

VOICES FROM "OUT OF THE COLD":
AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC COMMUNITY-BASED ACTION RESEARCH OF A FREE
MEAL PROGRAM

by

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

IN

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
(Interdisciplinary Studies [Agroecology / Food and Nutrition / Social Work])

We accept this thesis as conforming
to the required standard

The University of British Columbia

October 2003

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ABSTRACT

My first observation of the "Out of the Cold" (OOC) weekly meals and shelter program organized by the Grandview Calvary Baptist Church in Vancouver, BC, is that it is increasingly crowded. What feeds into this specific crowd and into the global picture of malnutrition and poverty? In part, decreasing public services and increasing cost of living exacerbate social problems associated with unemployment. Private and political institutions also influence food security and environmental integrity.

With criticisms against charities, is OOC a valid way to help people? Yes and no. No, because there are signs of user dependency and of public safety net falling related to the emergence of privately organized relief. Yes, because many people do not have the resources to free themselves from whatever entraps them in poverty. Community development projects require participants to have a basic level of stability and hope for the future that many do not have. It is a place for some of the most vulnerable people in our society including the mentally and physically ill, homeless, addicts, and elderly.

People who come to OOC value the good food in a hassle-free atmosphere that provides opportunity for social connection. To them, good food means safe, nutritious, tasty, appetizing, and choice of vegetarian and non-vegetarian.

At the Crossroads Drop-in house that oversees OOC, organizers have opportunities for further connections and empowerment, but OOC can also develop empowering activities such as a participant advisory committee (PAC) that was formed during this Community-Based Action Research study. This PAC dealt with overcrowding by adding the use of a hallway for the overflow crowd and by limiting line-ups that take up floor space.

Other ideas for empowering individuals and educating the public include food preparation and service training, community kitchens, buying directly from local farmers, community gardening, composting/recycling, networking with other programs, liaising with government authorities, volunteer training, and follow-up of non-returning volunteers.

The methods used in this study are Autoethnographic and Community-based Action Research with Trans-disciplinary Re-contextualization discussions. Considering OOC in its contexts leads to the question, "How would OOC look if long-term sustainable food security for everyone equitably were a goal?"

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DEDICATION

To Rob, Tien Yun and my Unborn Baby

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

How could I have done this without the acceptance of people from "Out of the Cold." People allowed me into their space and thoughts, and befriended me. I hope that they can be proud of their contribution to this paper.

Karl Johnston and Jonathan Bird were instrumental in modeling for me and freeing me to establish these connections. Without them, I would have had a much harder time and not learned as much as I did.

Each of my graduate committee members were wonderful: Drs. Alejandro Rojas, Art Bomke, Gwen Chapman and Graham Riches. Drs. Rojas, Bomke and Chapman supported me from the very beginning through to the end, reading many drafts and providing very insightful comments.

I would not even have started my Master degree endeavour without the encouragement of my friends Bonnie Sawatzky and Dorothy Chen. Cathy Thornton prayed me through my thesis, and Joylynn Blake and Miriam Tamaki volunteered to baby-sit for me.

Unintentionally, my family nurtured me to be the free spirit that I am. They gave me, their wiggly little last born, an abundance of energy and practical gifts.

Then, there is my husband Robert Tamaki. He has been my anchor, my love and my challenger.

I give all of the above people my sincerest thanks.

CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

A. *Layout of This Paper*

For many reasons, I am writing this thesis in a non-traditional style and order. The primary reason is that I tried to give much space to the voices of the study participants. I wanted to include quotations voiced by the participants and that by myself as the researcher while in that natural setting. Ellis and Bochner (1996) also inspired me to compose this autoethnographic writing in a manner that would allow the reader to experience and feel. Furthermore, one of my goals is to demonstrate the importance of considering a specific food and shelter program in its contexts. Therefore, I decided to describe and weave together the locally specific situation, the larger contextual picture, and the researcher voice connecting the two pictures. The italicized left column contains my description of the local situation, the researcher voice is to its right, and the contextual picture (included in chapter III) is to the far right.

Since I wanted to weave the contextual information with the local situation, I postponed the literature review of the issues related to this study. Instead of placing the literature review and explanation of the problem to which this thesis addresses in chapter I, I placed introductory remarks and my research goals in chapter I. My literature review that supports my methodology is in Chapter II; my literature review for the issues related to this study is strategically interspersed in chapter III to provide context for comparison and contrast to the locally specific data obtained in this study. That is, the most interesting results and discussions are in chapter III. Chapter IV contains the summary and recommendations.

B. *Background*

1. *Out of the Cold*

A glimpse of Out of the Cold

His head was covered with the hoods of his kangaroo jackets. He sat on the chair hunched over such that I could not see his face. I heard him grumble. That was when I turned around to look. There were lots of people going back and forth getting their desserts between his table and the table just behind him. As he grumbled, he kept moving his chair more and more in the way of the people so that people brushed up against him more and more. Since this was happening behind me, it seemed impolite to keep my back turned. Finally, someone said something to him behind me and I didn't hear

any more commotion from him or the others around him.

Background Context

The Grandview Calvary Baptist Church in the Grandview/Woodland Area of Vancouver B.C. serves free suppers and provides overnight shelter every Thursday at their program called Out of the Cold (OOC). OOC grew quickly from about 30 people attending during the first months of operation in November 1999 to about 130 guests two years later. Overnight stay also reached maximum capacity in February 2003, needing to stop the signup list and turning people away regularly. It has been very hectic. Organizers found themselves trying to cope with the increased numbers in a limited facility and with limited resources.

A voice from the Grandview/Woodland Area

"Why aren't the churches doing something about the people on the streets?" someone commented at a Grandview/Woodland Area Service Team (GWAST) meeting.

Background Context

OOC started when Tim Dickau, the pastor of the church, took up this challenge of doing something about the people on the street and their need for overnight accommodation. He looked at models such as Toronto's OOC and chatted with other people who were interested. After they worked out a proposal, they brought it to the church, got volunteers and started OOC in November 1997. Christmas dinners that two women started earlier showed that people were looking for a meal when they ran out of money at the end of the month. So, they brought the overnight stay and the meal together.

To further its service of people in the area, the church established the Crossroads Community Project (or Crossroads) in June 2000. Since then, Crossroads oversees OOC. Crossroads also runs the drop-in centre where people can have access to shower, laundry, clothing hamper, phone/fax and Internet. Other Crossroads programs include pottery and art class, professional counselling, methadone support group, AA and Bible study.

See Appendix I for the Crossroads Information Package.

2. The development of This Study

A voice from Out of the Cold

The Program Co-ordinator said to me, "You are a dietitian? Could you see if our meals are nutritional? We are also thinking of starting a community kitchen."

Researcher

I worked as a Registered Dietitian/Nutritionist (RDN) for many years. In recent years, I felt constrained by the limitations of merely assessing food programs by determining how well the nutritional goals are met.

Most RDNs also recognize that food serves many functions and many RDNs have started re-integrating their nutritional assessment with contextual issues. However, the dietetic profession that is embedded in the modern culture has become so specialized that many RDNs still almost solely assess food's nutritional benefits in their assessments.

For example, let us examine bananas. Many RDNs know bananas as "soft" foods that we prescribe on the BRAT (Banana-Rice-Applesauce-Toast) diet, as high potassium foods that supplement patients on potassium-wasting diuretics, and as finger-foods that edentulous long-term care residents can chew. Typically, we use bananas for many functions in dietary management. We know lots about bananas. However, we do not know where they come from. How they were produced? By what means and how far they were transported? What are the social and environmental impacts of using bananas in Canada? Many RDNs are oblivious to how the food gets to us.

As part of urban culture that has dissociated them from agriculture, most RDNs usually counsel clients on the decisions that they perceive to have control over. That is, RDNs counsel clients on what foods they ought to buy in the grocery store, how they can prepare these groceries, or what they should order from a menu – advice based almost solely on the nutritional aspect of foods. However, not knowing about the background of our groceries does not make it unimportant.

The fact is that our choice of foods can have a powerful corporate impact on the production and distribution of foods. As we can see from food system models (Appendix II shows The Canadian agri-food system), consumption is directly linked to many other components of the food system. Ever so small an impact is one individual's food choice in the food system, yet we are all intertwined in it.

Therefore, this OOC evaluation will not be limited to the nutritional aspect of the food served. While including a nutritional assessment, an informative evaluation would consider other aspects of the food served as well as other aspects of the food program.

From initial conversations with the program co-ordinator, other service providers and users of the OOC program, I found that their desires were not restricted to the nutritional quality of the food and to the development of a community kitchen. I saw that people's desires were to respond holistically to the world in adopting more environmentally sound practices than currently and in empowering people. Recognizing a parallel in the movement towards holism amongst the people of OOC and within myself, I seized the opportunity to develop a study that would help move both our journeys towards holism.

C. Goals

My call towards holism is for RDNs to re-integrate our care of individual people's physical health as affected by nutritional intake into the care of the larger community of people and environment of this earth. Thus, RDNs live as part of the health care team of the world! Just as RDNs assess the needs of individuals to determine the content of nutrition counselling, RDNs can consider the social and environmental ideals to enlarge the "field of care" and assessments in dietetic practice.

Therefore, my goals for this study are the following:

- 1. To participate in a community-based evaluation of OOC by utilizing holistic approaches in order to produce results that are useful to the stakeholders of this program.**
- 2. To demonstrate the importance of considering a specific food and shelter program such as OOC in its contexts.**

D. Chapter Summary

In this introductory chapter, I remarked on the unconventional style of this thesis, providing a roadmap to the rest of the thesis. Then, I provided background information on the OOC program and on the development of the study itself. Finally, I presented my research goals. In the next chapter, I will discuss the methodologies through which I met my study goals.

CHAPTER II. METHODOLOGY

A. Background Rationale

1. Paradigm Shifts: Reductionism to Re-integration

The primary rationale for the thesis and the methodology of this study is the recognition of a need to shift the way we look at the world. I argue that modern scientific reductionism is inadequate; re-integration is the alternative to be proposed.

For the modern scientific research method to be valid, it has to hold constant or limit all factors other than the one or two factors being studied. This characteristic of reductionism became an inseparable characteristic of the modern scientific worldview (Callicot 1990) and thus the field of human nutrition.

As with all other points in human history, societal problems in combination with new innovations took societies to new stages. Problems that stem from modernity as evidenced by ecological degradation and increasing social inequity call for efforts beyond what reductionist science can accomplish. As a RDN whose concern stretches beyond the field of human nutrition, I am convinced that these problems call for a change in the means by which we make our decisions about food.

My disillusionment with modern approaches sounds like postmodernity so far. Postmodernists have been deconstructing the metanarratives that produced the aggressive modern autonomous ego. However, while highly sceptical and critical of the prior (modern) approach, the postmodern deconstruction of metanarratives is not entirely satisfactory. While "dismantling all previous beliefs about humanness and all courses of action that such beliefs sustained" (Middleton and Walsh, 1995), postmodernism may lead people to embrace a nihilistic attitude. Because I chose a purposeful existence, I am also in disagreement with the postmodern deconstruction project.

Early in the twentieth century, Albert Einstein and other scientists already brought us a view of the physical world that is appearing "more integrated than fragmented, more probabilistic than deterministic, more potential than actual" (Callicot 1990). The world is structurally and functionally inter-dependent much like the parts of an organism.

Conventional quantitative research methodologies are generally incapable of handling this inter-dependency. They tend to limit or even distort the information derived from the research process. For example, a quantitative research question may be: "Are people happier by coming to the OOC program?" In order to answer this question, the researcher must define and operationalize happiness in quantitative terms in order to measure it. Although measuring such a complex concept as happiness may provide some information, the information derived from such a research process is inadequately fragmented and deterministic. I am doubtful about the sovereignty of the researcher in producing questions and measurement tools useful to a dynamic program such as OOC food program. Therefore, I concentrated on using qualitative research designs to include information that might not be anticipated.

Once qualitative methods explore the research goals, quantitative methods such as surveys could be used to confirm the theories and find out to what degree the theories are true. However, my time allotted for this project is limited and I was more interested in participant empowerment than confirming theories. Therefore, I chose to help facilitate a group process in which the OOC stakeholders¹ determined what information is important and how they might act upon it. In this way, OOC stakeholders take part in integrating information for improving OOC.

Understanding that OOC is not only influenced by the individuals who attend OOC, but also structural forces, I built in opportunities for considering links between the values of OOC stakeholders and structural influences, thereby, integrating elements of the "big picture."

2. Evaluation Research

In the literature, there are numerous definitions and approaches to evaluation, program research, program evaluation and evaluation research. Evaluation involves judgements of many kinds; it weighs the worth, and determines the merit of an action, intervention or program. Evaluation asks questions of causality to ascertain "what it is about a program that works for whom and in what circumstances" (Clark with Dawson 1999:32). Guba and Lincoln (1989) describe fourth generation evaluation, which emphasizes a process of multiple stakeholder iterations and valuations.

Compared to program evaluation, evaluation research employs "scientific methods in the process of carrying out an evaluation" and places "greater emphasis on generalizability, causality, and credibility within the research community" (Clark with Dawson 1999:3,4). A focus on theory-building also sets evaluation research apart from inspection, monitoring and auditing that are other forms of evaluation activity.

3. Researcher as a Stakeholder

I consider myself, the investigator of this research, a stakeholder. In any study, even in the scientific studies that aim to be objective, the researcher infers his or her biases merely by the questions that he or she asks (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Even with my every effort to withhold my influence, my presence would influence the way that my interviewees respond. In addition, I could inadvertently misinterpret their responses based upon my own pre-conditioning.

Clark and Dawson says that "an evaluator can also be seen as a stakeholder insofar as she or he is concerned with producing a methodologically sound piece of work that addresses the salient evaluation issues and makes a worthwhile contribution to the decision-making process" (1999:24). LeCompt and Schensul (1999) even prescribes researcher interaction

¹ Stakeholders in this study include recipients of meals and overnight stay, Crossroads staff, the Crossroads advisory board, volunteers, other interested individuals, and the researcher. I consider stakeholders as those who are affected by the program. Those people who come to receive meals and/or the overnight stay are certainly affected by the program. If it were not for OOC, the organizers and service providers would be doing something else with the time and other resources that they spend on OOC. Thus, those people who organize and/or provide the OOC services are stakeholders. Moreover, changes in OOC would affect other programs. For example, if OOC closed down, there may be increased (or decreased) number of people going to other food programs in the area.

with participants in natural settings to build local cultural theories. Local theories are important in this study, because the primary purpose of evaluation is not to prove new knowledge, but to improve effectiveness (Clarke, 1999). It uses existing knowledge to inform and guide practical action, and in the process, it generates new knowledge.

As much as possible, I let the process be iterative and allowed theory-building to be emergent. Yet, the whole process was not a free unlimited flow of ideas, because initial interview questions were focused on stakeholders' perceptions of food and the food program that I am evaluating. Also, I am attempting to integrate the "big picture" through the "lenses" of the various stakeholders. Thus, my purposefulness is one more reason that I "stand inside the evaluation." That is, I describe my involvement as I describe the involvement of other stakeholders.

4. Participatory Evaluation and Participants' Empowerment

Chambers (1997) defines the powerful as uppers and others relate to them as lowers. The powerful uppers such as OOC organizers and I as the researcher are at risk for conducting managerial-like evaluation. Managerial evaluation would not seriously explore and consider the "locally specific, complex, diverse, dynamic and difficult to control" reality as perceived by "lowers" and poor people (Chambers, 1997:74). "The views of uppers are often privileged, supposed to be empirically true and morally right. But ...the realities of the socially dominant professional are often neither true nor right" (Chambers 1997:76, 77). Power relationships are a source of error. Also, "insofar as the manager stands outside the evaluation, his or her managerial qualities and practices cannot be called into question" (Guba and Lincoln, 1989). There is inherent unfairness, disempowerment and disenfranchisement of people affected by managerial evaluation.

How can the reality as perceived by lowers be sought? What kind of power can be "empowered" into the community?

Literature search shows exciting models of empowerment through participatory action. For example, Paulo Freire's work on dialogical education for the liberation of the oppressed (Freire, 1970) has informed some creative projects. I found only one such project targeting food and the urban poor. Kim D. Travers worked with a group of low-income urban women who had limited access to income for nutritious food (Travers, 1997). Through facilitating participatory research, she saw community empowerment increased and inequities reduced. Her involvement with this group of women was extensive. She facilitated 27 group interviews and participation observation over a 16-month period. Since my time available for this project is limited, empowerment realized will likely be modest. Nevertheless, I chose this participatory evaluation design to set the stage for empowerment to be played out. As described by Clarke (1999: 25), empowerment evaluation is basically "a democratic approach designed to promote self-determination." It focuses on collaboration so that evaluators can help program participants help themselves.

