes in attitude and behaviour. Actually, it was knowledge in conjunction with some sort of active involvement with the issues, discussions, personal contact, participation in rallies, that swung many to believe in the cause.*

Armstrong & Davies (1977, p. 150) agree that helping to teach others is not necessarily the only, or even the prime educational element of community action. They believe that

*What is more important is participation, where the groups are actually learning through doing, picking up practical skills and knowledge in their efforts to solve some of their more pressing problems. ... but significant changes are the ones that occur more profoundly in the minds of people. There is, then, a further educational process at work in the idea of participation and this lies in the field of attitude change. ... Attitude changing, through a praxis based on felt needs and self-help, is the bedrock of community development theory and certainly lies at the heart of community action.*

**Maximize/Create Vested Interests**

Before people, as individuals, are prepared to put a great deal of time and energy into a project, they must envisage some personal benefit accruing to them as a result. That is, there must be some intrinsic motivation to participate in any action. Extrinsic reasons for supporting a cause are not sufficient to maintain momentum over any length of time.

The Boundary Bay Conservation Committee was formed, originally, by people who were already concerned about either their own personal environment, or the general environmental well-being of the area. They were already motivated to work for preservation of wetland habitat, and the whole eco-system of which wetlands are only a part. Vested interests of other community groups lay in the prospect of increased traffic, slowing the daily commute to Vancouver even more than at present, the assumed increase in crime and social problems which a rapid population explosion might bring, or the need for more infrastructure to support any housing development, and the effect that would have not only on the land base but also on the tax base.
However, those who already held acknowledged personal concerns were only a small segment of the population in the first instance, as the majority of the community went about their daily lives either unaware of the changes which were about to be wrought, or unconcerned as to the effect it might have on them personally. Once word about council's plans started to get around through the various channels of communication used to raise awareness—leaflets, flyers, media events and conversation, people began to make enquiries about the plans and what the results might mean to them and their community.

The educational campaign carried out by The Boundary Bay Conservation Committee was aimed at raising to the surface the latent knowledge already within many individuals, who had presumably chosen to live in that area for the very attributes that would soon be lost if council went ahead with their plans. As was stated by one core-group member, "people are not keen to save something unless they appreciate it," so every educational effort was made to encourage and develop an appreciation for the area and what could be found there. The fact that people did begin to value and appreciate their surroundings more was evidenced by the noted increase in people walking the dykes, attending outdoor on-site workshops, and learning more of their own accord about the birds and animals they had seen.

One respondent, finding she had a heron rookery at the bottom of her garden when she moved to the area, immediately felt a responsibility to save the marshes and uplands which were heron feeding grounds. Other people noted that Boundary Bay was the only unprotected part of an extensive Pacific Flyway, which stretches from South America to Russia, and felt that this particular link in the chain was vital to the wellbeing of a huge population of waterfowl and shorebirds. If they enjoy seeing the sky filled with snow geese as they fly in from Wrangle Island, then they personally have to act to ensure the appropriate habitat is available to attract those geese every winter. Vested interests, then, can range from the esoteric to the mundane, but if they are personally meaningful they are powerful motivators to act.
Saturate Key Areas with Information

Saturation of key areas with information is one way to ensure that everybody knows about, or is aware of, an issue. It does not mean that people will necessarily become more knowledgeable, or more informed about the matter, but it does mean that they will have heard of it, seen it advertised, discussed with friends, or at the very least noticed it somewhere. Once saturation of the environment occurs, it is very difficult not to know about the issue. Since the means of purveying this information may or may not catch the attention of the target audience, it is very much an incidental method of getting information into the community, and depends on people noticing what they are seeing, or listening to what they are hearing, giving it at least some part of their attention if information is to be retained. Jarvis, however, does maintain that ‘pre-conscious learning’ will take place from just having seen the same message repeated in so many ways in so many places. That learning will be unintentional and tacit, but it will occur, nevertheless.

In this case study, information about meetings, social events, and educational activities of all sorts was posted on telegraph poles, sent round door-to-door, passed by word of mouth, and advertised in the local newspaper and on community television. The telephone network was another means of ensuring that as many people as possible were at least aware of the events, even if they were not fully familiar with the topic to be discussed. Once people became interested in learning more about the issue, or more about the local environment, they would actively seek out dates, times and places where further information would be available, so once personal or community momentum has been established the desire to know more, and perhaps become more involved, becomes self-perpetuating. Making sure that everybody is aware that there is a community problem is the start of the education process, which then goes on to inform and educate through the various planned events advertised on the posters and flyers.
Use Multi-faceted Educational Strategies

Although community action group members do not generally have time to think through their educational strategies in detail, most groups think of a variety of actions which will draw attention to the issue and encourage people to learn more, at an individual level. It is important in community circumstances to appeal to sensory as well as cognitive learning, and to provide forms of education that will attract all age groups and interest levels.

Any community activity will involve the more usual, relatively formal educational opportunities which people attend with the intention of providing knowledge for the audience, or acquiring knowledge from the providers. These events are usually interactive, involving debate, question periods, chances to state a point of view, or present an argument from the floor, and usually attract those whose main intent is to become more informed. These types of serious functions probably mainly appeal to the more dedicated and involved members of the community, either from the core group or their active supporters.

In the areas of informal, and incidental learning, there must be some fun or enjoyment in the learning process. With informal learning the fun element may result from participation in the activity, whereas with incidental learning the fun activity itself is the attraction, with any resultant learning being coincidental to participation.

Events encouraging informal and incidental learning offered in this instance were many on-site workshops to explore the Bay, the dykes, watch and identify birds, walk the area generally to familiarize people with places they may not normally visit, get people out on their bicycles and bring their families with them. Social events provide a break in all the hard and demanding work which goes on in community action, encouraging people to support the cause with money paid by way of tickets to festivals, dances, auctions and other organized activities. These events also give an opportunity for the core-group to look back on what has been achieved, even if the battles are still ongoing. Such breaks in routine are very necessary to keep momentum alive and to
recognize the effort of many people while also providing media opportunities and thus keeping the issue high profile in the community at large.

All learning may help to create vested interests, but sensory learning in particular has an important role to play in creating memories upon which such interests are sometimes based. One may recall the sound of thousands of geese honking as they come in to land, or the visual impact of a blue sky crowded with white wings flying over the nearby shore. There are many such instances that are very meaningful to the individual, and become the base for taking a personal interest in preservation or re-creation of that particular environment. Using strategies which will incorporate the chance to learn through seeing, hearing, feeling, smelling or tasting something firsthand is creating a reason to care whether such experiences can be repeated again another time.

Informal learning is one of the most common ways of accumulating knowledge, and that accumulation of knowledge need not remain just a random collection of trivia, but may through some incidental catalyst eventually link together and become educational. Because it is never known what may act as a catalyst for whom, the more learning opportunities with which an individual is presented the more chance there is that many small pieces of information may coalesce into some larger piece of useful knowledge.

Whatever the form of learning opportunity presented, members of the community should be encouraged to question, critique, and compare the various pieces of information they receive. Learning resulting from reflection in action does not cause a closed circle as suggested by Kolb (1984) but more of a spiral, in accordance with the model suggested by Burnard (1988), thus critical reflection and practical experience encourages further learning, which in turn inspires the learning process to continue. Members of the Boundary Bay Conservation Committee were certainly aware of the value of encouraging critical reflection throughout the community, as they deliberately tried to ask provocative questions at the appropriate time to cause people to think and to question. They did not want to tell people what to think. Their aim was to present the
facts, admit their environmental bias, and then ask people to consider the information they had and make their own decisions.

Take Advantage of the Unexpected

In this particular case study unexpected incidents were equally important as the planned strategies in providing learning opportunities about the issue. Action groups can gain considerable advantage from taking note of other high-profile events occurring in the community at the same time and using them as teaching tools if the opportunity allows. In this instance the public hearings before council during the summer of 1989 took up so much of people's time, either by being present or watching live community television transmission of proceedings, were reported so widely in the media, once the second newspaper became established, and were a primary topic of conversation for many that they doubled the effectiveness of the BBCC's educational campaign. The enormity of community involvement at the time meant that the public hearings were one reason why the area became saturated with information. The pro-environment community newspaper which was delivered to the doorstep twice weekly carried reports of submissions presented to council since the last edition, and ran Letters to the Editor which gave vent to people's feelings. Through radio and television phone-in shows members of the public had unfettered access to Federal, Provincial and municipal politicians, so they could present their opinions directly and unedited. This also gave people the chance to speak to the community as a whole while ostensibly addressing the politician taking the calls.