Chambers describes empowerment from four angles. Firstly, differentiating groups and interests can give the weaker collective awareness and confidence. Secondly, people can express what they know and add to their skills and knowledge through diagramming, mapping, investigating and observing. Thirdly, new community-based organizations can

be formed to maintain group solidarity and build negotiating power to meet threats of governments or other groups. Finally, participatory methods can change the attitudes of dominant groups in the process of conflict identification, expression and resolution.

B. Research Objectives and Research Methodologies

The following table lists the overall Research Objectives of this study and the corresponding Research Methodologies used to meet the objectives.

Table 1. Summary of Research Objectives and Research Methodologies

Research Objectives	Research Methodologies
1. Describe food and food program-related values important to the stakeholders of OOC	Emerging Qualitative Autoethnography including Participatory Observation and Semi-structured Interviews
2. Empowerment through community-based exploration of problems and negotiation of solutions	Merging Community-Based Action Research
3. Make connections between priorities of the OOC stakeholders and elements of the "big picture," letting the one inform the other.	Trans-disciplinary Re-contextualization Discussions; Archival and Secondary Data

1. Emerging Qualitative Participatory Autoethnography

Ethnography literally means "writing about groups of people." More specifically, ethnography is "writing about the culture of groups of people." I used ethnography, because it is a method of investigation that first tries to discover what people actually do and the reasons they give for doing it. Although the underlying assumption is a human world that is highly variable (LeCompte and Schensul 1999), this type of writing is based on patterns of behaviour and beliefs that persist in a group over time. Otherwise, those behaviours or beliefs are defined as individual or personal rather than cultural.

Ethnography uses the researcher as the primary tool of data collection, and we have already established that as the researcher, I was a stakeholder in this study. Therefore, the observations I made while participating in various capacities of the program were an important tool of data collection throughout this study.

I began the study with an inductive process using participatory observations and my interpretations of these observations to identify initial questions. In designing this set of initial interview questions, I struggled between trying to include all potential important information and trying to keep the study focused so that I would not end up with an unmanageable amount of data. The resultant initial open-ended interview questions focused on different food-related aspects of the program. See Appendix III for the preliminary questions developed for OOC users and Appendix IV for the program organizers questions.

My writing can be considered as "autoethnography." It is autoethnography both in the sense that my writing is autobiographical with ethnographic interest and in the sense that it is ethnography of my own group (Reed-Danahay 1997). Neither had I sought out meal or overnight programs nor did I belong to the Grandview Calvary Baptist Church, but I live in the general vicinity of the same city and I belong to another Christian church. Therefore, I naturally empathized most with the organizer and volunteer groups. Yet, the fact that I did not belong to the sponsoring church provided me some distance allowing me to regularly step back throughout my reflection and data analysis.

2. Merging Community-Based Action Research

Upon gathering a baseline of emergent qualitative information about food program-related values important to the stakeholders of OOC, I utilized *Community-Based Action Research* to help OOC stakeholders set and act upon their priorities. Community-Based Action Research involves researchers and participants who jointly participate in problem identification, implementation of research to better understand the problem, analysis of research results, and action to remedy the problem (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999).

As themes emerged through initial interviews, I provided feedback to stakeholders related to these themes for clarification. I facilitated Community-Based Action Research as described by Stringer (1999): "At the completion of each set of activities, they [participants] will review (look again), reflect (reanalyze), and re-act (modify their actions)." Along with the other OOC stakeholders, I worked through a continually recycling process of observation, reflection, and action. This continual cyclical process is also known as the Hermeneutic Circle (Guba & Lincoln, 1989).

Group exploration of problems and negotiation of solutions incorporated the values of OOC stakeholders and helped empower them to evaluate and act upon the issues most important to them. As interested stakeholders were gathered, I helped facilitate group discussions for corporate evaluation. I reflected back concepts gathered during one-to-one interviews, and facilitated discussions for generating critical consciousness (Freire, 1970), commitment and community empowerment otherwise not realisable in individual interviews. Information that emerged through participatory observation and one-to-one interviews was merged through this group process. It follows that different things could be accomplished – theory building, prioritization of recommendations, and/or congealing of a group of people who are excited about carrying through with some of the recommendations.

The outcome will be a set of recommendations to the Crossroad Community Project before the completion of my master's program, which I expect to be prior to October 2003. See Appendix V for the Time-chart for Crossroads Food Program Evaluation Project.

3. Trans-disciplinary Re-contextualization Discussions

The third step of Trans-disciplinary Re-contextualization discussions takes place as I step back from the perspectives of a few OOC stakeholders in the group process to look at

OOO from the perspectives of various disciplines and of enlarging geographic regions. Using the analogy of the movie camera (that Dr. Alejandro Rojas described in an interview), I adjust the camera lens from a close-up position to a wide-angle position (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999).

This became another major component of my thesis: the OOC evaluation needs to consider the contexts in which OOC sits. Why? As we have already mentioned, the world is complex and inter-related as an organism. Re-integration of a fragmented worldview may be part of the answer in our world of environmental crisis and social injustice. I integrate the new data gathered about OOC with information already known about the OOC contexts. I feel that the disciplines most relevant to this study on OOC are Agroecology, Food and Nutrition, Sociology, Anthropology, Ethics, Social Work, and Economics. As a result, this study will be an example of trans-disciplinary study that utilizes movement across each of those disciplines. The movement will be like a movie camera looking at the OOC program from different angles, and using a range of close-up and wide-angle lenses. In contrast to reductionism, I wish to call this trans-disciplinary study holistic re-integration. I address the evaluation of OOC from holistic perspectives re-integrating the important fragmented elements. I attempt to both see the program from the "lenses" of the various stakeholders and see it in the context of the "big picture," letting the one inform the other. Also, I will take what I see from different perspectives and reflect them back to OOC stakeholders encouraging dialogue and action for the improvement of OOC.

C. Research Rigor

To maximize the quality of this research, I built in rigor-enhancing strategies. These include choosing appropriate research designs, becoming familiar and comfortable with participants through prolonged engagement with participants (Stringer 1999), carefully executing methods, and using triangulation of different data-collection methods. Triangulation is building redundancy into data collection methods that serve as sources of confirmation or corroboration for each other (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999: 131).

The different data-collection methods used in this study include the following:

1. Participatory observation
2. One-to-one interviews
3. Group discussions
4. Interviews with co-ordinators of other food programs
5. Literature and secondary/archival data review

In addition, a highly qualified secondary investigator visited the program to provide a sort of investigator triangulation. He was asked to assess the believability of the report based on his experience in the same situation.

Trustworthiness of the study was also enhanced by a confirmable data and analysis trail, and by thick data descriptions that facilitate readers to identify with the research setting allowing the findings to be transferable (Stringer 1999).

D. Data Collection

1. Informant Characteristics

Due to previous difficulties experienced by OOC service providers trying to solicit feelings of individuals within group settings, it was most appropriate in this case to interview program users first on a one-to-one basis. I recruited knowledgeable informants using a "snowball approach" requesting informants to suggest other informants. I excluded some Mental Healthcare users, very young children (age 10 or younger), and people with whom I could not establish rapport. Although excluded from formal interviews, the influence of these people was certainly included in my participatory observation and general reflections.

In total, I noted the "voices" and the interactions of 120 individuals. Of these people, I conducted formal interviews with 22 and I met with 19 in group meetings. Each group meeting had 6 to 11 people (average 8 people per PAC meeting). Other than in the formal settings of interviews and group meetings, the rest of the voices and interactions were noted through participatory observation.

Of the service providers, I interacted with the Crossroads staff, the cooks/helpers of Out of the Cold meals, and some members of the Crossroads Advisory Council and the sponsoring church. To learn about the context in which Crossroads is situated, I also interviewed some people who were knowledgeable about food programs already being offered in the Grandview-Woodland area of East Vancouver. I interviewed the nutritionists in the REACH clinic and the North Health Unit, and the staff of the Kettle Friendship Society and co-ordinators Salvation Army breakfasts.

2. Recruitment

I started attending the OOC dinners in November 2000; the last interview was held in March 2003 (after a year of maternity leave). The majority of my visits were between May through August 2001 when I attended OOC weekly plus visited the Crossroads Drop-In once or twice a week.

As I ate with OOC users and engaged in conversation, self-introduction and the topic of this project often came up in our conversations. I invited those who showed interest to talk about their perceptions about food in formal interviews.

Building trust through openness and honesty is part of the process that gives the researcher access to valid and copious data (LeCompte and Schensul 1999). A natural part of trust building is commitment to protecting participant's interests and safety throughout the study. Consent was requested from interviewees (see Appendix VI for consent form). To protect those who did not give consent for their comments to be attributed to them, some of the names included in this report are pseudonyms and their comments are short in length and common in nature.

Besides personal invitations, I invited feedback about food perceptions through colourful posters placed in two visible locations in the dining hall for two months. I made a verbal announcement about the posters to all the guests so that they knew the "Queenie" to which the poster referred. After the announcement, people came to me to offer their opinions.

Broadly inviting the participation of all stakeholders to this study was important for these plans:

1. To recruit representatives of relevant stakeholders including people from both genders, and of a variety of ages, racial and ideological backgrounds and living situations in order to draw an adequate description of values.
2. To inform participants about the study and respect consent concerning my observational records.
3. To avoid the risk of excluding interested stakeholders and in effect become a social controller.
4. To eventually distribute the findings of the study to all interested and relevant stakeholders.

3. Data Recording

Record keeping of interviews was sometimes done using cassette voice-recordings (Schensul, Schensul and LeCompte 1999). Tape-recording provides an accurate record and serves as a backup to written notes. However, I expected tape-recording to be intimidating to some participants. For the interviews with service providers and some very friendly Crossroads participants, I requested the use of a tape-recorder (see Appendix VI for consent form). Otherwise, I used pen and paper to write brief notes during interviews and copious notes afterwards. Cassette recordings were erased after written transcripts were transcribed and checked so that no voice records can be traced to informants.

Since I asked some questions relating to personal values, the informants may have found themselves experiencing memories or emotions that were difficult for them. When informants expressed discomfort with the subject of the conversation, I led the conversations into another direction. {Deleted "However, when I sensed that the informant desired to share with the researcher based on established trust, I let the initial discomfort lead us into areas of sensitivity."}

People who came to receive services at Crossroads, or meals and/or overnight stays at OOC were routinely called "guests" by the organizers. From here on, I will also refer to users of services at Crossroads or OOC as "guests."

4. Nutritional Assessment

Knowing that I am a dietitian at the outset, the program co-ordinator requested a nutritional assessment. Therefore, I built into my data collection a record of the menu in order to implement a nutritional appraisal of the meals. This information contributed to the overall qualitative evaluation of OOC.

E. Data Analysis

What was done with the copious notes and the transcribed recordings? My data analysis was mostly embedded in the Community-Based Action Research process. That is, I found

myself in the recycling process of observation, reflection, and action -- on my own and with other OOC stakeholders.

As noted by Dr. Gwen Chapman in a meeting, the distinctions among observation, reflection, and action are false separations, as are also the distinctions among data collection, analysis and reporting. Most visits at OOC and Crossroads were collages of these processes. However, there were also major periods of observation, reflection, and action; and data collection, analysis and reporting. Please find my report of periods of observation, reflection and action in the Community-Based Action Research section of chapter III.

Upon completion of the Community-Based Action Research process and all the data collection, I reread and reflected upon the entire collection of notes. While rereading, I summarized and prioritized the voices that were represented.

F. Chapter Summary

In this chapter of methodologies, I discussed my rationale and definitions for the methodologies used in this study. Also presented were some of the detailed plans for data collection and analysis.

I argued that modern scientific reductionism is inadequate; re-integration is the alternative. The thrust to re-integrate led me to utilize Emerging Qualitative Autoethnography to describe food and food program-related values important to the stakeholders of OOC; Merging Community-Based Action Research to empower participants; and Trans-disciplinary Re-contextualization Discussions to make connections between priorities of the OOC stakeholders and elements of the "big picture," letting the one inform the other.

I also discussed how evaluation research is set apart from other types of evaluation, how the researcher is considered a stakeholder, and how I strived for research quality.

CHAPTER III. VOICES FROM OUT OF THE COLD AND CONTEXTS

Weaving the voices from Out of the Cold with that of the researcher and the contexts...

A. *The Crowded Out of the Cold and its Contexts*

Voices from Out of the Cold

At the peak times, the hall was crowded with tables, chairs, people moving about lining up for food, and their bags, coats, dogs and other belongings. Most people were also anxious to get into line early so that they could go back to the line for seconds before the food ran out. I was in conversation with one man who was really disappointed when he missed the rush to the beginning of the line up because he was talking to me. The line formed so quickly that it was almost along two walls by the time I said, "you're going to be last anyway." People literally dropped everything and scrambled when they saw the first persons start the line. Naturally, the line formed earlier and earlier before the official serving time of 8 p.m.

Researcher

This was my experience as I lined up for meals and "hung out" with people.

I started attending the OOC suppers in November 2000 about three times a month until May 2001. At which time, I increased my attendance of the suppers to every week and also visited the Crossroads Drop-In a couple of times a week for about three months. Rapport developed with some people that facilitated opportunities to conduct one-to-one interviews.

Each time I attended the OOC supper or breakfast, I was alert to the processes of the dining area. I tried to chat with those people around me as I sat, lined-up and ate.

As guests shared with me how they were and what was happening in their lives, I also shared a bit of my life with them. The one life event that became a natural conversation piece was my pregnancy. I started telling people when I was about four months pregnant. When I was obviously pregnant, it did not require any prompting for conversations to include me.

After knowing some of the people at OOC and Crossroads for more than a year, I had a good level of comfort with some of them. I had the privilege of hearing some of the people's life experiences – both past and present experiences. With many, I shared laughter; with some, I worked along side; and with a few, I shared concerns and even prayers.

A few times, I came early to the supper and offered to help in the kitchen; I helped clean up a couple of times. In the kitchen, the atmosphere depended on the mood of the cook in charge. During some evenings, I felt sorry that things were going wrong since the cook was upset about different things not going her way. Other times, I felt useful and had the chance to get to know some people.

Volunteer duties included meal and dining room preparations; dishes, kitchen, dining room and washroom cleanup; overnight watchers; breakfast preparation and cleanup; visiting; music-playing; and so on. In some volunteer capacities, I experienced the laborious physical exertion that is required. In the area of visiting which was my natural researcher role, I experienced the emotional exertion as well.

Stepping back from that experience at OOC and looking at the "big pictures" has been an awesome experience as well. I will try to present these pictures and let you feel the links between OOC and their contexts.

Understanding the global contexts that created the growing need for meal programs could be vital to OOC.

1. Global Malnutrition

Context

The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that about 3 million people, half the human population, suffer from malnutrition of one form or another. A survey of U.N.-sponsored studies show that at least 1.1 billion people are inflicted with *hunger*, while another 1.1 billion *over consume* which also has harmful consequences. Hunger-related diseases kill more than 5 million children each year. The survivors of such diseases are often physically or mentally stunted causing widespread productivity losses among those who reach adulthood. Meanwhile, in wealthy

countries, millions of people are crippled with heart disease, diabetes, cancer and other chronic diseases that are at least in part due to overeating. They spend years or even decades late in life dealing with the effects of these diseases. In the United States, treating the effects of obesity costs more than \$100 billion annually (Gardner and Halweil, 2000).

Researcher

The nutritional intake of the poor is often compromised for various reasons. For example, the poor are donated mass-produced sweets that are low in micronutrients.

Voices from Out of the Cold

William, an OOC guest, commented to me, "Far too much in abundance is sugar in the diet of people going to food lines. Over abundance of sweets. Tomato is related to the Deadly Night Shade – like donuts, they manufacture too many – give them away, same as sweets. Remove the ice cream; fruit is good.

A volunteer commented to me, "It's great that you serve fairly high standard meal. There are too many sweets in the food donated. Fresh foods are often not used even if they are available by donation due to the short shelf-life."

At Crossroads, a man who dropped-in regularly made three packages of instant noodles mixed with flavour packages in the microwave. "It's only empty calorie," he said to me.

Another man said to me, "Big thick Bologne sandwiches -- no vegetables -- with only butter. That's what people are used to."