The depth of community anger was another unexpected side-effect of the way council was conducting business. Anger is a great motivator, and sharpens people's critical faculties. It caused close attention to be paid to the way things were being done, what was being said, to whom and by whom. There was not only anger towards council itself, but towards the developers for the way they had acted. The housing development plan aroused considerable ire in its enormity, and the golf course development was an
irritant for two reasons. Firstly, land was being removed from the Agricultural Land Reserve with little regard for due process. Secondly the number of courses planned for a small area was overwhelming, and the value of the land to be used had not been assessed in other than economic terms. This very palpable anger was so much on the surface of the community that direct and concerted action by residents of the area was inevitable, resulting firstly in the citizens' referendum, and secondly in the replacement of all but one of the incumbent councillors at the next municipal election.

Discussions arising on the street, or events completely unrelated to the issue, may also present opportunities for providing information, answering concerns, or setting mistaken records straight if activists are able to make use of situations which present themselves unexpectedly or out of context. For example, one evening the then-Chairperson of the Boundary Bay Conservation Committee was attending a social gathering and was looking forward to a pleasant time with like-minded people.

I was at a World Wildlife dinner and I thought I don't need to talk about Boundary Bay or anything. I'm going to have a nice meal with people that are all bird or wildlife people. The husband of the woman I was sitting next to started when I let out that I was with the Boundary Bay group, he started in at me—why are you trying to stop golf courses? And we had to have a full-scale argument on golf courses. He was from out of town completely, somewhere other than B.C., but he'd heard something about it. He knew enough about the group to know what the vague issue was, he was totally misinformed on a lot of points, which I was happy to put him right on, but by this stage, four years on, it had got to quite a lot of people. (3:3)

To be able to benefit from situations which seem disadvantageous at first may also help the cause. When Delta municipal council unexpectedly scheduled hearings to start earlier in the evening than normal, meaning that commuters returning home from Vancouver would hardly have time for supper before having to appear to present their briefs, the community responded by setting up pot-luck suppers at City Hall so people could go directly to the hearings and get something to eat on arrival. This in turn became a publicity-seeking occasion, which further helped to raise the problem's profile. In
order to take advantage of the unexpected, individuals must be quick-thinking, flexible, and able to organize events very rapidly.

**Take Advantage of Socio-cultural Trends (The time is right)**

Unless there is already a certain amount of latent, or tacit, knowledge of an issue which can generate empathy for its promoters it is very likely that what appears as a radical idea to the community will gain little or no support. Even the United Nations Charter of Rights failed to receive attention the first time it was presented because, its author stated, the time was not right. Some groundwork must already have been laid in order that radical ideas become acceptable to mainstream communities, and very often this groundwork has been provided by earlier new social movements which may have remained on the fringes of society for several decades. Attitudes, values and beliefs promoted by new social movements are not adopted easily by society as a whole, but after twenty, thirty or more years, when enough time has passed to allow for a gradual diffusion of new ideas and a certain percentage of the population avows the values openly or subconsciously, movements gain their own momentum and become unstoppable (Senge, 1990).

The Boundary Bay issue is a beneficiary of the environmental movement, which began as a radical, hippie idea in the 1960s, became evident in the ‘flower children’ of the ’70s and the ‘back-to-the-earth’ movement in the early ’80s, and then, following the publication of the Brundtland report, moved into mainstream, conservative society in the mid ’80s and early ’90s, when environmental awareness and sustainable development became the buzz-words of the era.

Consequently values have been shifting, to some small degree, from materialism and anthropocentrism, to environmental sustainability and concern for preservation of natural resources. A few decades ago marsh land which had not been ‘improved’ or made useful to man was considered worthless, with little consideration for the wildlife it supported or the aesthetic value it could offer. Now the change in values has moved
beyond the fringes of society, and there is opposition to many development proposals which are seen as a retrograde step, when previously there would have been no conflict of opinion. Being able to take advantage of the fact that the time is right is a major factor when trying to create a change in attitudes and values, which is what the Boundary Bay Conservation Committee was hoping to achieve in the councillors who were, until that time, enured in their old ways.

**Summary**

In analyzing the research data many factors were found to impact the success of a community action group's campaign to inform, educate, and eventually encourage a change of attitude in the target audience. In the first instance that target audience is the community at large, but ultimately it is the politicians and decision-makers whose attitudes and values apparently conflict with those of the electorate they serve.

The data serve to show factors affecting communication between various segments of the community—the core group, the media, the general public, and the politicians. Much of the success or failure of educational campaigns such as the one carried out by the Boundary Bay Conservation Committee depends on an ability to communicate well with all sectors in order to get their support. By saturating the area with information, word got around that there was a problem of concern to most people in the area, and that action would be required from all who shared a value which differed from that held by the decision-makers who were about to cause radical change.

Getting people involved in helping to promote the issue has more value than just the obvious. Involvement and education are closely linked, both the education of self and the education of others. Thus one way of helping to achieve the goal is for the core group to avail itself of all the help it can get, creating a greater pool of people to diffuse the message through the community. Although the educational strategies were planned and organized, the informal and incidental learning they aimed to create is by definition unsystematic and unorganized as learners are free to avail themselves of it or not, as they
choose. But in spite of unpredictability of outcome, these two types of learning constitute much of the everyday learning taking place outside the formal education system, and do seem to be effective in promoting the diffusion of information.

Once a modicum of knowledge reached the community in the Tsawwassen area there was a concerted effort on the part of many individuals to learn more through their own research and discussion with friends and neighbours. This self-directed learning may, in some cases, have led to the presentation of briefs and submissions at the public hearings, as people became more informed and willing to state their views. As wide a variety of learning opportunities as possible were presented to the community in order that a very diverse target group, consisting of young and old, newcomers and long-time residents, could be reached successfully.

As anger mounted in the community the education process intensified. People wanted more than anything to see the development plans quashed and council replaced. Everyone had their own reasons for not wanting the plans to go through, and organized direct action was seen as a means of educating the politicians, who seemed impervious to all other forms of approach. The community action group took advantage of the unexpected, using both the anger stirred up by council procedures and the council process itself to further educate and inform the public, although without the incidental help of community television, whose regular mandate it is to transmit live broadcasts of council meetings, the task would have been much more difficult.

A final factor which may have helped the cause of raising environmental awareness was the ability to ride on the wave of growing acceptance of attitudes and values which were not prevalent in earlier decades. Social needs and demands are changing, and years of foundation-laying by radicals have paved the way for society as a whole to adopt new ways of looking at individual and collective lifestyles, with more emphasis being placed on quality of life in general rather than quantity of material goods accumulated in particular. Not every community action group can find a socio-cultural trend to fit their cause, but where one is evident, it should be used to advantage.
CHAPTER 6
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Purpose of the Study

This study set out to determine how a community action group raises public awareness for its cause, through studying how planned educational strategies of a community action group lead to informal and incidental learning amongst the general public. Often such learning is not just for informational purposes, its aim is to change individual attitudes which results, in time, in a societal change of attitude.

The main problem around which the study centred was the question of how learning takes place where the instruction is intentional but the learning is generally unintentional. Instructional exhibits and displays can be very carefully structured, planned and carried out to purvey a message to the public, but the public might not respond as desired, taking only a passing interest in what has been so carefully prepared to attract their attention, rapidly dismissing the matter as unimportant or of little priority to them personally.

In order to find an instance where deliberate educational plans were targeted towards an undefinable audience who were learners 'in passing' (Reischmann, 1986) rather than students in the usually accepted meaning of the word, the educational activities of a community action group was chosen for study. There was a social issue of concern, in the first instance, to a few people who were aware of what was happening, and who thought the whole community should be alerted as they too would be affected by the eventual outcome. The job of this initial core group was to inform their neighbours of the potential problem, and create an awareness of what it would mean to them and how it could be dealt with satisfactorily. The ultimate aim was to educate and inform local politicians that their present attitudes and values as shown in their decision-making were not acceptable to the electorate.