Global Malnutrition Context

The third type of malnutrition is *micronutrient deficiency*. Deficiency of vitamins and minerals affected about 2.0 to 3.5 billion people globally in 2000. Combined -- hunger, overeating and micronutrient deficiencies -- account for half or more of the world's burden of disease. As nutritional well-being is a fundamental building block in personal and societal development, malnutrition means living less than a full life, as well as slowing and sometimes partly reversing society's development. Canada being a wealthy country faces not only overeating, but also hunger and micronutrient deficiencies (Gardner and

Halweil, 2000). Hunger in Canada is visible through numerous well-used food programs such as food banks and soup kitchens (Riches 1997).

Researcher

Among other reasons, most people come to OOC for the food. They are among the hungry and the poor in this world.

Voices from Out of the Cold

Korky, an OOC guest, spoke to me in an interview about the root problem of people needing OOC and what can be done.

Korky said, "There are many ways for people to get food. But the root problem is poverty. Government helps people to get a job or create their own employment. But, recognize that there are more people wanting to work than jobs. The Canada's Assistance Act said that it is the responsibility of the welfare system in the various levels of Canadian government to provide for those in need. Need people to express themselves through churches, or whatever. OOC people have the least chance of making structural changes on average, and have the least political power. Unreasonable to put it on their shoulders. It is like saying to the mouse in the mousetrap, 'you got yourself into it, you get yourself out of it.'"

Researcher

The million-dollar question is "How did people get into this poverty trap and how can they be freed?"

Global Hunger Context

In the literature, proposed causes of hunger include overpopulation, deficient food production, over consumption of resources by rich nations, and liberalised international trade. Harper (1993:175) summarises the emerging consensus: "population growth is one among many causes...economic policies and political institutions influence human well-being and environmental integrity at least as much as variations in population growth rates and often more directly". Schuyler (1980:5) understands that the fundamental cause to "hunger in a land of plenty...is

unequal distribution of economic power, the means to grow or buy enough good quality food to prevent hunger and hunger-related illness". Poor distribution of resources can be linked to the failed economic development model.

2. Agroecological Context

Researcher

Ironically, liberalised international trade also brings the cheap food that OOC users eat – some foods that travelled from distant places using depleting fossil fuels and toxic chemicals, and grown under poverty (WHO 1992). Critics of globalisation see ecological disaster as a result of liberalised international trade.

Context

"Certainly, the explosive growth of the human enterprise, the wide-spread degradation of local ecosystems, the destruction of community, the erasure of traditional knowledge-systems and the inequitable distribution of impacts – good and bad—are accelerated or enhanced by contemporary globalization and the integration of the world's economy" (Rees 2001).

a. Ecological Costs of Our Bananas

Researcher

To illustrate ecological, economic and social costs of our food to the exporting community, let us look at bananas again.

Context

Bananas are not grown in North America; they need warm humid climate. Trade made it possible for the western world to enjoy bananas since the late 19th century (Soluri 2001). Bananas are now Canadians' favourite fruit over apples and oranges, each Canadian consuming almost 14 kilograms in the year 1997 (CANSIM matrices 2268-2272). Also, taking into account the rate of inflation, bananas and other raw foods have declining real prices (Statistics Canada, no 62-011-XPB, 2001).

In North America, we experience the benefits of inexpensive bananas and many other foreign products,

but they come to us with ecological, economic and social costs that are not reflected in the price that we pay. Transformation of forest into industrial agriculture incurs many agroecological costs. These include soil degradation, transformation of water resources, biodiversity loss and pesticide resistance (Soluri 2001).

For most imported products to get to us, they need to be processed, packaged and transported using depleting stocks of fossil fuels (Shrybman 1999) that emit ozone-depleting substances into the atmosphere upon combustion (Lang and Hines 1993). However, the earth's capacity to absorb atmospheric wastes has been declining, because much of the world's tropical forests have been transformed into export agriculture such as in the case of banana plantations. "Four-to fivefold increase in world economic activity since the Second World War" have "produced an unprecedented level of material and energy exchange between the ecosphere and the human economic subsystem" (Rees 1995:343).

In contrast to the assumption that the economy can grow along side infinite environmental resources and sink for wastes, ecological economists see the economy as an open importing subsystem wholly dependent on "a materially closed, non-growing, finite ecosphere" (Rees 1995:348). "A quarter of humanity still lives in poverty," but the scale of the global economy as described by the "ecological footprint" is "already larger than the planet" (Rees 1995:343). Trade liberalization provides incentives for increased volume of production utilizing economies of scale. This lowers the price for products that had been in previously protected markets, and the equilibrium effects of lowered price is increased consumer quantities demanded (Dragun 1999:9). Exponential global population growth and increasing scale of consumption through free trade is predicted to press the biophysical carrying capacity enhancing the possibility of global disaster (Rees 1995).

b. Costs of Our Bananas to the Exporting Community

Researcher

Corporations bring to us cheap bananas at high social costs.

Context

Costs to human and social capital take many forms (Pretty 1999). For the transformation of forests into export agriculture, banana-growing communities experienced tremendous stresses. For instance, the north coast of Honduras exported record quantities of bananas during the first decades of the 20th century. These rural communities experienced much economic, social and biophysical stress (Soluri 2001). Growers were saddled with the loss of frequently rejected fruit that shippers judged to be damaged, undersized or over-ripe. Panama disease invaded the susceptible U.S. market-created foreign variety and destroyed the intensively cultivated crop. By 1940, the fruit company relocated to new lands. Along with the financial capital, the company took away infrastructure such as railroads and bridges, and residents' livelihoods. Imagine the devastation that these communities experienced – and this case is hardly unique. The fruit company moved to other regions where it can continue to evade costs of natural and social capital for growing bananas.

Researcher

Korky spoke to me about the power of corporations and the need for massive change to counterbalance the economy-centred mainstream.

Voices from Out of the Cold

Korky continued, "There is now more poor-bashing thinking, 'if those people do not drink, are not criminal-minded, not living in sin, then they would get a job.' But if they have jobs, they may not be drinking. Blaming the victim is a way of diverting the attention of the real cause. Some will get jobs, but they are quickly replaced by others. I'm not saying don't help individuals. It does not help the long-term situation. It has to be political in the broad term. Power: Corporations now have more rights than people. Ideally, government is the voice of the people working in the interest of the public, but they can't do it. Government is now at the mercy of corporations, especially small foreign governments. The cause of poverty: corporations layoff people anytime it is profitable. There needs to be massive social change

that put people first. Business and psychological fibre of people cause poverty.

c. Capital Mobility and the Economic Context

Chuck said, "If I find out that it's grown here, I feel better about it... for economy wise, patronize the local growers. Let the Americans eat their own food. When it comes to buying, I'm a hypocrite. I go for things on sale."

Researcher

Constrained by limited money, people often buy cheap imports such as bananas over local fruits.

Context

While classical economists solidified their argument for free trade using the theory of comparative advantage, the above case of importing bananas illustrates the actual absolute advantage effects of mobile capital held by profit-maximizing businesses.

Classical theory of comparative advantage was established with the premise that natural resources and labour vary from country to country. Let each country specialize in producing those products that have low marginal costs relative to their cost of producing other products. Export the excess supply of products in which there is comparative advantage and import other products from other countries in which they have comparative advantage. This seems logical until we see companies moving financial capital from country to country (Daly and Goodland 1992).

Made more feasible through free trade, transnational companies move their production operations to where costs, usually labour, are lowest. Private companies are also known to under price commodities "to evade taxes in the producing country and raise profits when they sell at full price in the importing country. This is done to transfer profits to the country with lowest taxes, or to escape limits on remittances of profits abroad" (Daly and Goodland 1992:17). This practice of "transfer pricing" and under-pricing increases consumer demand and accelerates depletion of natural raw materials.

The resultant social problems associated with unemployment are exacerbated by deep cuts in social programs by the federal government (Riches 1986).

Researcher

The resultant shortage of labour jobs, exacerbated by deep cuts in social spending, both directly and indirectly affects many OOC participants. Many of the unemployed are disillusioned and destitute.

Voices from Out of the Cold

William said, "I live close to Main and Hastings. I walk through the pushers. They're trying to kill me, kill the society. Fundamentally, they're the same as beer venders, car venders. Hypocrisy of our society today: people who get into their cars knowingly contribute to pollution. Police needs crime; teachers need stupid folks; insurance company needs broken cars – growing poverty is needed – so that people live off of oppression. I'm shell-shocked, battle-wary, struggling to have faith in Canada. I'm here because of loyalty like a battered wife to her husband; battered child to the family. 'Don't feel good about things. I don't trust folks, though I want to trust.'"

d. Compromised Labour Standards

Voices from Out of the Cold

John, an OOC guest said, "I read in the news about European countries sending their infected beef to North Korea. Do you see the evil in that? Mad cow disease that eats up brain tissues is supposed to be sent to starving people."

Researcher

Is it wrong to have different standards for the rich and the poor? Is it wrong to take advantage of cheap imports?

Context

Profit-maximizing businesses move their financial capital to the country where factor costs, particularly labour, are lowest. Even if labour were also mobile, these lost labour jobs would not be so attractive. Competition for the lowest bid lends to compromised standards. For instance, labour practices such as child labour and long working hours in unhealthy conditions that are not acceptable in North America are endured in some developing countries. Standards for air, water and pollution are usually viewed as burdens, so

production is often chosen to be in places where standards are relatively lax (Lang and Hines 1993). However, North American consumers are oblivious to the true production conditions, because promotional advertisements do not generally tell us what we would not want to know.

e. Alienation to the Food Source

Researcher

Unaware to many of us, profit-oriented business people make important food decisions for us. Economically challenged people can save some food costs by foregoing the expense of value added foods and doing some of their own food preparation if circumstances allow.

Context

The prevailing economic model results in economic advantages that utilize technological innovations to displace human jobs with machines. The trend of increasing economy of scale by mass production contributes to the alienation to our food source. Mass production de-scales human jobs in numbers, skills, pay and security. Large corporate mechanized monoculture production displacing rural farming communities is a case in point. Also, consolidation of farms and the specialization of labour in the modern economy have developed ignorance in the Canadian population around food production issues.

In the economic model, the more that food moves through the multiple components of the food marketing chain (producer, brokers, processors, transporters, storage, wholesalers, and supermarkets), the greater the economic activity. However, the distance between the production and consuming points of the food system has literally and epistemologically lengthened. As a result, many of us do not know how to produce, store or even to cook food (Berry 1997).

Many Canadian citizens are sold on value-added pre-prepared foods advertised to us. The primary food trends according to Sloan (1999) involve super simple "on-the-run" or "freestyle" prepared foods.

Brand name promotion that large companies can afford is effective in decreasing the elasticity of consumer demand and increasing consumer loyalty.

f. Compromised Safety and Technical Standards

Researcher

Many OOC guests are concerned about the safety of the food source. The degree of knowledge around these issues varies.

Voices from Out of the Cold

Korky said, "I have 3 levels of strictness for food. When I buy, I buy the best. When I'm eating in a restaurant, I buy the best that is on the menu. When people are giving it to me, my standard is a little bit lower. And if I'm rich, I would just refuse everything that is below the top standard. I pick the best things that you have: salad, vegetarian entrée, and potatoes, side vegetables. Never ice cream or white flour, white sugar cookies. Sometimes you have fruit and that's good. The top level is organic or wild, whole, non-psychoactive foods."

Another OOC guest said, "What do you think of Genetically Modified foods? I think putting animals in plants & fruits is playing with Mother Nature. We didn't used to have so much cancer."

Doronn said, "Got to be careful with even beef these days, because of the Mad Cow Disease. Wash it well & cook it well. Good idea to be vegetarian, but I am not a vegetarian."

One woman said, "I don't eat meat. I learned that the farmers inject hormones into the animals to make them grow faster. I don't think that's good. Beans and lentils are good sources of protein."

Context

Food safety standards such as for pesticides, growth hormones and genetically modified organisms vary from country to country, but international free trade requires standards to be harmonized. Harmonization results in compromised standards.

Countries can utilize measures conforming to international standards specifically that of "the Codex

Alimentarius Commission, the International Office of Epizootics and the International Plant Protection Convention" (Josling, Tangermann & Warley 1999:212). However, the problem is that these standards "often fall substantially short of those established by jurisdictions closer and more responsive to the interests and views of consumers and health advocates" (Shrybman 1999). Many national standards are more stringent than the international ones, but GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) favours the weaker international ones requiring health to be traded-off by global economic benefits.

Voices from Out of the Cold

Daisy responded to my question about her perception of local foods, "For sure locally grown foods is the first way to go. Not a lot of pesticides, hopefully not as much as the imported stuff. The less imported the better. They are greedy too."

Context

Required to accept imports from countries that utilize lower food safety standards, Canadians have within our food system foods that our standards deem unsafe. For instance, we complete the pesticide "circle" when we import foods grown in developing countries (Wargo 1996:4). As new and supposedly less hazardous, pesticides are developed and older pesticides are severely restricted, North American manufacturers ship stockpiled pesticides to developing countries. DDT and other chemicals banned in Canada are still in use in many tropical countries.

Voices from Out of the Cold

William continued, "I don't believe in chemical foods. 'Don't believe in cities either. City folk are misguided, ignorant, no real understanding of life. Media dependent. Pesticides and chemicals are to support cities. Genetically modified foods is for cities. If I am desperate and hungry, I eat poison. I put away many concerns on the back burner."

Context

Many of these countries lack the infrastructure to educate and regulate the use of the toxicants (Short and Colborn 1999). Data from USDA's Pesticide Data Program (Kuchler, Chandran & Ralston 1996) showed

pesticide residues on imported grapes to have higher pesticide residues than domestic averages.² A FDA study found violative residue concentrations in 1% of imported pear and 7% of tomato samples (Gunderson 1995). Many of these violations consisted of pesticides that had no US tolerance level set for the products in which the pesticides were found. The safety of the Canadian food supply is even more questionable due to cutbacks in government monitoring.

Researcher

This look at the global and ecological contexts of our present food system highlights the unsustainability of our industrial food production and distribution practices.

Context

Since the future cannot be verified now, the concept of sustainability or perpetuity cannot be demonstrated in the present. However, many have proposed guidelines based upon lessons learned from the past. Gliessman gave a summary of the minimum objectives for sustainable agriculture (1998:13)³.

g. The Organic Alternative

Researcher

If conventionally grown foods were problematic, would organically grown foods be our answer for a sustainable food system?

Looking at the many aspects of a sustainable food system, using certified organic foods alone could not be

² 9 to 22 times for Captan; 13 to 30 times for Vinclozolin; 3 to 11 times for Dimethoate; and at least 40% higher for Chlorpyrifos.

³ A sustainable food system would:

- guarantee equality of access to appropriate practices, education and technologies, and enable local control of resources;
- rely mainly on resources within the agroecosystem, including nearby communities, by replacing external inputs with nutrient cycling, better conservation and an expanded base of ecological knowledge;
- minimize negative effects on the environment and release no toxic or damaging substances into the atmosphere, surface water, or groundwater;
- preserve and rebuild soil fertility, prevent soil erosion, maintain the soil's ecological health;
- use water in a way that allows aquifers to be recharged and the water needs of the environment and people to be met;
- work to value and conserve biological diversity, both in the wild and in domesticated landscapes.

the answer. There are many variables that certification does not mandate. For instance, social equity, global trade, consumer selection or preparation of foods are the responsibility of the industry, consumers and government.

Context

However, certification of organic foods provides protection against pesticide application and optimizes the fitness of diverse agroecosystems including soil organisms, plants, livestock and people (CAN/CGSB-32.310-99).

Researcher

Locally grown organic foods have been the best alternative to conventionally grown foods particularly if consumers play their part in being educated and consume responsibly.

Voices from Out of the Cold

I asked questions about people's perception of organic foods.

Noah said, "Not much difference in taste or texture, just more expensive. I get the whole idea: no pesticides and fertilizers, better for the earth..."

An OOC friend highlighted the harmful effects of addictive drugs and coffee even as we spoke about organic foods, "There is such a thing as good organic or bad organic. Orange is organic – good organic. Some think drugs and coffee is organic. People manipulate all sorts of things. If I consume anything that is organic, I would hope that it is good."

Researcher

Although OOC served some organic foods donated to another program of the church, the higher cost of retail organic foods is a big deterrent.

Voices from Out of the Cold

Rita, a volunteer cook said, "The problem is that it is terribly expensive, 3 or 4 times the price. Couldn't run this program if we used organic food."