Since most people are busy living their everyday lives, going to work, looking after the family, and being involved in leisure activities and pursuits, there is little time or
interest for finding out about the many municipal decisions which may affect one's life adversely. Once people have cast their vote at the ballot box, they feel they should be able to relax and leave government of their area to their elected officials who, it is trusted, will make decisions for the good of many rather than for the benefit of a few. However, politics is not like that any more, either nationally, provincially or municipally, and consequently there are many ‘watchdogs’ who monitor bureaucratic decisions and events which take place behind the scenes.

In the case of the Boundary Bay Conservation Committee, their problem was to alert the people of Tsawwassen and Boundary Bay that plans were being made between developers and the municipal council, which were not well publicized, to build high-density housing on what was thought to be good arable land, and to create 18 new golf courses in and around Boundary Bay, on wetland habitat and supporting upland used by millions of migrating shorebirds and waterfowl as a stopover and wintering ground on their migration up and down the west coasts of North and South America.

Having alerted the community that there was a problem, the next stage in the educational process planned by the Boundary Bay Conservation Committee was

...to change the general community attitude from one of passive acceptance by the public of so-called ‘progress’ which was actually destroying the landscape to a watch-dog role, which sought to guard, educate, change attitudes, and lobby politically. (3:2:2)

The final step, in the short-term, was to then try and change the attitude of politicians who were making decisions with which many of the electorate did not agree. In the long-term, the educational process is ongoing both within the community at large, and in the political arena, with the aim of negotiating long-term land use plans which will reduce the conflicts existing between developers and environmentalists.

Methods Used

In order to discover how learning diffused through the community it was necessary to know what educational or instructional strategies were being used by the community action group to attract the attention of the general public. Members of the
Boundary Bay Conservation Committee were interviewed using semi-structured informal discussion to elicit information about their planned tactics and how they carried them out. But the fact is that something deemed interesting by one party will not necessarily be seen as interesting by the intended target audience, and whether learning takes place depends entirely on how the message is received and perceived.

These learners do not fall into the usual category of learners in that they are not 'students', they are people going about their everyday lives. Any learning taking place is usually unintentional or incidental as they go about their daily tasks. They may, as a result of casually absorbing some information, then become involved in self-directed learning in order to find out more and become more knowledgeable, but they may, equally, absorb that information and almost immediately forget about it as something more important takes precedence. The work of a community action group is successful if that information is absorbed, reflected on, added to an individual’s store of knowledge, and finally acted upon. Knowledge, without action, in the context of a community problem, is not enough. Knowledge on its own will not necessarily cause a change of attitude or change of behaviour. It has been shown (Martin, 1988) that knowledge, combined with action, is more likely to stimulate such changes.

**Data Collected**

Open-ended interviews were conducted with members of the Boundary Bay Conservation Committee to determine how they carried out their educational planning and campaign, followed by similar interviews with members of the actively interested general public, in order to enquire about the ways in which they first became aware of the matter, what further learning took place, and from what sources that learning came. In the course of enquiries it became evident that the two main media outlets in the community, the local newspaper and community television, played a very large part in disseminating information and even in the unwitting creation of attitudes in the area, and
therefore key members of each of those entities were also interviewed, to gain their impressions of how they saw the educational aspect of their particular medium.

Interview questions were altered and adapted as constant comparative methods of analysis were used to assess whether previous interviews were producing the type of information required. This method of adding or subtracting questions as was deemed necessary also enabled facts and events mentioned by one person to be included in discussions with subsequent respondents in order to verify events or to get a different point of view on the same matter. People rarely see the same event in the same light, and thus a range of interpretations gave a more holistic picture as seen from a variety of angles.

Since there is acknowledged bias in all questions asked, and answers given, this bias is admitted and no attempt is made to remove it. It is intrinsic to qualitative research and all analysis was done bearing this in mind. However, this study was not concerned with the substance of the action, the particular issue over which there was concern. This research looked at ways in which public awareness was raised under these particular circumstances, and the actual substance of the issue could have been any of a similar nature, forming the background matrix upon which the web of educational strategy is woven.

The Battle of Whiskey Run (Linton, 1977) depicts a similar situation in Pennsylvania where a community lobbied their council to rescind a decision made behind closed doors to fill in a popular ravine and turn it into a playing field which almost no-one wanted. This is, however, simply a short article reporting what happened, but the issue is exactly similar to that pertaining to Boundary Bay. The matter began when local housewives queried a large proposed expenditure in the council budget, and discovered what it was for. Linton (p. 65) reports:

*Ten years before, a project like this would probably have been greeted by many suburbanites as an enlightened, if somewhat extravagant, improvement. In 1971, however, there was an outpouring of indignation when the facts came out. It was greatest among two groups: people who lived near the park, and young people. One young man said that his whole life had been molded by having the wild park to play in as a child.*
That community also became aware of the power of education, for

_The Whiskey Run Rebellion has become a respectable conservation organization, conducting weekly nature walks and sponsoring an annual cleanup of Woodland Park and other environmental projects (p. 94)._ 

and, like the Boundary Bay Conservation Committee,

...

_Rebellion volunteers found the public and press very much aware of the need to protect environmental values. They found that government agencies will listen to ordinary people. They found that sparkling streams and unspoiled woodlands touch a deep responsive chord in people—even people who have had little opportunity to experience them. And they found you can fight city hall, and sometimes even win (p. 94)._ 

These excerpts are used to illustrate the fact that, as community concern evolves into community action, there are certain factors which are shared and can be generalized, bearing in mind the fact that “the cast and setting will be different” (Linton, 1977, p. 94).

**Findings**

Interviews were all tape-recorded, with permission, and following transcription and analysis, certain themes appeared which could be categorized. As these categories became apparent, careful coding of the data continued until most of each transcription had been coded into one of the six main categories which emerged. Although methodological literature suggests that categories should be discreet, so that no item of information can logically be put under more than one heading, it was found in this instance that some excerpts from interviews did, in fact, illustrate more than one finding. The six categories chosen to represent the findings are inter-linked, if not interdependent.

Once the data had been surveyed carefully or mined (Merriam, 1988), and direct extracts used to illustrate points made, it was discovered that there were still some informational gems which had been overlooked the first or second time of reading, resulting in a thorough mining of the tailings which were left after the original analysis
had removed most of the larger nuggets appearing on first perusal. This certainly illustrates the point that any qualitative researcher must become totally immersed in the data and become exceedingly familiar with them in order to extract the most from them (Merriam, 1988).

**Persuasive Communications and Social Marketing**

There were, in this instance, findings within findings. A review of communications literature had suggested that persuasive communications and social marketing were very important in getting messages out to the general public where the aim was to sell a change of lifestyle or change of attitude, rather than a material product. These concepts are borrowed by social movements from advertising, which in turn sprang from research in psychology, anthropology and the social sciences. Persuasive communications is concerned with the way messages are worded, illustrated or otherwise conveyed, while social marketing is concerned with how these communications are transmitted to the target audience.

Although these did not appear as major findings categories, there was evidence in transcript texts that community action group members were certainly well aware of the importance of paying attention to how, by whom, and through which channels their messages were diffused or disseminated into the community, even if acknowledged tacitly rather than explicitly. The founding chairperson of the Boundary Bay Conservation Committee illustrated this clearly when he said

*It depends a lot on the receptivity of the person. If you don’t agree with the BBCC’s approach, then everything we write is junk.* (1:14)

and:

*I know certainly we have spent enormous amounts of time writing pamphlets and trying to get them right, doing draft upon draft of visuals and using inside and outside help, and professional and non-professional people, all combining and agonizing over how to get things right.* (1:13)

When it came to presentation of information to the public he acknowledged that

*... everything has a built-in bias. The naturalists in the group naturally*
wanted to put the information forward in the best light, and so that
would be done, and then sometimes for the purpose of impact you want
to state the most negative case or the most positive case or whatever...
(1:10)

but the use of persuasive communications is very evident. The power of pictures was
also acknowledged by another former chairperson, who is also an artist and did many of
the drawings used in pamphlets and posters published by the Committee.