Context

(For the retail prices of organic verse conventional foods in Vancouver, BC in Feb 2003, visit the website <http://www.organicagcentre.ca/pricesdec02.htm>.)

If we include the externalities of environmental and social costs involved in bringing us the conventionally grown food, organics are likely cheaper. We pay {Added:} indirectly for the pollution, health effects, resource depletion and social inequity that may accompany the conventionally grown food. The higher price of organically grown foods covers the costs for the transition from conventional to organic farming (Dabbert and Madden 1988), certification and inspection, risk for crop failure related to pest and wildlife damages (Leckie 1999), and high labour hours (Hanson et al 1997). Also, subsidies for organic farming in the form of research investments from agrochemical corporations and government are negligible compared to those given towards pesticide development and biotechnologies. Because of the small amount of subsidy and the high costs faced by organic farmers, the "playing field" between conventional and organic farmers is imbalanced.

h. Buying Local

Researcher

In response to my question about their perception of locally grown foods, *OOC guests* said...

Voices from Out of the Cold

"I prefer it. It's good for the economy. Keep the business in B.C. May be farmers would give us good prices if we buy in bulk."

Noah said, "Good for B.C., but I'd not go out of the way to look for B.C. I like BC Hot House Cucumbers cause it's the cheapest."

Doronn commented, "That's okay. There's a little greenhouse behind the church here. Healthier, cheaper too. Not matter, most people don't care if locally grown food is served."

"Would not even notice."

Researcher

Some people are aware of the ideals around buying locally grown foods, but keeping food costs down is still the priority on low income.

Context

Buying local encourages farmers and communities to retain a greater proportion of the consumer's food dollar, provides a range of agricultural products that promotes diversity and regional self-reliance, and minimizes fossil fuel depletion and global warming (Gussow 1999).

Even in the winter, it is possible to eat a nutritionally complete and enjoyable diet consisting of regional foods (Wilkins and Gussow 1997). Some advanced seasonal planning would increase the variety of stored and preserved foods during the winter. As the availability of products is generally related to the consumer demand, buying locally grown organic products may help increase their availability.

3. The Context of Emergency Food

Researcher

Although honourable, free food lines such as OOC have been criticized.

Context

Poppendieck (1998:19) is concerned that emergency food takes away the very foundations that may free people from it. She says,

"All this good will and effort affect the fabric of social life in our society. Shall we keep on perfecting our means of acquisition, transportation, and delivery of charity food until the protections - and the underlying sense of equity and fairness - that might have kept people from becoming poor and destitute in the first place are completely destroyed?"

As the protections of the public safety net fall, so it seems also the ability of people to break out of the cycle of poverty.

End Legislated Poverty, a coalition of 28 B.C. groups working to get government to reduce and end poverty in British Columbia, interviewed people receiving charity. Many people who were interviewed expressed

the "contradiction between their need for charity and the feelings of humiliation that came from having to accept it" (Hobbs et al 1992). The people receiving charity feel trapped. Poppendieck found that many people participating in charity work also feel trapped as they are unwilling to deprive the poor of the help.

Critics have even entertained that charitable acts such as OOC may contribute to the collapse of the public safety net in Canada (Riches 1997). Since the early 1980s, there has been rapid expansion of community organized emergency food in North America, Europe, Australia and New Zealand. The sharp recession accelerated a long-term trend toward increasing unemployment and steep cutbacks in federal social spending (Poppendieck 1998). Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and churches, of which Grandview Calvary is one, organized themselves to help meet the increasing needs. Poppendieck observes that "the low overhead, efficiency and cost effectiveness of using donated time to distribute donated food" feeds into the right-wing critique of public programs, thereby abnegating government responsibility to take action.

By off-loading their responsibility, the government "strips away the relative anonymity and universality on which the Canadian welfare system used to be based" (Power 1999). The Canadian social security system developed after the Great Depression when leaders recognized that the structural forces causing poverty require macroeconomic state intervention. This social security system gave Canadians income security, because it upheld the shared values of "Equity of income security, the equality of access to Canadian institutions, concern for the well-being of every individual, collective social responsibility of all citizens, security in the face of economic uncertainty, social integration and cohesion, work as an integral part of a person's self, economic and social opportunity, self-sufficiency, and faith in democracy" (Power 1999).

Churches and other community groups organizing food programs would not likely disagree with these commonly shared values. Yet, they valiantly ready themselves to feed the hungry when they see the poverty. Although unforeseen, community organized

emergency food programs lend themselves to fit into neoconservative policies.

Voices from Out of the Cold

One of the OOC guests said, "To other people from other provinces, Vancouver is known for a place for free food. People have other priorities in life – 'I can spend my money on other things. I get a free meal every day.' There is a co-dependence with churches. If they remove the food programs, there'd be people starving."

Context

Although Riches (2000) highlights the failure of charitable food banks and emergency food programs such as OOC in solving the problem of hunger in Canada, he also feels that school food programs, collective kitchens, or good-food programs should be supported. His true concern is on the poor balance of increasing reliance on food programs and decreasing income support.

While there are critics against community-organized emergency food programs, Glasser (1988) found that social contact provided for people at soup kitchens is in itself valuable. Glasser found that "For...people who are without work, are physically or mentally ill, live in unfriendly or dangerous surroundings, and exist on the meagre incomes of welfare program, the soup kitchen creates a culture in which the desire for sociability, acceptance, and social support may be at least fleetingly realized."

Researcher

The mental disability in some people at OOC is obvious. Some people have slow speech or speech that does not make sense; some have distinctive behavioural characteristics such as little eye contact, eating with their hands or wearing shoes that are too small and with no socks. Often, they display emotional hurdles such as fear and/or anger. One man disapproved of me chatting & laughing. He repeated what I said with a cynical tone of voice. Many OOC guests have limited abilities to look after themselves doing activities such as hygiene and grooming, cooking, eating, and working. One woman who has slow speech and who

was easily startled goes to different churches for most of her meals.

Voices from Out of the Cold

Some people commented on how I looked different from the rest of the people:

"You look healthy, clean, you've got all your teeth"

"You look pretty sane."

"Are you with them or are you one of us?"

Voices from Out of the Cold

An OOC friend said to me, "I eat in churches and restaurants, 'cause I can't cook. You never know when I will have a seizure and get burned. The only people who cooked for me was my mother. She did that until I was 12 years old. Then she booted me out. Most of the canned food I buy is already cooked. So, I eat it cold: chilli, pork and beans...they're all right. I don't complain about food."

A middle age looking man said, "It [OOO dinner] saves cooking at home. It would be different if I were at home. I wish I had the kitchen window with the light shining through. In my place now, you have to turn on the light during the middle of the day, because it is dark in there. I have to get out to get away from the depression. I wish I had my own home. That guy, he's still living with his parents. He's so lucky. My parents got old and moved out of the house. I have extra money 'cause I am disabled."

I met a "squeegee kid" who makes money to feed his multiple addictions including alcohol and coffee with lots of sugar. One time I saw him at Crossroads, he said, "I'm really stoned. I have to find a cigarette. It's an issue; want to quit." Another squeegee kid said to me, "I'm really fried too. Couch-surfing everywhere. Got to find a house, but not high in priority. Food is up there & beer is up there." Addiction contributes to some people's homelessness. However, I met homeless people who had no problems with addictions.

Researcher

Not everyone who attended OOC had challenges as described above. Some seemed quite well adjusted. Instead, they may be in between jobs, they may be involved in activism that keeps them from getting conventional work, or they may be staying in Canada beyond their visa.

My description above seemed to highlight the needs of some OOC guests, as often their needs are what brought them to OOC. Even the most needy of OOC guests are not only people with needs, but also people with laughter, compassion, knowledge and skills among many other characteristics.

Eating together and perhaps working together have the potential to influence deep personal spaces, and even bring outward changes.

Indeed, table fellowship experienced by the church volunteers during the first Christmas community meal was part of the initial motivation in starting OOC.

Voices from Out of the Cold

Al said to me that he misses his kids and wife. Doesn't really know why she left. That's why he is where he is, and having gone through depression. Finally, life seems to be looking better as he has been working in a coffee shop part-time and he has some other job prospects.

An OOC volunteer said, "It's probably good to think about how you should be doing social justice. For this program, it's just about eating together at the table. Let's be extravagant about it. Counter to what they've been getting all day not being treated like human if they're sitting on the street, shooting up, and drinking; here, they don't have people looking down on them. Put classes together and restore humanity, dignity and worth. Volunteers can just be with people, listening and talking. Show signs of the kingdom of God."

Pastor Tim Dickau said, "The challenge (of OOC) is not to create unhealthy dependency. Crossroad's as a link, at least gives us an opportunity to work with people and help them move to a new place. But that would be a concern...to create unhealthy dependency for people who have the ability to move forward but aren't doing that because of some barriers they face or

whatever. That's why we want to help walk with those people towards a different new place in their lives."

Researcher

Indeed, what are those needs that are being fulfilled through OOC? What are other needs that OOC is capable of meeting?

Context

If food poverty is what OOC trying to address, food banks and emergency soup kitchens have been failing to cope with the enormity of food poverty in our societies. Despite some reports suggesting that the North American economy is strengthening (Riches 2002), Che and Chen summarize:

"According to the 1998/99 NPHS [National Population Health Survey], over 10% of Canadians, or an estimated 3 million people, were living in food-insecure households. That is, because of a lack of money, at least once in the previous 12 months they worried that there would not be enough to eat and/or they did not eat the variety or quality of food that they wanted, and/or they did not have enough to eat."

This Canadian survey showed enormous food insecurity in our highly capitalized food system.

To Poppendieck (1998), food insecurity is caused by poverty; and amid a plentiful society, poverty is a product of inequality. She says that the basis for access to food needs to be changed.

Researcher

Receiving a free sit-down three-course meal at OOC is certainly an alternative to buying food from grocery stores or even getting food from the food bank. However, changing access of food is not enough. If food security for all people includes those people in future generations, it would require that there is consideration for the long-term sustainability of the food system.

How would OOC look if long-term sustainable food security for everyone equitably were a goal?

If informed by the whole food system, the goals would be holistic and encompassing ecological soundness,

economic stability, social equity, and humane/spiritual development (Gips 1988; Kaufman 1988).

4. British Columbia and Canadian Contexts

Researcher

Although the need for emergency food has grown over the past twenty years, even greater increase is expected in the near future.

Context

The economic downturn as a result of terrorist attacks on "September 11th" has put increased pressure on the BC Liberal government to implement greater spending cutbacks than when it came to power in the spring of 2001. Despite a big drop in public opinion, this provincial government still "plans to cut the public service by as much as a third as a move to balance the budget over the next three years" (McInnes C., 2001).

Researcher

The public service cuts have direct and indirect impact on the most vulnerable in our society.

Voices from Out of the Cold

A single man who was an OOC guest and volunteer described, "It's very very difficult to live just on the welfare cheque. One month, I went to many places to compare prices by bus or walking. It's a lot of work to plan the meals and other things that I need, but I did it once."

Researcher

Many people do not qualify under the strict criteria for getting onto social assistance. For those people who get on social assistance, managing all the expenses is a big challenge.

Context

Even without considering the public services cut, the cost of eating a healthy diet for people on limited incomes have been increasingly difficult. Dietitians in British Columbia reported that the cost of eating in BC has been increasing (Dietitians of Canada 2001 and 2002). However, the Social Assistance rates in 2002 decreased, especially making hard-pressed single

parent families even more desperate (Dietitians of Canada 2002). For single parent families that are comprised mostly of women, changes caused monthly income to be reduced up to \$426.⁴ For the single adult disabled male on Social Assistance, average cost of shelter and food is greater than 100% of his income, leaving no funds to cover all other living expenses. A family with one parent working at \$9.00/hour would use 79% of their income to provide shelter and food alone. It is no surprise that food is sacrificed for other essential expenses such as transportation, utilities, medical and dental expenses, and hygiene supplies. Instead, food banks and soup kitchens become an essential part of the coping strategy among people on limited incomes.

Voices from Out of the Cold

William told me, "The money on welfare is not enough for healthy living. Put all the money on artificial support like vitamin or food supplements and eat on food lines. Then may be would get enough nutrients. But, I don't buy vitamins. I save \$50 a month for a slightly larger room."

Joyce, a regular OOC guest and volunteer, said, "I am dairy intolerant. I get groggy, nausea, bloated. I minimize the amount of dairy. Oatmeal in the morning with soy milk. It's expensive too, about \$42 a month. I love soy yogurt, but that is expensive too. Sometimes I buy soy cheddar and that is fairly inexpensive."

Researcher

Special dietary needs are particularly difficult to meet on social assistance alone.

5. Grandview-Woodland Contexts

Voices from Out of the Cold

Brian, an OOC guest and long time volunteer said, "There's such a need. Lots of people here are hungry. A lot of these guys are from the Drive, Downtown Eastside, and Granville area. Low income & not much

⁴ The \$51 Support Allowance rate that remains the same for one or six children and the \$55 to \$75 Shelter Allowance got dropped; and the \$100 Family Maintenance payments and the \$200 Earnings Exemptions were clawed back.

for cooking. Most are on welfare, on the street nowhere to go. I am on welfare. It's a struggle – got to really plan your meals. I'd like to see OOC expand to another night, or to two meals in one night: one later & one earlier. Need a bigger building...a better stove."

Researcher

The Grandview-Woodland area where OOC sits houses many low-income people, but it is also the home to many eccentrics.

Context

The Grandview-Woodland area of Vancouver stretches from Broadway to Burrard Inlet, and from Clark Drive to Nanaimo Street. Its heart is Commercial Drive. Promotional materials describe the Drive as charismatic, trendy, funky, unusual, cosmopolitan appeal, and so on. The area features diversity of people, housing and land use. While the area was known as "Little Italy" after the Second World War, the Italian influence has broadened into a Latin one.

The Broadway SkyTrain station in the area that connects two rapid transit lines brings people from all over the lower mainland. Each time with the coming of the SkyTrain lines, changes were expected in the neighbourhood. New commercial and higher density residential development and upgraded community facilities were planned to accommodate population increases.

(http://www.rapidtransit.bc.ca/whatsnew/reports/enviro_analysis/envir_analysis_sep98-b05.htm).

Researcher

To learn about OOC in the context of other food programs in the area, I interviewed two nutritionists and two food programs. The nutritionists I interviewed saw OOC as a charity.

a. Health Unit Community Nutritionist

In an interview with the Community Nutritionist of the area, she said that the majority of the people whom she sees have issues of food access: people on welfare, and seniors who are homebound and can't care for

themselves. Income is a big determinant of health. Those people with low income are too busy surviving. They have high stress levels and they do not access help. There are not enough nutritionists for ongoing management of individuals. She must look at the community as a whole and work on capacity building to meet the needs of those who live in it. Some of her activities include supporting cooks at day care centers, conducting workshops for parents, working with the Chinese Meals On Wheels program, and providing education/updates to the staff of the health unit. Her view is that charity programs are very important and will become more important in the future. However, her hope is that they do not just provide food. Ideally, these programs are also community building: people supporting other people. Activities such as community kitchens, bulk buying to decrease cost, learning appropriate ways to feed kids and connecting people with resources to meet their needs are examples of giving opportunities for people to help themselves.

Researcher

Although considered a charity, OOC is an example of community action that has been a mark of the Grandview-Woodland area for a long time.

Context

This area's focus for community action dates back as early as 1907. At that time, residents organized to have Park Drive (later named Commercial Drive) improved in order that children would not have to walk to school along rail lines. Now, numerous alternative and counter-culture movements such as the Public Dreams Society and a variety of socially and politically active groups make their home in this area.
(<http://www.bbr.ca/BritCPO/grandvw.html>).

b. REACH Nutritionist

I interviewed the Nutritionist of the REACH Community Health Centre. She did not see people's problems solved just by changing food habits or learning about budgeting, though there are places for these. Also, she does not believe in just giving: Charity is not the long-term answer; charity could paralyse people. While feeling that charity is necessary, she does not believe that that is where she belongs. She feels that clients should be

provided all the other things from social and spiritual sources to increase self-esteem to increase the possibility for changes. She wants to be involved in empowerment activities that lead to self-sufficiency. Her target population is not the street people, but rather people who are two steps up from them. She works on giving a "hand-up," creating alternatives to the "hand-out." Three days a week, she works in the clinic and the other two days on community development projects. Community development food projects in which she has been involved include the Good Food Box, Farmers Market, Community Kitchens, Grandview School's garden, Strathcona gardens and Stone Soup Festival.