A pamphlet came out with pictures asking "Do you want Delta to look
like this?" and it's all green and pretty, with birds and things, "instead
of this?" a black and white picture hand drawn by an artist with
aeroplanes and cars and freeways and high rises and golf courses—a
total exaggeration with this beautiful landscape ... Very, very vivid
image just to create awareness. (3:12)

Social marketing, according to Kotler (1982, p. 490) "is the design,
implementation and control of programs seeking to increase the acceptability of a social
idea, cause, or practice in a target group." Having carefully crafted messages, they then
should be delivered in such a way that there is maximum comprehension by the target
audience (Manoff, 1985). That members of the Boundary Bay Conservation Committee
were aware of this, although they probably did not call it social marketing, is shown in
several ways. In one instance it was agreed to mail out flyers and brochures to local
households rather than have them delivered with the newspaper because, it was
suspected, something in the mailbox would get slightly more attention than yet another
piece of paper inserted with all the commercial flyers that have to be picked up from the
doorstep daily (2:4).

In order to increase the acceptability of a social cause by the target audience a
message must be congruent with the audience's values and beliefs, or must be so
persuasive that their present views, if conflicting, are seen to be no longer viable. Some
knowledge of audience background is necessary if messages are to be appropriately
molded for presentation. A hard-working member of the core group who attended many
public meetings in order to talk with people and hand out information said

Every time we go to a public hearing or meeting, the whole bent is
different so we have to do a whole new set of research and collation of
information in another way. (2:7)

However, while being aware that the way the information is delivered needs to be tailored to each specific occasion, community action group members stressed continually that:

We go again and again and again to meetings all over the place, and each time we have to present material. We always take the angle with everybody that these are the facts on Boundary Bay, and this is why it needs to be protected. We always go from that angle, and then we will focus in on what that particular meeting is there for. (2:7)

All the time community action groups, which traditionally have little money to mount expensive educational campaigns, are vying for attention with professionals of financial means. A member of the Boundary Bay Conservation Committee admitted that

You’re countering paid lobbyists, and that’s very difficult. There are some good salesmen out there, good people, they wine and dine them (the politicians), they threaten them. If they can’t do it the nice way then they do it the nasty way, which is what is happening in Delta now. (2:10)

That makes the task all the more difficult for those who are working so hard on a voluntary basis to make their voices heard by the politicians. The community readily listened to appeals from community action groups and made up their own minds about the preferred outcome of a contentious issue, but impressing the will of the community on politicians and decision-makers can be tremendously hard work, when some knowledge of social marketing and persuasive communication, whether tacit or recognized, is almost essential for, as was stated on a bumper sticker “The majority is not silent, the government is deaf.” That particular message was forcefully brought home to Delta Municipal government by means of the citizens’ referendum, referred to earlier. ‘Just knowing’ that these are some of the obvious ways to approach dissemination of information is the type of knowledge Fensham (1992) would call “commonsense knowledge.” It does not have to be taught, it seems to those who are involved in the action that this is the most effective way of achieving that particular goal.
**How Public Awareness Was Raised**

The six main findings emerging from this study are summarized in Table 2. These show that encouraging people to become involved in the action in one way or another not only encourages self-learning on the part of the involved individuals, but may create a vested, or personal, interest in the desired outcome if one does not already exist. Saturating key areas with information means that the average citizen can hardly fail to notice or hear about the action, either by reading about it in the local newspaper frequently, seeing posters, bumper stickers or t-shirts around town, or hearing their friends and neighbours talk about an issue which becomes a major topic of conversation. Through a variety of activities which were planned throughout the year, both indoors and outdoors, serious or entertaining and informative, as many members of the community as possible were reached to raise awareness of different aspects of the problem. Fund-raising activities encouraged people to socialize, enjoy an activity such as bike riding, bird identification, or buying art at an auction, while at the same time causing those who attended to become curious about where the money was going and what it would pay for. Such events were attended by the community at large, including those who were deeply involved and those who may know little or nothing about the issue, where chance conversation becomes the channel for communication.

Other learning opportunities attracted different segments of the local population, from the very young to the elderly, and from the newcomer to the long-time resident. The target audience, in this particular instance, was everybody, and therefore a wide range of events was needed in order to appeal to as many participants as possible. Sometimes unexpected opportunities occurred, either locally, or far outside the context of Boundary Bay and its surrounding area, which could provide a forum for discussion of the issue, and instances of such situations are illustrated in Chapter 4.

It was also discovered, on analysis of the data, that because of the environmental nature of the issue under discussion in Boundary Bay, the community action group was
able to ride the crest of a wave of rising environmental awareness over the last three decades. Changing attitudes and values is a very long-term project, and the fact that new social movements have been embracing the concept of protecting the global environment, as well as showing concern for one's personal surroundings, for quite some time was beneficial to the Boundary Bay Conservation Committee's cause. To be able to take advantage of the time being 'right', sometimes referred to as 'jumping on the bandwagon' is tremendously helpful as, by this stage in a societal attitude change there is often tacit, if not yet open acceptance of the new ideas, and it is therefore a little easier to persuade people that, since the majority now thinks this way, it is time they too shifted their attitudes or acknowledged that, deep down, they had already partly accepted the changing trend.

Conclusions Reached Through This Study

On the Importance and Place of Informal and Incidental Learning

One of the main conclusions coming out of this research is that adult education and lifelong learning are all alive and well and to be found in community settings such as the one upon which this study is based. That they are not organized, in the professional sense of adhering to a carefully constructed curriculum, or necessarily systematic or sequential in the way learning opportunities are presented, does not reduce their efficacy or popularity. In situations such as the Boundary Bay case study, it is not necessary for professional adult educators to intervene, as some authorities suggest is advisable (Boggs, 1986; Dean & Dowling, 1987).

The people who participate in or actively support community action groups learn a very great deal as they go about the business of informing themselves in order to be able to pass that information on to others. This learning is not restricted to the issue at hand, but incorporates the political process involved in dealing with it, and many other peripheral matters, depending on the particular problem. A respondent who is a founding member of the Boundary Bay Conservation Committee made the following
observation, which is quite enlightening on the issue of spin-off learning which took place:

One important issue is how the local people became educated about farmland through the TDL hearings and the golf course issue. We learned about the ALR (the Agricultural Land Reserve), the ALC (the Agricultural Land Commission), the Order in Council 1141 (which permitted using agricultural land for golf courses without removing it from the ALR) and about the role of farming in Delta—how important farming is to Delta’s economy—a $40 million per year business at that time. We learned about soil classification, nuisance birds, problems with farm machinery, farm roads and urbanization. We learned how little good farmland Canada has and how Delta and the Fraser Valley are so important because of the deltaic soils and climate. We learned about problems in California and concerns for future food supplies. As a result the people have more respect for farming, farmers and the ALR. In addition, people learned about the Pacific Flyway; the term Ramsar site; they learned about voles, and we learned that this area had international significance—the largest number of wintering raptors in Canada.(2:2:3)

These comments bear out Armstrong’s statement (1972, p. 26) that those involved in community action “will want to know about social processes, and public administration and planning and local government. Their groups will also be in the business of learning and teaching.” These are all aspects of community action that are learned experientially, on the job. It would be difficult to plan in advance any self-directed learning or officially organized course covering topics which might be needed by activists, because such knowledge depends entirely on what happens as the action progresses.

However, when speaking with people who have been involved in community action for several years one discovers how much those individuals have learned, often to their own surprise. Comments are frequently made to the effect that ‘I didn’t know what I was letting myself in for’ when looking back on an experience which has included learning how to make public presentations, how to understand the formalities of local, provincial or national government, how to gain access to bureaucrats, and the ‘nitty-gritty’ of what matters to all parties involved. None of what was learned could ever have been formally taught—even with the most carefully prepared curriculum. There are
still many aspects of life which seem to be most effectively learned experientially, informally and incidentally, and that this type of learning is pervasive and profoundly successful cannot be denied.

People not only learn informally and incidentally, they can in some cases eventually become experts as a result, with knowledge that can challenge any academic learning, and even surpass it in applicability, since it is knowledge emanating from the practical world of everyday life. Cann & Mannings (1987, p. 129) substantiate this, saying that “learning incidentally from equals is our normal way of learning and formal education relates to only a fraction of each individual’s learning needs.”

Another aspect of informal and incidental learning is the importance placed by many on learning through the senses; the role that sight, sound, feel, smell and taste can play in creating vested interests, bringing back memories, and making affective learning more effective because of its sensory character. This is what Fensham (1992, p. 17) describes as common sense knowledge, that is “knowledge to be experienced, not described in words,” as opposed to commonsense knowledge (p. 5), which he describes as knowledge which is “taken for granted, obvious and not worth stating to another.” No amount of discussion, use of photographs or slides, or playing of audio tapes can replace the actual experience of seeing or hearing something first-hand, and feeling the emotions associated with that experience. Photographs and other means of recalling memories can then help to recreate the associated feelings, but cannot by themselves engender those sensations in the first instance.

Common sense learning is a very powerful tool, as memories can be recalled after many years, sometimes by trigger factors which are so small as to be almost insignificant. Yet as memories return, and sensory learning is recalled, there is often an associated desire to protect whatever environment happened to produce those feelings. For example, people are now growing old fashioned roses again because they like the smell—such fragrance having been bred out of modern hybrids. Real estate agents are known to put bread in a warm oven during Open House in order to kindle the right
emotions in prospective buyers—that is persuasive communication, but not by using words. Many of the learning opportunities created by the Boundary Bay Conservation Committee included on-site workshops, where there was ample opportunity for informal learning through experiencing and discussing, while surrounded by sensory learning as participants saw and heard, watched and listened, to the very environment they had come there to learn about.

Informal and incidental learning must have an element of fun attached to it (Finger, 1989b). This is stated many times by those involved in community action. There must occasionally be some immediate reward other than the acquisition of knowledge. Workshops, social events and fund-raisers all become opportunities for enjoyment of the moment as well as a time for learning, and because of the informality of the situation it may be the enjoyment which takes precedence as the main reason for attending. This does not preclude learning, the two often go hand-in-hand. This is not to say that every informal learning opportunity should be fun-filled and frivolous, there are times when the tenor is more serious in intent and content, appealing to people in their reflective moments.

Summing up the conclusions reached from this study with regard to the importance of informal and incidental learning in a community setting, the words of Cann & Mannings (1987, p. 132) are still cogent in that “there is valid learning outside the formal educational setting and it needs to be brought in from the cold because the majority of people get their learning from it. This is where the current debate ought to be.”

On the Effectiveness of Saturating an Area with Information

When an issue is of prime importance to a group, whether it is a community action group or a national government, one of the key factors in raising discussion and debate amongst the general public is the fact that everybody knows about it because the subject matter appears on posters, in newspapers, as advertisements in every aspect of
the media, on lapel buttons, t-shirts, bumper stickers and anywhere else where the general public might casually read an article, listen to the radio or television, or see a familiar logo. Logos, in their way, are also non-verbal means of using persuasive communications, being associated with a particular cause, product or action. In fact over-saturation may be a problem, since people are often heard to remark that they are ‘sick and tired of hearing about it’, whatever ‘it’ might be, but at least they cannot say they remain uninformed of the issue. Finger (1989b, p. 28) notes that “the awareness that there is a problem in our relation with nature is drummed into personal or sometimes even professional surroundings, where environmental problems are discussed almost daily. It is therefore impossible for me to escape from this awareness.”

Such saturation of the environment stimulates debate and conversation at home, at work, at the bus stop, in the supermarket, and anywhere else that people gather, and as has been discussed earlier, conversation is a very effective channel of communication, persuasion, and confirmation for sharing attitudes, values and beliefs. Sometimes informal study groups may be created around more serious and wide-ranging issues, such as the national constitutional debate, or city planning, but debate at home around the dining-room table may be less organized but nonetheless informative and stimulating to those who participate.

Regarding Creation of Vested Interests

Saturation of areas with information has a lot to do with creation of vested interests. Controversial topics can cause people to become ‘hot under the collar’ about their feelings one way or the other, motivating people to persuade others to think, feel, and believe the same as they do because they have a vested interest in the outcome. Passions rise, tempers may even flare, as individuals have their own special reason for obtaining results they see as essential to restoring harmony to their world. Having a vested interest in an outcome is a great motivator, and even people who are usually passive and reluctant to become involved in controversy can be aroused to take a stand,
participate in non-violent confrontation, or even on occasions when feelings run strong, to break the law for what they see as a just cause. Saturation of the area with information and creation of vested interests are, in turn, linked with persuasive communication and social marketing. One does not necessarily create or cause the other, but there is considerable overlap and influence between them.

**Getting People Involved**

People will become involved in working for a cause if they have a vested interest in the results, and therefore they are willing to give time, expertise, help and money towards that end. Most people become involved in volunteer work such as is required by community action groups if they can anticipate a reward, either intrinsically in restoring equilibrium to one’s personal world and removing the cause of controversy or stress, or extrinsically in achieving the goal of the organization for which the work is being carried out. Involving people, especially newcomers to the area, in helping to solve a community problem may also help to create vested interests, if the individual has not had an opportunity to decide which side of the debate to support. Involvement therefore works to strengthen one’s dedication to the cause, or to help people make decisions based on experiential, informal and incidental learning through participation. It is knowledge, combined with action, that seems to create or confirm a change in attitude.

It is therefore felt that the conclusions drawn from this community action group case study show that informal and incidental learning occurring in everyday life can have long-term social consequences in terms of changed attitudes, values, beliefs, and, consequently, behaviours. Armstrong & Davies (1977) maintain that any change in attitude is a major by-product of participation in action group activities. However, the educational strategies used by the Boundary Bay Conservation Committee were deliberately aimed at informing the public in order to create a change in attitude, so in this instance it was not just through participation in the group’s activities or experiential
learning that attitudes were changed, it was also through informal and incidental learning taking place in the community as a result of the many learning opportunities which were carefully planned and carried out. Finger (1989a, p. 16) points out that "social movements must be considered as one of the best expressions of underlying social and cultural transformations. Such movements are often just the tip of an iceberg, introducing new values which will sooner or later affect entire societies." But it must not be forgotten that, as was shown in this study of the Boundary Bay Conservation Committee and its related action groups, including children in the learning process is crucial to achieving a long-term and lasting attitude change, and therefore we are discussing not only adult education, but also lifelong learning.

Relevance of Research Findings to Other Educational Dimensions

We are, at the end of the twentieth century, living in an era of profound social and industrial change. Ways of life with which we have become comfortable and familiar are being challenged by new social mores, and a move from an industrial economy to one based on science and technology. Learning is having to occur across all levels of society, and throughout many different societies in the world, as we now have to acknowledge that we can no longer afford to live in national isolation. Old attitudes, values and beliefs are being replaced by new ones. New, that is, to this generation, although some, such as the recent trend to see things holistically, is really a re-awakening of truths which were known to the Ancients.

At one time it was assumed that all the learning one needed to last a lifetime was obtained in school, but now this idea is visualized in terms of eating enough at breakfast to sustain one for the next twenty-four hours. School systems themselves are changing, to create learning conditions which encourage enquiring minds and problem solving rather than rote learning and concentration on static syllabi. Beyond the school system, whether or not one continues to tertiary education, there is still going to be a tremendous need for lifelong learning either of a professional or vocational nature, or
just to keep up with the everyday skills needed to competently negotiate daily life.

Thoughts are beginning to turn to re-introducing informal learning to the workplace (Marsick & Watkins, 1990), where value is now being placed on learning in situ, as it was in the days of long apprenticeships to master craftsmen, where both commonsense and common sense learning play a valuable part. More responsibility for educational upgrading is being placed on employers rather than vocational schools or organized continuing education classes for professionals, and thus there is a need not only to acknowledge the value of informal and incidental learning in these areas, but to promote their use without organizing them to such an extent that they become another variation of formal training. Informal learning has always existed in the workplace, but its value, until recently, has tended to be overlooked.

Questions are even being raised about the validity of allowing potential highschool ‘dropouts’ to finish their formal education in workplace settings, combining educational efforts with experiential learning on the job. Even some university degrees combine formal, non-formal and informal learning in co-operative programmes, where students are placed in work settings relevant to their studies, not only being paid a small amount for their labours, but gaining university credits for doing so.