Researcher

Both nutritionists recognized OOC as a charity meal program and its importance. Meanwhile, recognizing limitations of charity, they worked actively on food programs that have community-building potential. Notwithstanding the wonderful prospects of community-building programs, they have drawbacks too.

Context

"Although community-development strategies usually offer more dignity and provide better quality food than food banks, they present other problems. Self-provisioning activities and alternative distribution programs often exclude the most vulnerable because basic levels of resources, which provide stability and an ability to imagine the future (that is, hope), are usually prerequisites for participation." (Koc, MacRae, Mougeot and Welsh 1999)

Researcher

Unfortunately, the community development strategies do not work for those in greatest need such as many who attend OOC.

Context

The poverty in the Grandview-Woodland area is modest compared to the Downtown Eastside that is renown for its problems with crime, homelessness, and substance misuse. However, Grandview-Woodland is adjacent to the Downtown Eastside. Many people walk between these areas, and Skytrain provides rapid transit

between them.

(http://www.city.vancouver.bc.ca/community_profiles/grandview_woodland/didyouknow.htm).

According to the 1996 census, a high percentage of the population in the Grandview-Woodland area was in low-income households: 43.5% compared to the city average of 31%. There were also a significantly higher percentage of single parent families: 25.8% compared to the city average of 16.4%. Many of the residents rented: 70.2% of the dwellings in the Grandview-Woodland area were rented dwellings compared to the city average of 58.1%. The average gross rent was \$598 compared to the city average of \$724 and compared to \$337 of the Strathcona area that is also adjacent to Downtown Eastside.

Researcher

I chose to also visit The Salvation Army and The Kettle Friendship Society in the Grandview-Woodland area as they also had sit-down meals. The other free meals and food bags organized by other Christian groups were offered in a nearby park.

c. The Salvation Army Brunch

One morning, I lined up for a meal at The Salvation Army one block from OOC. The door opened for brunch at 9 a.m. There was live Christian music playing and people attending several food/drink stations waiting. The music was somewhat loud such that I was having difficulty carrying on conversations with people sitting around me. However, one woman told me that she came for the music. When most of the people lined up have been served, someone among the musicians asked everyone to stop their activities and pray. One man at my table continued to eat, but most people stopped and listened. Some people closed their eyes. The prayer used "we" language such as in "God cares for us."

In an interview with the Care & Share Ministries Coordinator of that Salvation Army, he told me that their goals are to feed the body and the soul. He said

that they give out only donated food and so they were not giving out the best nutrition. However, they do the best that they can. The singing and ministry try to be the link between society & the people. The Salvation Army also conduct programs such as Building Service Worker Program and Life Skill Program that enable people to support themselves to break the welfare cycle.

The Care & Share Ministries Coordinator said that it is hard to get different churches together. The devil separates. However, there is a regular meeting for pastors in the Grandview/Woodland area. "Without duplicating programs, let's just close the gaps," he said. For example, Karl, one of the two part-time Crossroads staff who was involved with OOC, asked the Care & Share Ministries Coordinator about whether The Salvation Army could take over the shelter program. This idea did not eventually work out, but The Salvation Army officer worked on it. He added that The Salvation Army walks by faith instead of getting money from government that have known to restrict prayer and ministry to people. That would mean compromising God's principles.

Researcher

In leaving this Salvation Army brunch, I had no doubt about why people of The Salvation Army put on the meal. They acted as agents of God's care.

Networking with other programs in the area takes time away from frontline work, but it is important in helping to "close the gaps." As I will describe later, organizers of OOC aim to provide a unique atmosphere free from upfront Christian music, praying or other religious appeal.

d. The Kettle Friendship Society

I asked one of the OOC guests who was heading to The Kettle to take me there. Upon arrival, I was welcomed as a friend of a regular drop-in and was given a complimentary supper. Also there were several people familiar to me from OOC. Some of them came over to chat and eat supper with me.

The comments that I heard about The Kettle were all good. Only one woman said that she no longer goes there because she had a falling out with someone there.

The Kettle Friendship Society is a non-profit organization incorporated in 1976 to provide support services for individuals with mental health disabilities living in the community. The drop-in activity centre offers a place where people can meet as friends, and numerous programs including meals daily, Cooking Club and Baking Nite.

Researcher

In the Community Based Action Research section of this report, I described the desire of some of the OOC guests who wanted stricter rules at OOC. They had also frequented The Kettle Friendship Society and were happy with their example. Here is what I found about their rules from a package of information sheets that I received at The Kettle Friendship Society.

The Kettle Policy was explicit: "The Kettle Drop-in is a safe supportive place for people to relax and enjoy one another's company. To insure that everyone's visit is an enjoyable and comfortable one, the following are not accepted on Kettle premises!!

- *Threatening and/or abusive behaviour or language*
- *Gambling*
- *Alcohol or drug use.*
- *Persistent Borrowing or bumming.*

These rules have come from the suggestions made by the people who use The Kettle. By keeping these rules, we are respecting others."

Also explained in four pages of this handout were the policies for steps leading to suspension of Kettle participants due to disruptive behaviours, serious behaviours, and drunken or stoned behaviours; and for an appeal system.

Researcher

I have noticed in organizers a drive to be different from other food programs. If the drive to be different stems from a reaction to ideological differences, OOC could be a unique food program that meets the needs of

people who also have the same criticism of other food programs. However, this drive could also run over components of other programs that may be consistent with OOC goals. It is important to identify and keep in focus the program goals and objectives.

6. The Grandview Calvary Baptist Church Context

a. Pastor's Vision for OOC

Voices from Out of the Cold

Tim Dickau, the pastor of the Grandview Calvary Baptist Church, told me in an interview, "Because people get isolated due to addiction, poverty and whatever, there is a distancing between themselves and the rest of the neighbourhood, and from the rest of the neighbourhood to them. OOC provides a place to begin to bridge some of that gap and get on the road to reconnection and reconciliation.

This distancing was apparent when the church tried to establish Crossroads' Drop-In house next to the church. Many of the neighbours did not want addicts or poor people in the neighbourhood. So, even though the neighbours did not know them and that the majority of them live in the neighbourhood anyway and were already here, and even though 95% of them were not in anyway dangerous to them, the neighbours were still afraid. 'We need to get rid of them' is the view of a number of people. The people in the church wanted to bring people back into relationship, so that they could understand one another.

For example, when OOC volunteers see people on the street and they stop to talk to them, slowly it begins to change the people from OOC, thinking, 'maybe I am a part of this neighbourhood. I know people and they come and talk to me. They treat me like a person.' Things start to change because of that interaction and that sense of belonging."

Researcher

Pastor Tim sees OOC as a place to begin the reconnection and reconciliation between the isolated people with the rest of the neighbourhood. By treating

the poor and the addicted as people and by talking to them, OOC volunteers extend a sense of belonging and function as bridges of gaps in the community.

Most guests with whom I spoke had many positive things to say about OOC, even though many guests also provided lots of suggestions for improvement.

Some people contrasted OOC to other food programs where people were rude, contemptuous, and steer you there to pray or sit through a service.

***Examples of OOC guests' response to my question,
"What attracts you to come to the Thursday supper?"***

"Grateful people come from their homes & put on the meal. They could be spending time with friends, but they show concern for people who aren't as well off."

"Meals: sit down together. It's a human desire. Churches like to do it. It's not just physically nourishing, nourished in other ways. Some [churches] are clearly trying to spread their doctrine to get new members. Can't blame them it's just natural. Sometimes they're obnoxious, pushy. Your group is not like that. You do it in a very natural gentle way. Not shove it down our throats as some do. You're fine on that account."

"Nice to feel you're human – respected. You don't get that service anywhere else. Not refused a meal, feel welcomed."

"Other days, I go to meals offered by mostly churches. [OOO] Should have started a long time ago. Other places had it long time ago. Hassle-free, not have to do to other stuff to get a good meal...listen to a big spiel or wait for half hour, the prayer spiel. They say it's from God. No, not from God. It's from the kindness of people. If they want to believe that, then whatever works."

Researcher

Although many people were grateful about not needing to sit through a service, there were some people who felt that prayer belongs in the church and others spoke freely about their beliefs in God.

b. Prayer and Spiritual Input

In response to my question of what would improve OOC, an OOC guest said, "Before we start serving the food, someone asks people to be quiet and lead everyone to pray." Someone else at the table immediately said, "Not everyone agree. Ninety percent of people not agree." Another two or three people concurred with him. He added, "All the other churches do it [pray]. You want this to do it too?"

An OOC friend said, "I eat whatever I get. I see all kinds of people complain about the food. Christians probably do more than others. People shouldn't bellyache about listening to the service. I hear people at Union Gospel mission say that. I think the church doesn't owe them a meal. People should be grateful and thankful that people who do it."

A man came up to me and graciously told me about an elderly lady who was very ill. He wanted me to pray for her, because she asked people to spread the word around to pray for her. He asked if I was a Christian. I said yes and that I would pray.

Several people I met who had been struggling with addictions also held beliefs in God. One believer told me his evangelistic abilities left after he got drinking. Another said that he was on cocaine and realized he shouldn't have: "But God is merciful" and helped him through withdrawal.

Researcher

If there is any spiritual input, the organizers preferred the personal relational approach.

Voices from Out of the Cold

One OOC organizer said, "I am wary of programs that manipulate to convert people to Christianity. Coming to a church is not the best way to experience God. At some places, hungry people have to listen to a sermon while smelling the food."

Tim commented, "Some of the leaders are quite sensitive about 'not inviting you here to get you there.' If the invitation is personal, there is less people getting the impression that they have a free meal so they [OOO organizers] can get them to the Bible Study."

Researcher

In keeping spirituality hidden from the surface, there is a risk in taking God out of the equation. Tony Campolo, a prominent advocate for the poor, prefers to pray openly for the Holy Spirit, not being shy about calling on the person who is the source of the needed changes and who deserves the credit. He said, "Taking the God out of the equation is likely taking the "guts" out of the work."

Voices from Out of the Cold

Nevertheless, pastor Tim believed that the Bible Study and the church have been helping people to reconnect. He said, "Reconnecting with God can give us the resources to reconnect with other people by offering love. Discovering that God is real in Jesus helps people to discover their value and their worth in God's eyes, thereby restoring some of the lost self-esteem and shame, and everything that goes with living on the street, being poor or whatever."

B. Community-Based Action Research

1. Empowerment

Context

A literature search by Page and Czuba (1999) found that many writers do not define their use of empowerment and others define it narrowly for use in their own disciplines. As a general definition, they suggest, "Empowerment is a multi-dimensional social process that helps people gain control over their own lives. It is a process that fosters power (that is, the capacity to implement) in people, for use in their own lives, their communities, and in their society, by acting on issues that they define as important." Power, as used in this definition, requires that it not be limited by influence and control, and not be zero-sum (that is, it remains in the hands of the powerful unless they give it up). Power can be expanded and experienced in relationship with things and people. Moreover, empowerment occurs in relationship at various levels, such as at the level of the individual, group, and community, and occurs within sociological, psychological, and economic dimensions, amongst

others. Also, this definition of empowerment implies that changes in individuals enable the community to collaborate on solving complex issues (Page and Czuba, 1999).

Researcher

In the pastor's view, one of the foundational goals of OOC is reconnection amongst people. Organizers also declared in the Crossroads' Mission Statement that relationships empower and transform. The empowerment at OOC and Crossroads appears to focus on the individual level in the socio-psycho-spiritual dimensions with implications on the neighbourhood level.

Voices from Out of the Cold

Tim continued, "One of the reasons that OOC and Crossroads are needed is reconnection and reconciliation with the rest of the neighbourhood. Because people get isolated due to addiction or poverty and whatever, there is a distancing between themselves and the rest of the neighbourhood, and some of it from the rest of the neighbourhood, not just from them...Again, to recover some of their dignity, OOC is a place where people do not just get fed and get out of the away, but where they can stay and find a place to hang out with others. For people who also go to Crossroads, there are more opportunities to talk to others and be listened to by others. OOC is a place to begin that."

The Mission Statement of Crossroads Community Project as stated in their documentation (Appendices I and VII): "Crossroads Community Project is a non-profit Christian initiative in east Vancouver to empower people to dismantle barriers of poverty, addiction, or social isolation thru mutually transforming relationships forged by practical aid, therapeutic activities, spiritual growth, and building on people's strengths." OOC fits in the level of practical aid "where people find a free meal, a place to sleep for the night, and a safe atmosphere where relationships can be cultivated."

Karl also said, "I'd like to see guests be more a part of the decision process. A lot of time, I don't have a clue what to do with some of the issues. If there is a way

more people are willing to take ownership, more ideals can take form.

I asked an OOC guest whom I had been interviewing, "Want to volunteer?" He said, "Not really. 'Hard to deal with some people.'"

Another OOC guest said, "I used to volunteer at the Kettle for months. Then, it started getting to me. It takes a lot of patience and I didn't have much patience."

Researcher

Organizers want to provide space for people to volunteer, but they have experienced challenges with the suitability and reliability of volunteers.

Voices from Out of the Cold

Dave D., a long time volunteer and Crossroads Advisory Board member, said, "Given the precarious nature of the OOC people, there needs to be a balance between volunteers who will always show up and those who cannot be depended upon. On Thursdays, three to four people sometimes show up to help prepare the meal. Some people offer their help after the meal. But last week, they didn't show. We really felt the loss of helpers. It's tricky."

Karl said, "In the space between the ideal and practicality, there is a difference between 'formally brought-on' volunteers and 'casual' volunteers. The difference is not whether they are part of the church, but more so due to commitment. There are some people from the church that don't show up. Once someone's proven himself or herself to be committed, then...otherwise, I wouldn't fill in a schedule with them."

It takes time, people have to show commitment and character before take on leadership roles. The abused could be an abuser – that's a real concern. I have seen people come up the ranks have really got a hard shell. One guy took training and became the kitchen supervisor in another food program. He talked to people like they were dirt, not nurturing a good atmosphere. Good thing to empower, but careful with placing people."

Researcher

Empowerment has been an underlying movement in the church and the way the pastor sees programs being started and sustained.

Voices from Out of the Cold

In the interview with pastor Tim, he feels that part of the reason that the programs continue is that people start with a vision, rather than saying, "Oh, we got to help." Tim does not act as the leader saying, "We are going to do this. Can you people get on board and support this," and then they struggle to make it work. It is people that are being nourished with a vision who then say, "Hey, I'm interested in this, are you interested? Then, gathering people and developing it."

It is a small church, about one hundred and ten regular Sunday worshipers. Financially and resource wise, they just could not sustain the many community outreach programs run by the church. So, with OOC and other programs, they have partnerships with people beyond the church.

2. Participatory Observation

Researcher

One of my research objectives was empowerment through community-based exploration of problems and negotiation of solutions.

Here is my observation of some of the issues that others have also pointed out to me. One issue is the disruption and safety risk that inebriated people sometimes cause.

Voices from Out of the Cold

Although the troublemakers were usually those who were inebriated, not all who were inebriated were troublemakers – at least not every time they came. In fact, I encountered inebriated people who were very appreciative of the meal and the kindness of the people.

One evening, a man who was obviously very drunk came to talk to me. He was loud, smelled of alcohol and could not stand still. Since he talked slowly, it seemed as if I listened to him for sometime. I also felt

that he might get angry if I walked away. Then, when he approached me to give me a hug, I didn't know what to do. I was a bit afraid that he might get angry if I pushed him away. So, I turned such that I was perpendicular to him, and then let him hug me loosely. He hugged me twice during that evening. Two other men wanted to hug me too – although not as drunk as he.

Researcher

I was not used to drunken strangers offering me hugs. I experienced what a woman of my disposition may experience: feeling of unease when encountering someone angry, drunk or flirtatious.

From conversations with other women and men, some people at OOC also experienced varying degrees of awkwardness amongst inebriated people.

Voices from Out of the Cold

Some people who come for meals felt strongly that there should be no people under the influence of alcohol, because of the high degree of conflict occurring related to inebriated people. Chuck, an OOC guest and volunteer, said, "I want to eat, not want to watch my back."

One evening, there were two fights while Jonathan, a part-time Crossroads staff, was overseeing the meal in the dining hall. One fight broke out while he was escorting out the people involved in the first fight. After a few stressful times like this, Jonathan urgently wanted to minimize incidents happening again.