Lifelong and informal learning is also needed to enable whole communities to cope with change from a modern industrial economic base to a post-modern technological base. In our own immediate environment in British Columbia some resource-based industries are either in trouble or winding down because of a change in demand, a lack of materials with which to work, or the increasing use of computerized machinery to replace human labour. Stringent economic times have also caused vast reductions in executive and middle-management workforces across the country and throughout the developed world. Each of these unemployed workers must be taught how to cope with life on a daily basis while at the same time becoming re-skilled with the hope of re-entering the workforce in a new capacity. There are formal, planned curricula for this purpose, but there is also a tremendous amount of learning which can
Many people are becoming entrepreneurial, learning their new business as they go along, seeking help where it is available. Many others have decided that a return to a new and different workforce is not the answer to their predicament, they are generally older, used to higher wages and salaries than some corporations can afford now, and see no prospect of working again before retirement. There are people such as Frithjof Bergmann (1983), and the New Work Society, who are trying to address such problems using any means within their power to encourage people to learn new ways of thinking, and to adopt creative ways of changing the 9–5 routine which has governed so many workers’ lives for so long.

Some evidence of changing attitudes is becoming apparent in a recent announcement by President Clinton of the United States that in the face of reduced need for armaments he would keep munitions factories running, making socially useful and acceptable products. This was tried in 1981 in Britain, and failed (Cooley, 1987), but perhaps twelve years later, in 1993 in another country, ‘the time is right’ and the idea might finally find a foothold in a more aware society. If such a change does in fact happen, it suggests that grass-roots movements to persuade decision makers to learn from suggestions made by workers may gradually be having some effect on official policies. It is not just the lower echelons of society who have to learn, become creative and change their attitudes, it extends throughout, from top to bottom, and no-one, however well educated, is immune from the need for further and continuing learning.

Not only is the current employment market an area which might benefit from creative ways of using informal learning opportunities, the field of community health is already having to attack new problems with new, or different, approaches to learning promoting lifestyle changes which may avoid known risks of diseases common to our society. People are encouraged to take personal proactive responsibility for their wellness, rather than succumb to illness for lack of knowledge or lack of application of the preventative measures that are within their power. Sometimes this involves major
changes in attitude and values, but when society has been saturated with the appropriate information, and time has elapsed in which learning and reflection can take place, societal changes in attitude begin to be manifested in changing social policies. The time becomes right for a major shift to general acceptance that new values replace the old. This can only take place, however, through constant use of persuasive communication and social marketing in selling a change of values to individuals until a critical mass is reached which, if Senge (1990) is correct, causes the movement towards acceptance of a new value to be unstoppable.

Much informal learning is also being used to promote environmental responsibility. Attitudes and values towards non-renewable resources are changing, and movements have been around for many years to encourage less use of packaging, more use of returnable containers, use of biological controls in place of insecticides and herbicides, the re-stocking of streams with fish after cleaning up water quality first—the list goes on. There is a great deal of informal learning happening in these areas, much of it through promotion by community action groups, but also in some sectors of the community there is a lot of self-learning taking place as people are anxious to find out more for themselves and then incorporate their learning into their personal lifestyles. Another area which has been using informal learning for quite some time is in the area of computers and ‘everyday’ technology that the public is having to become accustomed to as previous methods are being replaced.

Libraries now have computer catalogues, bank machines have become a way of life, and before long there may be opportunities to access transportation timetables, daily newspapers and other necessities of life through computer-assisted technology. People, especially those who have had little or no contact with computers, suddenly find themselves faced with the problem of learning how to use them or doing without the information they need, and informal learning and teaching is taking place all the time in these domains. There not only has to be learning concerning the use of these new technologies, there must also be learning to encourage overcoming the fear of finding
out how to use them. Amongst non-computer users there is considerable ‘techno-phobia’ which has to be overcome before people will even consider learning how to use them.

New attitudes and values are permeating everyday life in many areas at this time, all of which need a considerable amount of promotion before they become woven into the fabric of life and people wonder why anything different was ever acceptable. It takes years of promotion, persuasion, role modelling, and perhaps policy making and legislation until social attitudes change. Those that affect individuals personally may be easier to bring about because of the fact that vested interests are involved, but where attitudes are towards others and do not affect the individual directly, it may be a little more difficult to inculcate. For example, it may be easier to persuade someone to change their diet to conform with new health knowledge, whereas it may be more difficult to persuade that same person to be concerned about handicapped access to public buildings, or equality in the workplace. In such cases where wholesale conversion of attitude is eventually required, the media have a large role to play in keeping matters in the news, gradually saturating society with information which cannot be ignored.

**Implications for Practice**

Knowing that achieving attitude change is a long-term learning project, it should be accepted that knowledge increases little by little, over time, and as the new attitude becomes accepted into the mainstream it gathers momentum, sometimes exponentially. Short-term learning is important to deal with immediate circumstances and start the process of change, and acting on that learning helps to re-inforce acceptance of an attitude or value at an individual level. When others see action taking place, they too become aware of values being implemented, not just inwardly acknowledged, and thus this sort of learning may have a domino effect. For example, recently many sidewalk curbs at intersections have had wheelchair ramps built in so that disabled people can cross roads with the same ease as mobile pedestrians. While the work was being done
around the city it may have made a few people stop and think why all this was happening, and to consider what other obstacles the handicapped must face on a daily basis which the average person does not even notice. These are seemingly insignificant matters to most, and as Fensham (1992) states, they are taken for granted, apparently obvious, and therefore not newsworthy or a talking point since it is assumed that everybody else knows about them. But as was found in this research, trigger factors can be something very small, but important to the individual, and it is difficult to guess what might act as a catalyst for whom.

Because we cannot tell what will arouse an interest which may lead to learning and change of values, it is essential to create as wide a range of learning opportunities as possible on a consistent basis in order to promote, encourage and attain the eventual goal. On the larger scale, advertising can be used in conjunction with social marketing—the Participaction campaign is an example of this, encouraging people to adopt a healthier lifestyle through regular participation in physical activity within their capacity. Social marketing and advertising are closely allied, and used with sensitivity can both be educational. There are many more public service advertisements in the media now than in previous years, promoting changes in attitude towards drinking and driving, smoking, recycling, and many other aspects of life which depend, to an extent, on peer support for the new attitude.

Another invaluable aspect of informal and incidental learning is the way that two or more apparently unlinked pieces of information, even apparent trivia, can become valuable knowledge through some catalytic action which makes that information meaningful for one person, and yet another person may fail to see any connection. No learning, incidental, informal or any other kind, is wasted. It may remain unconnected for years before becoming linked and meaningful, but Archimedes was probably not looking for a theory about objects displacing their own volume of water when he stepped into the bathtub. Although as Jarvis (1987a) states, there is meaningful and meaningless experience, what is meaningful to one person might be meaningless to
another, and planned learning opportunities to encourage informal learning must acknowledge this and offer many ways of absorbing the same information in order to try to meet this challenge. In order for learning to occur, and thus for an experience to be meaningful, Jarvis (p. 168) suggests that

\begin{quote}
people have to think about it, reflect upon it and, maybe, seek other opinions about it ... Reflection is an essential phase in the learning process whereby people explore their experiences in a conscious manner in order to lead to a new understanding and, perhaps, a new behaviour. ... Reflecting is, however, a personal process. People reflect in different ways and they bring their own personal stock of knowledge to bear upon the experience. Sometimes that reflection may be of a cursory and superficial nature while at other times it may be deep, searching, and profound.
\end{quote}

As well as providing an opportunity to learn, therefore, there must also be an opportunity to think on it and discuss it with others. According to Blunt (1988, p. 50) “Learning has emerged as the key to ... enabling participation to occur.”

Gaining knowledge through the process of informal and incidental learning in a community setting, in conjunction with participation in activities, can play a very important role in creating a knowledgeable community and in changing social attitudes. Present-day democracy is much more participatory than it used to be, with many interest groups forming to discuss overall goals and plans to be presented to the politicians and bureaucrats who make the decisions governing that area. It is therefore necessary for such groups to be well-informed not only in the immediate matter under discussion, but also in the ways of bureaucracy, how to solicit opinion and be representative of their community, and in long-term goals as well as short-term plans.

Many such advisory groups are now being initiated by bureaucracy itself, as seen in Vancouver’s City Circles, which are voluntary groups set up to discuss ideas for the future city plan. In this instance such ‘study circles’ are non-confrontational and are offered help in the form of facilitators, meeting space, and any other services which may be required in aiding citizens to participate (Vancouver CityPlan, 1993). A local area residents’ association has similarly set up ‘Kitchen Table Sessions’ to discuss ideas for
planning future development of their area of the city with regard to housing, business areas, roads, traffic and any other issues seen as important to the success and well-being of the neighbourhood. Ideas from both the more formally organized CityPlan and the informal Kitchen Table Groups will be presented to Council for consideration and inclusion in future planning and legislation. Growth of these study groups indicates a desire by individuals firstly to become more knowledgeable about the needs of their community and the ways of bureaucracy, and secondly to have a more participatory role in their local government. At the same time the fact that this form of consultation is being used by bureaucracy shows recognition that there is much commonsense knowledge in the community which has remained until now an untapped resource.

Other interest groups dealing with specific social issues need also to be knowledgeable in legislation already in place, and in way of drafting recommendations for amendments to that legislation to accommodate changing social needs and attitudes. Self-help groups of all kinds are learning systems where informal and incidental learning play a very large part in furthering the needs of participants, and enabling them to help those in the wider community who share the same problems.

There is immense learning going on in these situations, amongst the participants of the discussion groups and between the spokespeople for these groups and council, when presentations are finally made. As people feel more included in their local government process, so they will be encouraged to learn more informally so that they can maintain and increase their participation. They develop vested interests in the outcomes of their suggestions for a more livable city or region, become more interested in what is happening in the area, and thereby create their own informal learning cycle. Encouraging people to participate in decision-making wherever possible empowers them to feel a certain amount of control over their destiny. To ignore the wishes of the electorate at this time is courting disaster, encouraging very knowledgeable grass-roots movements to act in confrontation rather than co-operation.
One area in which the Boundary Bay Conservation Committee were particularly successful was in encouraging people to think critically about all sides of the issue, and not rely on appeal to emotion in order to gain support. As one member of the Committee said:

A lot of the groups generally rely on emotion. ‘This is awful, the way our society is going, and we must reverse civilization, we’ve lost touch with our roots and lost sight of what we should be doing for the planet’ and so on. It’s good stuff, and it reaches a certain emotional level and that’s great. You’ve got to have people like that doing that sort of angle, but it’s no good going to a politician and saying we’ve lost touch with our roots! (3:4)

Members of the Committee stressed many times that they put the environmental facts before the general public and invited them to make up their own minds as to the worthiness of the arguments made against housing and golf course development. Members of the public also stated that they weighed the evidence from both sides carefully before making a decision. As one person put it:

I judged everything on its merits and asked questions all the time, weighing the evidence as to whether or not what I was reading or hearing was the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, and doing my own research on the matter before deciding what I felt about it and what I believed or disbelieved about presentations. (16:1)

It is thus important for community action groups and others involved in citizenship education is to encourage the development of critical thinking skills amongst the general public, not just those who participate in action groups, but everyone who wishes to be able to participate in the democratic process.

Critical thinking and analysis of information also extends to what is seen and heard in the media. Newspapers and magazines always have an editorial bias, which may be exercised to a greater or lesser extent, but information gained from these source must be judged as much for what is not written as for what does appear on the printed page. There are also various ways the visual media can manipulate interpretation of reality. For example, recent television news coverage of an environmental demonstration which became somewhat more confrontational than expected concentrated, in part, on filming
lengthy floor-level footage of the crowd in ragged jeans and sneakers. Without commentators saying anything, my interpretation of this presentation was “look at these unruly people, just look at the way they’re dressed, people who dress and behave like that can’t be presenting a rational, informed point of view.” Other people may have interpreted the scene very differently, but the media can be manipulative if one is not aware of the way editing may create bias.

Not only is bias found in the media—the Boundary Bay Conservation Committee acknowledged their bias from the outset. They provided information at meetings which put forward the environmental point of view, and if the public wanted to hear the developer’s side they would not look to the Conservation Committee to provide it. But if people are encouraged to question information received and become knowledgeable themselves about the matter, they are then in a position to make a firm and reasoned judgment as to their opinion. Opinions held as a result of critical reflection are more likely to be maintained and defended than those resulting from immediate emotional appeal.

One aspect of learning in community settings, and perhaps more especially where the issue is fairly intense and serious, is to introduce an element of fun and enjoyment from time to time, where people can relax, take time out to socialize, congratulate themselves on victories achieved to date, and take stock of what must still be done in the future. This was certainly evident with the issue at Boundary Bay, where the Last Straw Festival was held to provide some relief from the tension of waiting for Council’s decision on whether or not to go ahead with allowing the proposed development, against which the community action groups were working so hard. The seriousness of getting to the long public hearings every night on time was lightened at one point by the organization of pot-luck suppers at City Hall when the scheduled starting time was brought forward unexpectedly. Individual burn-out in these demanding situations can be quite high, and care must be taken to ensure that time is set aside to try to prevent that from happening.
Core group members of the Boundary Bay Conservation Committee stated that it was difficult to find people who had the time to be deeply committed to the action. This is usually the case with any action group—most people have busy schedules and are unable to devote the large amount of time it often takes to lobby politicians, attend meetings during the day, organize and run learning activities for the general public, produce and distribute information, attend media events or the see to the many ‘behind the scenes’ administrative details which keep community action groups running. Thus it is important to keep recruiting active members who can share the load, or take over when others have to leave. The strength of any organization lies in its people, and no group can exist for long on a small pool upon whom the entire burden falls.

In order to gain the public’s confidence, any new group must establish its credibility for the cause it supports in the way it promotes its message, the type of message it puts out to the public, and the reliability of its information. It is also necessary to be congruent with, or fit into, the beliefs and values of the public from whom support is being sought. In this respect the Boundary Bay Conservation Committee

*initially stood back, because some local people felt a “greenie” lobby could hurt their issue rather than help it. Ultimately the opposite proved to be true. (2:2:3)*

Originally the concerns of the many small action groups which sprang up against the development project were traffic, housing density, social problems and loss of quality of life on an individual basis. It was not until a member of the Boundary Bay Conservation Committee brought up the concern for the environment as a whole at the public hearings that the common good, as opposed to the individual good, became the more important factor. But once that point had been made publicly, it caught on immediately and it was on that issue more than any other, that all the educational strategies and lobbying were based. All the other concerns were still present, and still valid, but fell somewhat into the background once the major focus became the sanctity of the flyway and the changing of the Agricultural Land Reserve criteria to allow golf courses to be a
legitimate use of farm land.

Because of the good rapport created by the Boundary Bay Conservation Committee when it was at its most active, people began to rely on its members to make representations to Council, to put forward proactive ideas for future area plans, and to ask for official studies to be carried out before further decision-making took place. While most of the other smaller community action groups have disbanded as the immediate threat to the area has diminished, the Boundary Bay Conservation Committee has become more active and more prominent because it covers a wider range of issues than the smaller groups did. It has become acknowledged in the community as being proactive in negotiating with Municipal council and working towards an overall plan for the area which would reduce conflicts between the many and varied interests, such as farmers, hunters, environmentalists, the rights of the First Nations People, and other developers who now are looking towards expanding a nearby coal port into a container terminal. The mandate of the Committee has now changed from being very active in the short term to being consistently hard working towards long term plans for the overall good of the area, continuing with long-term educational strategies, and trying to draw all interest groups together through consensus building.

Thus action groups must be able to ‘read’ the community in which they are working if maximum co-operation and support is to be gained. They must have local credibility and be seen to be reliable and consistent in what they do and how they do it, so that the community can rely on them to provide the voice they, as individuals, appear to have lost when it comes to lobbying politicians and decision-makers in times of conflict.

At the same time, community action groups must also plan their educational strategy to ensure that the general public becomes knowledgeable and well informed on the issue by the means summarized in Table 2, together with any other ways which specific groups might find applicable to their particular situation. In the case of the Boundary Bay Conservation Committee the community learning which took place was
deliberately and carefully orchestrated, agreeing with Martin (1988, p. 218) who maintains that “‘education’ in the widest sense is of central importance for (environmental) movements” and is not just a spin-off from participation as suggested by Armstrong and Davies (1977, p. 153) who ask

*Do community action groups really proceed to deliberately teach their members relevant skills and knowledge? That they are learning systems is undoubtedly true, but it is probably also true to say that the learning is really a spin-off from participation and involvement, i.e. that the amount of attitude change which occurs or political awareness which grows up is a major by-product. The groups do not organize primarily to teach or instruct, but they are nonetheless networks for learning and the learning may be very extensive.*

In the case of the Boundary Bay Conservation Committee one of their first actions after becoming informed and knowledgeable as a core group was to organize educational activities which encouraged informal and incidental learning in the community, and therefore their answer to Armstrong and Davies’ question “do community action groups really proceed to deliberately teach their members relevant skills and knowledge” is most definitely yes.