Different people provided various suggestions:

Chuck said, "I've been to other Christian food outlets: they are disciplined about it. No drugs, alcohol, dogs...more respect there for the patrons. 'Not just do what you please...ought to think of others. 'Not tolerated at the Union Gospel Mission. At least you go in there and you know nothing's going to happen... nothing's going to get stolen. Is that guy going to start a fight? Do I have to protect myself? Like in a prison situation, am I going to get dragged into that? These guys' [the staff's] minds...their sheepish attitudes... 'Kow-towing to,' 'subservient,' or 'soft.' They are like saying, 'We accept people who are under the influence

and they are more important than those not.' Alienate them in favour of people who are inebriated."

In contrast, one of the volunteer cooks Teresa said passionately, "Don't turn people away at the door. Whose problem is it? It's our problem. Draw the line when they're violent, but not at the door. Not drawing up a list such as no drugs, no alcohol, not like downtown. Instead, people can say, 'Hey we can all come here.'"

Researcher

Jonathan pointed out that Teresa spoke about the ideal values of inclusiveness, patience and creating a safe place for everyone. There is no disagreement about these values, but the question was how could they be maintained in a growing crowd?

Voices from Out of the Cold

Another man was intoxicated and very tired after walking all the way from Hastings Street. When I asked him what he thought of this program, he told me without hesitation that he appreciated the courtesy and the respect. Obviously, he also needed the food, as he said, "That was the first snack. At least I ate something. I'm surprised I stomached as much as I did." Being dependent on alcohol has not been easy for him. He moved close to Burnaby to get away from drinking. "It's working out real good," he said sarcastically as he had not even been home, but finding himself drinking down here.

Researcher

Meeting him and others who expressed appreciation for the kindness shown at the meal helped me to see that a welcoming meal is indeed important to people—including the intoxicated people who are sometimes disruptive.

Voices from Out of the Cold

One man noted to me that if OOC was safer, more women might come.

Another woman said to me, "Not many women want to eat with so many hard core men."

Researcher

About 10% of all the people who come for meals were women.

Why were women not coming? Is this an issue that can be explored?

3. Reflection

Researcher

After the majority of interviews and participatory observation were completed, I reflected upon my copious notes and categorized most of OOC voices by themes.

I presented to the staff some of the categories as they were completed as of July 5, 2001. This was the first round of formal feedback to the staff.

Voices from Out of the Cold

I talked to a few people who were turned off by the crowdedness. One said that there were so many people at OOC the last time he went that he left before getting the meal; another said that he was not going as often anymore.

Jonathan said, "What are we trying to be? Are we all about food or is food the center of a community event that fosters friendships? The size works against or for the atmosphere we try to generate? Figure out the threshold point when the numbers work against the atmosphere."

Karl said, "Respects slips as we get bigger."

Researcher

One time after a string of disruptive incidents at OOC, the staff felt pressured to deal with the problems of increasing crowdedness and disruptive incidents very quickly and pragmatically.

Karl told me that he urgently needed to see my quotations on the topics concerning tensions, safety, atmosphere and crowding. He wanted me to include the number of voices that raised concerns. I responded by noting that sometimes numbers do not mean a lot. The weight of the voices should also count. I told Karl that I wondered if the voices of the absent women

should count. Perhaps women were so intimidated that they just did not come.

4. Action: OOC PAC meetings

Researcher

The second round of formal feedback to the staff was at the beginning of August 2001 when I presented all the topics including tensions, safety, atmosphere, and crowding.

Parallel to my Community-Based Action Research plans, the Crossroads Advisory Committee had just discussed the need to form an OOC Participatory Advisory Committee (PAC) to discuss issues and that it was time for guests to have more ownership of OOC.

Karl asked me to draft an informal application for the OOC PAC.

Both Karl and Dave D. felt that handpicking PAC members would shorten the application process. This was assuming that many people would respond to broad invitations necessitating a process to screen some people out. However, I pointed out that if we handpicked people for this advisory group, some people might feel left out of the process.

Voices from Out of the Cold

I referred to one man who asked me, "How did you get onto the payroll?" I was not on any payroll with OOC, but he knew that I cooked a couple of OOC suppers and was involved in doing this project with OOC. He wondered how I got into the "in-roads."

Researcher

What I said influenced their decision. The volunteer coordinator made two verbal announcements inviting interested guests and volunteers to speak to me and get an OOC PAC form. After the first announcement, about ten people inquired and took the forms while four people returned filled out forms.

Altogether, there were five OOC PAC meetings. After some ice breaking activities, staff brought up the urgent issues of safety risk, tense atmosphere and women not feeling comfortable at the OOC supper. Although there were many causes to these concerns, the group named the issue "overcrowding."

Voices from Out of the Cold

Someone commented, "Volunteers are busy doing things for such a size of group that there was no time to sit and visit."

Researcher

In discussing about portion sizes, some people indicated that one serving of the food served at OOC was not enough and that they had to line up for second servings. However, since some foods such as the vegetarian was quickly finished, they had to rush to the beginning of the line so that they could finish in a hurry and line up for a second serving. On the other hand, I observed that there were people who threw out food that they did not like.

Voices from Out of the Cold

Korky said, "Young men after one plateful they're still hungry. That's why the mad scramble for lining up. Sometimes if I was at the end of the line and I line up for seconds, I won't get a second plateful of the vegetarian entrée. Only salad is left and that's not filling."

"They should give more than half a spoonful of food for the skinny ones (like me) and for the ones they know won't throw out food."

Researcher

Quickly, the group moved onto brainstorming ideas to solve this issue, and discussed pros and cons of some of the ideas to mitigate problems with premature and lengthy food lineups that hindered access throughout the dining room and creating tensions amongst guests.

Most people liked the following ideas:

- An overflow room, which was renamed "reception" area.
- Use take-out containers to give food to guests who are very intoxicated; require guests to bring containers if they want to take food out (to decrease the number of people in the dining hall).
- Provide larger servings but allow guests to go through the food line only one time.
- A dinner in a second location simultaneously.
- Community kitchens

Karl, the OOC volunteer coordinator, and I took turns in the facilitation during the meetings. At one point, I felt that I was doing too much leading. When I asked Karl about this, he expressed that he felt being overridden by me. As a result, I backed off a bit.

At the fourth OOC PAC meeting, some guests were excited about implementing some steps even that very evening:

- Announce that week that there would be no lining-up on a first come-first served basis starting the following week. Instead, the tables would be numbered, and people would be invited get seated. When the tables were filled, someone would pull numbers from a hat randomly to determine the order of the tables for getting the food. Those people who did not have seats would line up around the perimeter of the dining hall.
 - Announce the following week, after getting permission from the church, that people would start entering through the Salisbury Street door and exit using the door that had been used for both entering and exiting. Once the seats in the dining hall were filled, people would wait in the hallway and room by the Salisbury Street entrance until seats were freed up in the dining hall.
- Larger portion sizes were also provided to decrease people's need to line-up for second servings. This process was implemented with no resistance. In fact, most guests, volunteers and staff seem pleased with the changes, at least those who noticed the changes.

Voices from Out of the Cold

By 8 p.m. everyone had to find a seat. Janice didn't get a seat & was sitting on the steps. I saw her and told Karl. Karl found a seat with someone's backpack sitting on it. We pulled that chair over & I got Janice to sit with us at our table. I felt good that I could get her a seat, and I think she did too. Once everyone had seats, Karl drew numbers. After one table got up, he picked another number & the next table went up. People cheered when their table number was called. It was funny how he mistakenly called number two twice. It was not long, perhaps about 8:25 p.m., when more people were let in and directed to go directly to the

food. There was an impression that the dining hall was not so crowded. Perhaps it was because everyone had to stay seated, not lining up congesting the floor space for walking.

Researcher

There was one man who told me that he did not like the picking of table numbers from a hat. He felt offended, as it seemed that people were being played with while they waited hungrily.

Voices from Out of the Cold

Juan, an OOC guest and volunteer, said, "Pick numbers is like gambling. Feel upset. People come because people are hungry. Try to do the best for them. Put people into tables, fill first table before the next table, then call table by table to get the food. If they don't want to sit there, wait outside or change place by waiting. Fighting by people who drink – no such person should be allowed."

Researcher

This OOC PAC dealt with the overcrowding issue by rearranging the people flow and increasing the available floor space. The resultant decreased crowdedness improved the overall atmosphere. However, there was no resolution at the conclusion of the OOC PAC meetings to the sensitive issue of guidelines for inebriated people.

At a Volunteers' Meeting, there seemed to be differences in people's perception of the definition of "guidelines." People who did not want guidelines for the inebriated had definite ideas about strategies to prevent incidents and what to do if they happened.

Voices from Out of the Cold

Volunteers described strategies such as "pray (alone or with other volunteers) before the meal; sit with people who have the potential to cause tension; drop food preparation if there is an incident; talk with them; and draw the line when they're violent."

Researcher

Those who wanted guidelines would agree with the above actions, but would add other strategies including escorting people out if they were disruptive.

Voices from Out of the Cold

Some people at the meeting added, "We need 5 or 6 people with no responsibility in the kitchen who could sit with people; and assign people with the authority to discipline people such as escorting people out of the building, asking them to be somewhat sober when they come, and banning them from the meal for a certain period if necessary."

Researcher

People also had to be kicked out at OOC's overnight shelter and at Crossroads' Drop-In.

Voices from Out of the Cold

During an overnight stay, Dave D. and Brian had to kick two people out. Karl explained, "Sometimes there is one who would talk because he was drunk but would settle down after a while. But when two of them are together, it was difficult."

At Crossroads house one person with mental illness was conflicting with another and got out of hand. They barred the one man from the house for one month... Jonathan said about this situation, "Discipline does not hurt if relationship is maintained and in the right attitude. This guy came back after being banned for a month. We hear on the street that he highly respects us."

Researcher

The number of OOC PAC participants declined due to natural attrition and to someone not feeling comfortable with one guest dominating the meeting. To boost the number of OOC PAC members, members decided to personally invite other guests and volunteers including women who may not have had the self-confidence to come forward in response to previous announcements. Therefore, the lesson learned about recruitment for group meetings is that both general announcements and individual invitations were needed.

After I told Karl that I was able to attend only two more meetings, he postponed further OOC PAC meetings.

Karl was quite busy and preferred to find someone else to coordinate OOC and its related activities.

I saw empowerment actualize in this study from different angles. Firstly, participatory methods have given some participants an increased awareness and confidence. Secondly, people who I interviewed expressed what they knew and some who attended the group meetings added to their skills and knowledge. Thirdly, participatory methods modified the attitudes of the dominant group. The fact that the organizers involved an increased numbers of guests as volunteers and that they formed the PAC for Crossroads and OOC during this study attests to their efforts. Organizers were increasing their consideration of "the locally specific, complex, diverse, dynamic and difficult to control reality as perceived by 'lowers'" (Chambers 1997) and involving them in decision-making.

5. Debriefing the OOC PAC

a. Group Dynamics

Voices from Out of the Cold

One man had many good ideas, but he was taking up a lot of group time presenting his ideas. Unsuccessfully, I tried using the talking stick to even out participation while expressing appreciation for his ideas.

Initially, his spiritual conviction seemed friendly towards the Christian worldview, but later we found it to be somewhat adversary. Also, his plan to bring his companions who did not frequent OOC seemed threatening to the group process. The rest of the group was able to debrief after he left early one time.

Researcher

In part, I believe his assertiveness was also due to my enthusiastic invitation to him and other guests and volunteers. I invited them to help "negotiate plans to improve the dinner, overnight and possibly new programs; and coordinate and carry through plans" as stated in the OOC PAC form.

Voices from Out of the Cold

Jonathan did not want to give the impression that the OOC PAC was going to help with the decision-making. "That was not the intended function of an advisory committee. Ultimately decisions are going to be made by the staff, as I am responsible. If anything went wrong, I am answerable as the program coordinator. Also, this building belongs to the church, and it is the church that must pay for the insurance."

Researcher

Karl, Jonathan and I did not have a clear unified concept of what increased guest participation would look like. For any future OOC PACs, expectations of its roles and responsibilities can be made clearer from the beginning.

The uneven participation of the OOC PAC members was also due to differences in people's confidence to speak up. Jonathan pointed out that this group was too transient to congeal. The people in this group was different from those of the Crossroads PAC committee who would see each other at the drop-in several times a week. Jonathan felt that the really important people to involve in OOC decision-making were the long-term people such as the regular cooks and helpers.

b. Meeting Time

Researcher

There was difficulty getting all the key people together for OOC PAC meetings. Since volunteers were already making Thursday evenings available for OOC, the volunteer coordinator usually scheduled OOC volunteer meetings on Thursdays at 6:00 p.m. about once every three months. Normally he would choose the week when the Kitsilano Community Church was scheduled to cook.

I observed that the volunteers from the Kitsilano Community Church felt removed from the OOC sponsoring church and were not open to involving guests.

Voices from Out of the Cold

One woman from the Kitsilano group said, "We don't have anything to do with them [the Grandview Calvary Baptist Church]."

Another time, after Crossroads closed at 5 p.m., I walked with a couple of the men over to the church where some women from the Kitsilano group were preparing the OOC supper. The two men walked into the kitchen with me and offered their help. These two helped Karl prepare the OOC supper the previous week and really enjoyed it. The women from Kitsilano refused their help. After the men left, the women said to me, "We're not watching the building. Are the doors supposed to be opened yet?"

Researcher

The nature of the interaction or lack thereof with the OOC guests was affected by the extent that they interacted with the Grandview Calvary group. Scheduling the OOC PAC meeting always on their evening to cook would further isolate them. I felt that we should vary the meeting dates so that they would have the option of attending meetings and become more in tune with the rest of the OOC program. Even with trying to include them, only one person from the Kitsilano Community Church attended the OOC PAC and only once.

There were problems with PAC meetings at 6:00 p.m. prior to the OOC supper. Most volunteers were tied up at this OOC PAC meeting and left few volunteers to help prepare the supper itself. Also, because we thought that eating together would help the OOC PAC members get acquainted, the designated cook had to prepare a small meal for 6 p.m. as well as the large OOC supper for 8 p.m., making it doubly busy for that cook. As a result, after the first set of almost weekly meetings dealing with the overcrowding issue, the organizers decided that they could only afford monthly meetings. Unfortunately, there was too much time in between meetings for guests to remember to attend. It was impossible to remind them, because most of the guests who came to the PAC meetings had no contact telephone or e-mail.

c. Whose Voices Were Counted?

OOOC tends to feed and shelter those who are able to make their way to OOC and seek out services. In contrast, the Community Nutritionist of the area also targets the seniors who are housebound and the young children.

Assessment of OOC certainly needs to account for those who attend OOC, but what about those who do not come?

The question of the accounting for the absent women brings to mind a drawback of trying to evaluate the program based on the values of the stakeholders. The values of the stakeholders change based on which stakeholders' voices are counted. Due to the transient nature of many OOC users and the absence of potential ones, the voices of many people would not be heard. There may be some who do not come in contact with the evaluators or they do not volunteer their views when given the opportunity. For cultural or other reasons, some people need personal invitations to contribute their opinions or attend meetings. On the other hand, those voices that are counted tend to be the strongest ones that maintain their presence.

Those who volunteer themselves have the sociocultural, language and emotional aptitude to do so. Some who show interest will not attend meetings or will not attend regularly. Recruiting and retaining participants are important tasks that require one or more person's concerted attention.

C. Other Issues of Interest

1. "Guest" Verses "Family"

Voices from Out of the Cold

One regular Crossroads guest and OOC volunteer was eager to contribute when I interviewed him. However, when I saw him months later, he was no longer involved in OOC or attending the Crossroads drop-in. This man was called a "guest" and a volunteer, but what he described as his desire from Crossroads was "family."

Context

In an interview with Dr. Graham Riches, author of books on Food Banks and Food Democracy, he highlighted to me that "guests" have no rights. Guests receive from the host what the host decides to give.

Researcher

Was it unreasonable to expect family at Crossroads/OOC? What do people mean when they talk about community anyway? Is community not the feeling of knowing and being known, of helping and being helped, of loving and being loved? Is this interaction not "family" in the small scale of a few people?

Realistically, OOC/Crossroads cannot fulfill this desire of family for everyone who attends. Neither would everyone want family. However, those for whom this is a desire, I wonder if there is potential for it. Obviously, this one man thought that there was potential for family at Crossroads/OOC. Otherwise, he would not have involved himself for so long and became so disappointed when it did not happen, as he desired.

Voices from Out of the Cold

When I spoke with Karl who knew this man, Karl was totally unaware of the reasons for him not attending anymore.

Researcher

Juan had some practical suggestions towards more intentional outreach to connect people.

Juan said in an interview, "The staffs don't know how they [guests] feel, what they need. Why they come to Crossroads? First step: have volunteers talk to people to know them. Then, hold meetings weekly of staff and volunteers to talk about the people. Second step: find the help. Staff can talk to the church, 'this person needs this type of thing. Can the church help this kind of people?' Find donations by sending letters to people and getting food donations. Make it big so that you can have more money from the government to help mental people and people on drugs. Too many people think they don't have reason to live. Get to know the people how they feel cold, living on the streets and suicidal."

Researcher

Crossroads volunteers were encouraged to talk to guests and occasional training sessions were offered, but training was not mandatory for all volunteers. The intentional communication in the form of regular meetings that Juan described sounded a bit like the PACs. However, the PACs were working on issues as opposed to focusing on individual's needs. A group that has the aptitude to do outreach among individuals and with the intention to act upon needs could go a long way towards community building as Karl desired. That is, a formalized peer counseling and advocacy-training program for outreach volunteers at OOC and Crossroads could help meet their empowerment goals.

Voices from Out of the Cold

Karl said, "Solid relationships is what people need the most: community building -- one volunteer with one guest."

2. Funding Crisis

Researcher

Currently, Crossroads could barely keep the doors open. It has been facing a funding crisis. Karl's update as of August 2003 was that money donated for setting up Crossroads was running out. Crossroads applied for another grant, but didn't get it. Also, the proceeds from a fundraising dinner was enough to pay for only one-and-a-half month's rent.

Context

Dr. Art Bomke found from Karl that OOC gets about \$6000 in donations for the whole year. Art said to me, "This puts them at about \$115 /week. For the number of people this meal serves, it's only a bit more than a dollar/person. This reminds me of the loaves & fish story where a little can go a long way."

Researcher

Although a little money goes a long way for the food, more resources and people skills are needed for fundraising and management of the programs.

Voices from Out of the Cold

Pastor Tim's update for OOC in March 2003: "We really only have one place where we have gone for

funding ...that money is going to run out in September/October. That money doesn't cover the cost of heating and everything, which is pretty significant, plus the staff time. So actually, we should be doing a better job of fundraising for OOC...and that is partly because we don't have anybody that have the skills or the ability to do that. That is part of the reason why we are looking for a director. Either that or we find people to do that."

3. Need for a Paid OOC Coordinator

Researcher

In order to do those things suggested by people, OOC needs lots of organization.

Voices from Out of the Cold

Dave D. who already put in a lot of volunteer hours said, "If more participation is required, then OOC needs to honour their participation by remunerating them."

Researcher

Jonathan also feels that OOC needs leadership that is paid.

Voices from Out of the Cold

Jonathan said, "OOC lacks a boss. OOC is volunteer-lead. Karl lends small amount of administrative support. For example, no one would have time to read this thesis. Ever so passionate are the OOC volunteers, OOC is a small part of their lives."

Researcher

Jonathan envisions a paid OOC boss who exercises authority in a participatory manner, and who gives people chances to be creative and comfortable within good structures.

Voices from Out of the Cold

Jonathan continued, "This leader would retain the authority to say 'no,' but exercises authority in a manner that is not overbearing. He/she will seek consensus as much as possible, facilitating decision-making. No matter how participatory, the guest and host relationship remains, as this is a church's building

and funded by the church. The church needs to continue making policies and enforcing rules.

First, there is relational authority. For instance, 'You are hurting yourself & me. Can we come up with another way to work out your conflict?' If the person does not respond, the leader must resort to vested authority that is rooted in values of providing a sanctuary environment and yet a place where people feel at home.

Hosts remain hosts, as we have to express our being. We 'invite' others into us, conforming to our habits or we 'accept' that in them (such as the habit of speaking profanity) and actively anticipate that they have something to give us. That is, anticipate that the guest/stranger may provide something that we didn't even know we lack. Therefore, provide contexts for guest-guest, host-host, and guest-host for guests to become hosts like pouring water from jug to jug, not keeping social ground static.

There remains a tension, in religious diversity for example, but healthy tension. For, Jesus critiques every religion, believing in dialogue. Therefore, identify skills/interests, activate and free them.

If we are not free ourselves, we are only exchanging one kind of enslavement to another – mainstream society. Give people chances to be creative and comfortable within good structures."

4. Empowerment Beyond OOC PAC

Researcher

Organizers Dave D. and Jonathan, and some OOC guests share my interest in empowering people through addressing structural issues that encase OOC guests.

Voices from Out of the Cold

Dave D. said that while the political structure hasn't changed, we cannot let the destitute people fall through the cracks. His OOC goals are to prepare a meal, share it, and invite the neighbours 'until further notice.' That is, let's work toward some kind of structural change at the same time. Let's deal with the issues in life that drain resources and also with structure changes.

*Korky said, "These things [poverty] go in cycles.
'Could get better. People like you and me do our part.
The churches have done that. Get churches together.
It's a legitimate political exercise to express themselves
through churches, whatever. For example, Bishop
Remi De Roo speaking with a united voice on poverty;
Reverend Bernice Gerard worked to combat vice. It is
human nature to be compassionate. That's what I have
in common with Christians."*

Context

In an interview with Dr. Graham Riches, he spoke with me about the three pegs of service, education and advocacy. "We have a moral imperative to feed the hungry. However, the problem lies in social policies that affect resources, education, housing, welfare, and so on. How can you get the public to realize and understand the people being ignored? Small agencies such as Grandview Calvary Baptist Church try to help, but the problem is bigger than they can deal with. Agencies doing this type of work have public & political legitimacy and the moral authority when dealing with the public and the government even though they don't think so. Churches are not seen to be making a buck or seeking political gain. Therefore, connect with other agencies and see what's going on in the city. Other than connecting with churches and groups that deal with food, OOC can also contact poverty advocacy groups and environmental groups. There is institutional power if groups act together in the critique of public policy. Education means talking about it.

Researcher

Dr. Riches pointed out reasons that churches could be an effective public voice. On the other hand, Dave D. talked about reasons for church leaders to feel otherwise.

Voices from Out of the Cold

Dave D. thought that churches benefit too much from tax breaks and property right protections to be too political. Religious institutions feel that they don't

carry a lot of weight and there is a momentum for self-preservation. So, they don't want to rock the boat.

In contrast, Jonathan recounted his visit at a parallel agency called The Mustard Seed in Calgary, Alberta. The people of Mustard Seed get together with different disciplines/agencies to talk about people's cases & issues. They have also become effective in speaking up, thereby being a public voice.

Researcher

Exposure to other parallel Christian agencies can be inspirational to Crossroads/OOC organizers.

Context

Dr. Graham Riches continues, "Volunteers/staff training is a means of public education and conflict management. Organizers can also learn much from volunteers who do not come back. Among other questions, an organizer can ask them about their expectations, orientation needs, how they are valued & recognized, and whether there were staff/volunteer tensions."

Researcher

Volunteer training, ongoing volunteer management and follow-up of volunteers who do not come back are not only vital to the running of OOC, they also have the potential of empowering individuals, educating the public, and improving OOC.

D. Food at OOC

1. Food Quality

Context

Pastor Tim Dickau said that another important component of OOC is obviously the food. "People are running out of food. OOC has a healthy meal and a meal that tastes good. A healthy meal is important, but a meal that tastes good also helps people feel worthwhile."

Researcher

OOC guests gave high points to the food at OOC.

Voices from Out of the Cold

"The ones (meals programs) that stand out for quality of food are the First Baptist on Burrard and here."

"Meals here in general are very good. Good salad -- creative, sometimes with nuts and fruits."

"Entrée has some care to it. Always know will enjoy it."

"The taste, the amount usually plenty to go around."

"I just came from a place that had Macaroni, canned peas & carrots. I said 'no thank you.' A place that serves every time white bread, eggs, bacon, muffins... it's not very good. I try to eat so I don't get sick. Fresh fruits & vegetables, whole grains, cheese...are good. This [chicken meal] is good...much better than other place. This is a lot more work than Macaroni & cheese."

Joyce said, "They do serve the best as far as fresh vegetables and salad and fresh fruit out of anywhere I have eaten...as far as a free meal out of anywhere in the city, other than Union Gospel Mission...it's pretty good."

"A choice of vegetarian and non-vegetarian. That is very rare, so that is major bonus."

Researcher

To OOC guests, OOC food was creatively prepared, had some care to it, was tasty, had sufficient amounts and variety, was nutritious, had fresh vegetables and fruits, and had a choice of vegetarian and non-vegetarian.

Voices from Out of the Cold

Other aspects of good food as revealed by OOC guests:

"When people make the food eat their own food, you know there is nothing wrong. You know they've done a good job. You would wonder if you go to a place where they don't eat their own food. Why would they fear eating their own food?"

"Don't look at donated food as good. Quite often food is outdated. If outdated, not fit for consumption. The only way to get good food is pay for it. That's the problem with all the rising cost."

Chuck said, "Sticks to the ribs. Also, pork & beans: I like the taste; it reminds me of home."

I'll be full of chocolate [while eating her ice cream with a generous amount of chocolate sauce]."

Noah said, "Tastes good, looks appetizing."

"No ice cream. I am allergic to dairy."

Researcher

OOO guests also spoke about other aspects of good food: "Nothing wrong" or safe enough for the people who make the food, not outdated, gives satiety, reminded people of home, not a lot of sweets, looked appetizing, and had options for commonly allergenic foods.

The above OOC voices that spoke about how they perceived good food can inform OOC organizers who want to help people feel worthwhile by providing good quality food.

Besides the information I gathered from OOC guests in this study, I will also examine how the literature defines food quality?

Context

In Meiselman's (2001) examination of food quality in different contexts, he emphasizes the complex nature of food quality and the need to examine it from multiple dimensions. The guests from OOC view quality from the consumption and service perspectives. That is, they judge OOC food quality as they eat it and as they experience it in the setting in which it was served to them. Another important perspective is the product perspective with which food scientists, food technologists and some production cooks look at food product quality. They may look at biochemical characteristics, with a focus on defect avoidance and conformance to specifications.

From the consumers' perspective, product acceptability is relative and situational based on perceived value in food products, among other things. For example, the *low fat* nutritional "characteristic" is linked to the "consequences" of *slimming* and *social acceptance* that

lead to the "values" of *self-confidence* and *self-esteem*. Other characteristics that are linked to values include agricultural origin (that is, environmental impact, ethical treatment of animals and pesticide content); convenience that allow consumer control of time, new foods and tastes to meet a desire for adventure and variety; and price that is in line with the consumer budget.

Different food service environments also impact the perception of food quality. Consumers rated differently identical food served in different locations. The implications of this are many. For example, expectations could be problematic for a food outlet with good reputations, as it risks failure to meet the high expectations; and for an institutional food service where customers often expect less quality, customers may not recognize better quality when they receive it (Meiselman 2001).

Researcher

In contrast to having the power to choose at a grocer or restaurant, OOC guests have little control over food quality at OOC. Options such as the non-vegetarian entrée, condiments and drink flavours that give guests some individual choice become important to the overall perceived food and service quality. Thus also, the changes made through the OOC PAC in an attempt to deal with overcrowding in the dining hall probably also contributed to the perception of food and service quality.

a. Nutrient Assessment of OOC meals

I conducted a nutrition appraisal of thirteen OOC supper meals that I observed being served.

To determine the proportion of their daily intake being met by OOC, I asked OOC users at the table and during interviews questions such as, "Would you say this is more or less than half of the food you are eating today?"

Voices from Out of the Cold

In response to the question about the day's proportion of their food eaten at OOC, the answer varied greatly:

My OOC friend said, "This is it. Can't remember when I have had breakfast. Ate 40 times lunch in the past 4 years. Ate about 20 times a month. I'm not at the Union Gospel Mission everyday. Yesterday, 'tried getting in, but it was packed...for both seatings. Near the end of the month, everyone is broke. 'Having money problems...the last 10 days is quite hard."

If I don't have money and if I hadn't eaten at The Kettle, it would be my first meal of the day.

Before, it was more than half, even three-quarters...most people would have. Now, it's less than a half. I would have eaten a couple of times before coming to the dinner.

Researcher

Since I expected that there would be a wide range of responses, I also conducted a qualitative assessment comparing the meals with Canada's Food Guide for Healthy Eating. By incorporating both quantitative and qualitative nutritional assessment of a sample of meals, I am able to provide some nutritional recommendations to the program organizers.

i. Computer Nutrient Analysis

Using a computer nutritional analysis program⁵, I calculated the nutrient averages of thirteen suppers and made comparisons against their Recommended Nutrient Intake (RNI).

I attended five breakfasts, but I did not include the results of the computer nutrient analysis here.

Since I was able to get recipes for only some of the meals, quantities were estimated – both the amount per serving and amount consumed. This analysis is based on an average of 1.5 servings per person and based on the observation that many people had second servings although not all. One serving provides about 1/3 of the calories needed per day.

RNIs were set for the average healthy 40-year-old male whose goal is weight maintenance.

Each meal includes 3 cups of coffee with milk and sugar.

⁵ Food Smart computer nutrient analysis program.

OOC suppers

See Appendix VIII for nutrient analysis summary of the regular suppers.

Per serving, most nutrients were at or above 1/3 of Recommended Nutrient Intake (RNI). Regular suppers were low⁶ in Vitamin E and borderline adequate⁷ in fibre, calcium and vitamin D.

For those who do not eat well for the rest of the day and/or the rest of the week, they would not get adequate amounts of those nutrients to meet RNIs. Some people had conditions that mean higher requirements for some nutrients. For example, those who are underweight from illness would require high protein, high calorie and increased micronutrients. Those people who smoke require high vitamin C. Those people who consume excessive alcohol require high thiamin. The younger, larger or more physically active person such as one who does physical labour would also have higher RNIs.

OOC Vegetarian suppers

Per serving, most nutrients were at or above 1/3 of Recommended Nutrient Intake (RNI).

OOC Vegetarian suppers also tend to be low in Vitamin B12 and Vitamin E.

They are borderline adequate in, fibre, vitamin D and zinc.

ii. Qualitative Nutritional Assessment

Overall, the nutritional quality of OOC meals is fairly good. However, there is room for improvement. Small changes can make significant improvements.

From the voices of OOC guests, we know that donated foods often are comprised of sweets, and other refined or processed foods that are low in micronutrients. Although OOC received some food donations, cooks had the option of purchasing the food. OOC can buy the highest possible nutritional quality for the money.

Ideally, each meal would have all the food groups represented in the relative quantities recommended.

⁶ I define Low as below 16 % or below of RNI

⁷ I define Borderline Adequate as 17 to 23% of RNI

That is, the largest quantity of grains especially whole grains, second largest quantity of vegetables and fruits with an emphasis on the dark green or orange vegetables, third largest quantity of milk and milk products with an emphasis on the lower fat products, and the least quantity of meat and alternatives.

Although whole grains were used, there were many more opportunities to increase whole grains in the OOC menu. Including more whole grains would bring fibre and Vitamin E closer to adequate levels. Instead of using refined grains, use the whole grain equivalents. That is, minimize the use of white rice, white bread, and pastas and cereals from refined grains; maximize the use of brown rice, 100% whole wheat bread, whole-wheat pastas, and pancake and cereals made with whole grains.

OOC supper meals were generally abundant in vegetables as there were usually fresh vegetables in the main entrée and a salad. Vegetables provide many important vitamins and minerals. Fruit was sometimes served as a dessert, part of the dessert or part of the salad. However, fruits can be used even more often to replace the sweets. Fruit flavoured drinks were used often as they were less expensive than 100% fruit juices. Nevertheless, I noticed an effort to use more 100% fruit juices towards the end of the time when I recorded the menus. There tended to be some 100% fruit juice or fresh fruit for each breakfast.

Milk and milk products are low in the menu. With the exceptions when cheese or ice cream was used in the meal and milk for cereal, there were meals with no milk or milk products. Some ideas for increasing milk in the menus include adding milk, cheese and/or milk powder in sauces, casseroles, baked goods; or use milk or yogurt as a side condiment or topping for fruit as a dessert.

Since there are some people who are milk intolerant, it is best to always provide alternatives that do not contain milk or the option of withholding milk. For example, if the main entrée were made with a cream sauce, the vegetarian entrée could be made milk free. An example for dessert is chopped fruit with milk or without milk added.

The protein most often used in the OOC suppers was chicken. The quantity of protein provided for most meals was good. However, more beans and lentils could be used in both the regular and the vegetarian entrées. Beans and lentils would supplement the protein, vitamin E, calcium, zinc, selenium, and folate. Nuts, seeds, or nut/seed butters are also good proteins that can be used as side condiments or toppings. Although I did not encounter people who were allergic to nuts, nut allergy with life-threatening symptoms may yet be a concern.