In final summary, this case study found six main ways in which public awareness was raised, which are summarized in Table 2, and nine ‘behind-the-scenes’ elements which seem to be necessary for a core group to become successful and gain respect in their community, shown in Table 3. This particular community action group achieved a high profile with the target audience both at the time of greatest activity, while the issue was being hotly debated, and in the longer term, as overall plans for the area begin to emerge. The learning opportunities created by the Boundary Bay Conservation Committee are summarized in Table 4, and the communication flow which determined how information diffused within the community is outlined in Table 5, and schematized in Figures 2 and 3.

It is hoped that these findings may be useful to other informal education groups concerned with changing attitudes or educating communities large or small through strategies based on informal and incidental learning, although how much of the
information contained in this thesis might be useful elsewhere depends on the specific target audience, circumstances, and subject matter of the issue under consideration.
REFERENCES


Vancouver CityPlan Tool Kit. (1993). Vancouver City Hall.


Appendix A

Question Schedule

Re: Core Group Activities

Do you think people learn by following your example in what you do in the community with regard to the issue? Does your name often appear on meeting minutes or in the media as being involved?

To what extent did the core group use mass media communications?
  - Newspaper articles
  - local/national radio/television
  - films or videos
  - newsletters
  - slide shows and presentations
  - frequent promotions in other public areas
  - briefs to council
  - organized attendance at relevant council meetings

Do you think people regard you as an opinion leader in this issue? Do they place more credibility on something when you say it, rather than someone else saying it?

Do you often get asked to speak in public on the issue?

Are presentations made to community groups/schools?

When you make a public presentation, do you carefully think through what is going to be said in advance, or do you prefer to speak ‘off the cuff’?

When you address an audience, do you have an idea of who they are and why they are there before you start?

Did you have a particular target audience in mind when making presentations?
  - please describe any specific target audience aimed at

Do you find all sections of the community will take an interest in the issue, or only certain sections?
  - If only certain sections, which are they?
    - the already converted?
    - the vaguely interested?
    - the completely uninformed, seeking more information?
    - is there much opposition in the form of heckling?
    - do the opposition attend?
How do you select people to make public presentations?
- the first person who is free?
- people well known to the community and respected for their opinion?
- do you ever try to get someone with a well-known name to endorse the issue?

Are the education efforts of the core group carefully planned and co-ordinated on a long-term basis, or do they 'just happen' as the need arises?

If planned education, on what basis was it planned?
- what assumptions were made about the target audience?
- were any specific 'teaching tactics' used deliberately?
- have any other groups found some ways of getting the message across more effective and efficient than others?
- if so, which groups, and what tactics?

Were petitions sent around the community?
- how?
- door to door?
- through mall promotions, open-house meetings, other meetings, or environment day activities?

Did it take some considerable time to get the general public interested in the issue?
- any idea how long?

Did the core group get together with other major environmental organisations in supporting the issue?
- if so, which groups got together?
- how did they help each other
- was there some cross-over of personnel, some people belonging to several groups?

Were outside resources called upon sometimes?
- which?
- how did they help?
- was it a short-term or long-term liaison?

Do you talk about the issue a lot on a person-to-person basis in the community?

Re: Extended Community Learning

Do you notice people in the extended community changing their attitude, or is it something which isn't noticeable until demonstrated by specific action?

Do those people seem to take more interest in the issue as time goes by, or do they just absorb the information but take no action?
Do people in the extended community discuss the issue a lot between themselves?

Were bumper stickers or other small information posters provided for general use?
Do people tend to use them to spread the message?
- what about the use of lapel buttons?

When choosing information to give out, through meetings, posters, pamphlets etc., were both sides of the issue given, or was one side only promoted? How did you see the matter being presented?

Did the group deliberately target specific groups to start spreading the message?
- community centres/groups
- schools
- other environmental groups
- service groups, etc.?

What were your reasons for becoming involved in this issue?

Can you suggest ways and means by which the campaign might have had more impact?
If you were to do it all again, what might you do differently?

Re: Mass Media

When using mass media in any form to promote the message - community tv or radio, video/slide presentations, do you do any sort of checks to see whether the message you believe you are promoting is the one the audience is picking up?
- in personal discussions with those involved, do you ascertain that they they have interpreted the message in the way you wished it to be?

What form of mass communications were used?
- newsletter
- newspaper
- community tv
- radio
- posters
- bumper stickers
- lapel buttons
- pamphlets
- flyers
Re: Interpersonal communications

If you attended a presentation on the issue, what was it that held your attention most?

Had you already formed some opinion, either for or against, before attending such presentations?

What first drew your attention to the fact that there was an issue to be concerned about?
- meeting
- bumper sticker/poster
- community tv.
- personal communication at home/work

What was it about the things which caught your attention which caused you to stop and look at it, listen to it?

What particular fact or information caught your attention?

Did you subsequently find yourself noticing newspaper articles, other posters etc. which you might otherwise have overlooked?

Did your opinions change one way or the other in the course of the discussions, over time?

If your opinions changed, can you pinpoint anything in particular that caused that change?

Did discussions of the issue serve to reinforce an already-held opinion, either for or against?

Did you find yourself discussing the issue with friends/work colleagues/people you bump into?
- Did it become a topic of interest throughout the community, that you were aware of?

When looking at information pamphlets, videos, etc. were you made aware of both sides of the issue?
- Did you notice bias towards one side?
- Did it coincide with your own opinions, or did it help to change them in any way?
- Was information provided not only by the action group but by those on the other side as well? i.e. did the developers attempt to put out their side of the story.
- If so, how did their information help you to form your opinion?
Did you learn about the issue because you saw it in the media, on posters, bumper stickers so often?
  - if not, how?

Did you attend many information meetings, open houses or other displays to find out more about the issue?

Did you go on any organized or individual walks around the site in question to see for yourself what it involved?

Did you become more than just incidentally involved? Did you take part in any positive actions
  - organizing trips to the site?
  - helping the core group in some way?
  - other means, i.e. support with cash or volunteer time?

What were your reasons for becoming involved in this issue?

Have you always been involved in environmental issues? Can you remember when you first became interested/took part in a similar issue?

To what extent might you have got information through rumours or the grape vine?
  - did it turn out to be correct?
  - if not, how did you find the correct information?
  - how do you determine whether something is fact or rumour?

Through which means did you accumulate what you know now about the issue?
  - mass media?
    - which?
  - personal communication?
    - which?

Did you learn a lot about the issue mainly:
  - from your own friends,
  - from work colleagues
  - from elsewhere
    - if so, where/whom

Did most other people learn in the same way, do you think?
Did you actively seek more information about the issue on your own?
- from where, which sources?
  - other people
  - the media
  - the core group
  - the bureaucracy
  - other

Which were the most important sources of information to you in learning about this matter and keeping up-to-date with events?

Can you suggest ways and means by which the campaign could have been more effective?

Note: These questions were jotted down as the literature review was being done. As texts were read, and questions came to mind suggested by the literature, they were noted for possible use in interview-discussions, and formed the basis upon which interviews were structured.

Slightly different questions were asked of core group members, the media, and the general public, for some questions which were applicable to one segment of the population were not applicable to the other. The headings under which questions fell were also suggested by the literature, particularly that relating to persuasive communications and social marketing.

As each interview progressed cues were taken from what had already been said to see which question could be logically asked next in order to cover the areas suggested above. Some questions did not need to be asked, as respondents talked about many aspects without being prompted. During interviews, which were always tape-recorded, with permission, attention could be given to the subject matter being discussed without trying to remember important details, which would come out when tapes were transcribed, and it was found to be very helpful if respondents' key words were jotted down as they spoke, so that topics which had been brushed over quickly could be further explored by the next question to be asked.

As soon as possible after each interview, tapes were transcribed so that the information provided by one respondent could be used to shape the upcoming interview for the next respondent. In this way events referred to by one person could be confirmed by another, or a second person could provide a very different perspective to the same happening. This is part of the constant comparison process recommended by qualitative methodology texts.