Sometimes, the vegetarian entrée was simply the main entrée without the meat. It is important that sufficient amounts of an alternative protein such as beans, lentils, nuts and/or seeds, or products made with these (such as tofu from beans) is added to the vegetarian entrée. Otherwise, the vegetarian meal would be low in many nutrients important to vegetarians. Vitamin B12 would be low if there is no animal product. However, some vegetarians eat eggs and dairy products that contain Vitamin B12. These could also be optional for the vegetarian entrée. For example, some hard-boiled eggs or cheese slices could be given on the side for the vegetarians.

Voices from Out of the Cold

Korky had a good suggestion for inexpensive healthy foods that can be available in case people were still hungry after the meal. He suggested preparing some extra cooked brown rice or whole potatoes.

Researcher

Brown rice and whole potatoes are hot foods that are easy to prepare and highly nutritious. They can be used with readily available condiments such as butter and/or soy sauce, and brown rice can be re-used if frozen (not potato). This would be quite feasible especially if the menu already included brown rice or potatoes. Along the same idea, extra 100% whole wheat bread and a jar of peanut butter can be made available after the main entrée is served.

Voices from Out of the Cold

One OOC friend said, "Coffee and cigarettes are married together. If I drink coffee in the morning, I'll be lighting up a cigarette. 'Want to quit.'"

Researcher

Coffee is served at OOC and many people consume high quantities. The staff understood that multiple cups of coffee with lots of sugar within an hour must not be good. Not only does this feed many people's addiction to coffee and sugar, this interacts with other substances whether prescribed or not prescribed. An alternative is to serve decaffeinated coffee. Also, decaffeinated or herbal teas are not expensive if loose leave bulk type teas were used.

b. Researcher as a Dietitian

Voices from Out of the Cold

Some people had conditions that may have affected their nutritional needs: infected painful tooth, vitamin B12 deficiency related to vegetarianism, weight gain very quickly as a result of struggling with depression, smoking and drug addiction.

I tried to minimize my identity as a dietitian. There was one time when Jonathan the program coordinator called me to speak with a Crossroads Drop-In guest who had hypoglycemia. This guest was sharing with the program coordinator about his condition and Jonathan started to counsel him on foods until he realized that I was there and passed him to me. I spoke with him for a few minutes and tried to answer some of his questions.

My presence was influential in the food choices of the staff, as they knew my dietitian identity. Several times the staff spoke with me about their opinions about the food offered at Crossroads and OOC, and they asked me about my opinions. Also, they verbalized to me their choice of some foods because of nutrition-related reasons – both when the foods are nutritious and when they are not. However, most people at Crossroads identified me as a student as opposed to a dietitian.

2. Food Safety

Voices from Out of the Cold

Jonathan N. has a chronic painful syndrome. He said to me that he does not like OOC so much. "I could not stand the smell of alcohol," he said. Some people who go to OOC are heavy with the smell. Then, there was the time when he was in line behind a man who looked like a dumpster diver. His hands were dirty and had many cuts. Jonathan N. showed me how he was holding his plate out with his thumbs inside the plate. When a server put the food on the plate, he took one look at food and poured it back on the serving pan. Jonathan N. said, "When I saw that, I was totally turned off. I am a sick person and I didn't need more germs in my system." "Forgive me God...forgive me God," Jonathan N. said several times as he recounted the story to me. He felt angry with the man, as he was sick "because of bacteria" and he was in the hospital for it. I asked him if I could write up this story. At first, he said no. He did not want to be the catalyst for people not getting fed. I explained to him that someone came up with the idea of passing the plate down the servers' side instead of the guests' side. This story would give the background to the change. Then, he consented.

Researcher

This story brings to surface issues related to food safety. OOC guests wisely came up with many ideas to decrease the food safety risk. For example, volunteers who handle food could be told to wash their hands; to wear hairnets and disposable gloves; have vaccinations for Hepatitis; and be tested for TB. The serving spoon should not touch the plate especially if the plate is used for second servings.

Voices from Out of the Cold

One man found a piece of long blond hair in his dessert. He sounded, "ewww" a couple of times and returned it to the servers.

Brian advised, "When people come in and they want to volunteer. Tell them first go to the sink put some soap on, wash your hands. Street people might not do that

on a regular basis. 'Can't judge people about keeping clean.'

Researcher

As a helper and cook in the OOC kitchen, I have also observed incidents of fair sanitary and food handling practices by the cooks and helpers.

Voices from Out of the Cold

An OOC guest and volunteer was cutting vegetables in the kitchen when a man came into the kitchen. They introduced themselves to each other. She offered her hand out to shake his. After they shook hands and without washing her hands first, she returned to cutting vegetables.

In trying to find something in a drawer, something else fell out onto the ground. He quickly picked it up and threw it back in the drawer.

Researcher

Such incidents may be prevented if helpers had previous training in safe food handling, and sanitary practices can be easily reinforced if OOC had a consistent and effective supervisor.

There are so many things involved in preparing an OOC meal that adequate supervision of off-the-street volunteers without previous orientation is difficult.

3. Researcher as a Cook

I cooked two meals in total. The first time (August 2, 2001) was when a First Nations couple that came from a reserve was unable to come through with a salmon meal that I helped them plan. They were not able to get the fish at a low price. Since we were scheduled to cook, they helped me cook a Chinese meal instead. The second meal that I cooked (September 6, 2001) was because the volunteer coordinator was not able to find any cooks for that evening.

These cooking experiences provided me much insight. The feeling of being on the opposite side of the process from being a guest was interesting. It took me many hours to prepare and cook each meal. I worked out the menu with the staff and other guests at the Crossroads Drop-In. I estimated the large quantities and planned it

around the cooking facilities available. Although the volunteer coordinator expressed that I should not worry too much about going over budget, I was given \$125 as the goal to which I should aim. Although I tried to keep costs low, I feared that I didn't have enough food. It turned out that I was quite a bit over the budget the first time. I even got discounts on the chicken from the nearby poultry shop for large quantity purchasing. For the second time, I took my menu and shopping list to compare prices around the area before I purchased the items. Still, I went over budget, even though not as much as the first time.

The cooking process was interesting. Although I have done some large quantity cooking, the first times using the kitchen equipment were challenging. I had to learn where the food and equipment were stored. I had to adjust to the size of pots and pans, the amount of oven and stovetop space, the temperature of the elements and so on. Related to this were the planning of the sequence that foods should be prepared and the amount of time that it takes for the different items to cook. There was much physical labour in preparing the meal: washing, cutting and moving large volumes of food, and utilizing heavy equipment.

On both cooking occasions, I started the meal planning and preparation the day before. From speaking with other cooks, they also had to start at least one day in advance. Then, on the day of the OOC supper, sometimes cooks start as early as noon, sometimes as late as 3:30 p.m. or 4 p.m. depending on the menu. Then, cooks do not finish until at least 9 p.m. when all the items are served and leftovers dealt with.

I tried to recruit guests to help me shop as the weight and volume of food that I had to purchase and transport back to the church was beyond what I could manage. Besides, these were further opportunities to spend time with guests. For both meals, guests from the Crossroads Drop-In either offered their help or I asked them. It took concentration to think ahead to organize the preparation of each item and to involve the helpers. I asked them what tasks they would like to do give what has to be done. I tried to give them tasks that they felt comfortable doing and thanked them through the process.

At the start of one of the meals, Tammy's twelve-year-old son was with her ready to help serve the food. I said that the hot chicken needs to be served by an adult, but later forgot to assign him a task. He ended up getting a plate of food and eating by himself. I felt bad that I didn't include him. Karl said that this is his experience too. When he's dealing with so many people & things, he finds himself "stepping on someone" unintentionally.

Nevertheless, the volunteer coordinator was really pleased that I involved so many of the Crossroads guests in the kitchen. It inspired him to leave one week of the month in his OOC kitchen volunteers schedule for Crossroads guests. Prior to my opportunities to cook, he recruited mostly volunteers who were not also OOC guests.

E. Alternative Ideas and Suggestions

1. Aunt Leah's and Coffee House

Researcher

I attended the first ever Crossroads Fundraiser Dinner. It was so lovely and I had such a good time that I started yearning for OOC to be a bit more like this.

Voices from Out of the Cold

When I entered the hall for the Crossroads Fundraiser Dinner, I was greeted by two ladies who found my name on a list and took my money. The room was kept dim mostly lit up by candles. Each table was covered with a white table center with a tall yellow candle surrounded by several small white tea lights. Each place setting was complete with yellow paper napkins pulled through the handle of cups that were laid upside down, tumblers, cutlery and side plate. Each table had its own set of butter, cream, and sugar. On top of the piano sat a large flower arrangement and the walls were decorated with hangings and drawings. A classical violinist complemented the chattering of the seated crowd. Dave D. hosted the evening setting the tone that everyone will really enjoy the evening. Before the meal, he gave a brief run down of the evening naming the menu, the music entertainment, the poetry reading, the personal story and so on. Crossroads

regulars served the tables as waiters and waitresses, each serving two tables for the evening. They poured the juice for each person returning to ask if we wanted more. They brought the breadbasket, the entrées already served on individual plates, and then the coffee, tea, or herbal tea. Dave announced that we can ask for seconds by saying that the violinist is probably hungry, but if we want him to play some more, just keep eating. Between the music and the story, Dave called people table by table to get their dessert from a long table near the kitchen. He did not draw numbers, just pointed which table is next.

Researcher

This is the type of evening that can happen for all the OOC users, not just in a fundraising event. OOC can be a training post for people going through formal programs that train people to cook, host, wait on people and even entertain.

The fundraising event reminded me of Aunt Leah's as well as comments people made to me about their dreams.

Voices from Out of the Cold

One time during the summer, an OOC guest who was not familiar to me told me about Aunt Leah's. He said, "I haven't been here in a few months because I have been going to Aunt Leah's. There are three locations. They run from September to June. Aunt Leah's helps kids get off the street. The churches buy the food, train people to cook and serve it. There is a donation box for the food. They wait on you, telling you the menu & bringing the food out to you. More than a charitable ministry."

Another time, Teresa commented about OOC, "I'd like a coffee house after dinner to share talents."

Another person said, "A low cost café – that would be something nice to see on the drive."

Roger, a volunteer, told me about a program that he liked, "There is a new program in Reno. People get served. People line-up outside, but it's totally different from the Union Gospel Mission."

Researcher

OOC could be more like an Aunt Leah's training program with a Coffee House. More coordinating and professional input would be necessary in such a program. However, efforts could also be concentrated in fewer meals a month and when most needed. Community kitchens and overnight stays with breakfasts can fill in the gaps.

Voices from Out of the Cold

While some people were still eating, volunteers started wiping tables and chairs. The smell of the disinfectant was not appetizing.

A volunteer came with a bucket and cloth said to Terrance and I who were the only ones left talking at the dining table, "don't mind me," and started wiping the table. I felt compelled to put away my dishes. Even though I said that I would be right back, Terrance left after I got up.

Researcher

The clean-up crew has the effect of rushing people through their meals and conversations. If there was entertainment after the meal, an earlier meal may be necessary. An earlier meal could also have the effect of giving more time between the meal and the clean up.

2. Start the Supper Earlier for the Women?

Starting supper earlier may be important for welcoming women to OOC.

Context

In a brief encounter with Dr. Patricia Spittal, researcher who has been conducting the Vancouver Injection Drug User Study (VIDUS) mostly in the Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, I asked her if she might have any insight about the reason that few women come to OOC. Without hesitation, she asked me the time of the meal. I told her, "8 p.m." She said, "There's your answer. The women are working at that time."

Researcher

Although the drug use and prostitution around OOC is not nearly as intense as that of the Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, the same rationale may apply. I imagine that those women in greatest need for food and reconnection in a community meal are the drug users caught up in prostitution, the Mental Healthcare Users, the elderly, the transient young people, and the single women with children. If they were not working on the street, they may simply prefer to stay in after dark. Except for a few months in the summer when days are long, making their way to and from OOC would be in the dark. I imagine that most categories of women mentioned would prefer earlier meals.

3. Regular Volunteers to Serve OOC Guests

Roger, a volunteer, said, "Last night, lots of people were complaining. Servers wouldn't give out both the vegetarian food and the regular. How would you feel if you go through the line every week, then see a sixteen year old girl who you've never seen before and she change the rules. Usually, you get both unless you say you don't want something. I get both when I go through the line unless I said no. Putting a ladle in her hand seems like giving her power -- her position is elevated above theirs."

Karl added, "If we get a lot of volunteers, people would want to serve. You should have seen the girls saying that they want to serve. That's what they come to do is to serve. It seems to make them feel better to serve than to work in the kitchen."

Roger concluded, "If a regular gets treated this way, of course they get upset, and feel degraded. Only regulars should be on the line-up to serve food. It'd be more like a friendship greeting people by name and treating people with respect. And, that would improve consistency."

That week when Roger spoke to me, I heard a related story from Daisy who came late to OOC. Most people finished eating even their seconds. She said, "Didn't get meat this time. Last time, got no chicken. Just got half a spoon vegetarian. He wouldn't give the chicken"

saying, 'Come back for seconds.' When I came back, there were none left."

William commented, "A lot of the services for the poor are for the feeling of superiority as opposed to genuinely raising the quality of life for the abused, downtrodden."

Researcher

Previous to these incidents, volunteers inconsistently served both regular and vegetarian entrées. At times when volunteers tried to serve either one of the entrées, they were met with unhappy guests.

If regular volunteers who are familiar to guests were to serve the meals, there could be greater consistency and more personable interactions.

Voices from Out of the Cold

A young OOC guest unfamiliar to me said, "We didn't know there was a vegetarian entrée. Make a sign for vegetarian and non-vegetarian foods so people will ask for it."

One time when I cooked a meal, I recruited an OOC guest to help prepare a poster welcoming people to the meal & listing the menu items. He placed the poster fairly close to the food on the sidewall. Not many people looked at it. I realized that people's attention was on the food in front of them when they got to that spot.

Researcher

To help people feel more informed and welcomed, a black or white erasable board for presenting the menu and any announcements can be placed near the entrance.

4. People Coming Together to Cook as in a Community Kitchen?

Researcher

Jonathan wanted to strengthen other food programs such as community kitchens to complement OOC and decrease its crowdedness.

Voices from Out of the Cold

In response to my question about their thoughts on cooking together with other people, two women OOC guests said...

"No, I do not cook. Used to cook at one point like most people, then things changed. 'Had enough. Society freaking broke me. It's hard enough to get up and wash the hair. I think about eating but don't get around to doing it. At least if I come here, I eat."

"Not the way I run my life. I went to one a couple of times, then no more. Another woman had a hard time working with other people. She was asked to see a counsellor after she dumped out the beef fat."

Researcher

Community Kitchen is not for everyone. The few who are interested may need special considerations such as cooking and storing food for living alone or on the street. Some may need good facilitation to prevent and work through conflicts.

Voices from Out of the Cold

Chuck said, "It'd have to be the kind of food that is portable, not table food – catered to people living alone."

Korky commented, "I wonder how it would work if someone didn't have any food. You might have some conflicts amongst people about how things should be done. Taking people who don't know each other and people who are more stressed out generally. The way it is now, people are already together... people from the church. There's a bond among them. Myself, I might try participating...if I am available and not much other to do."

Researcher

The kitchen at the church where OOC runs would be a suitable kitchen for a community kitchen program. However, there would be limited access to the church kitchen.

Voices from Out of the Cold

Chuck who was homeless said, "My ideal kitchen is spacious, something like the church with a bench in the middle...can chop things up... lots of light."

Researcher

For homeless people and others who want to cook and eat on a drop-in basis, an accessible kitchen at the Crossroads house would complement a more coordinated one at the church. The stove/oven at the Crossroads house remained non-functional for many months as the landlord did not want the fire risk. This posed limitations on how much people can cook. They had a microwave oven that could heat small portions of food and a kettle for heating water.

Other issues prevented guests from using the Crossroads kitchen as a community kitchen. For example, supplies disappeared when people felt free to help themselves. This made fair management of the supplies difficult. The staff was creating a transition where only certain people who were trained "hosts" could access the supplies.

Context

Vancouver has a paid Community Kitchens coordinator. (For support and information about Community Kitchens, see website <http://www.communitykitchens.ca/>.)

5. People Growing Food Together?

In concert with my goal to see OOC in its contexts, Wendell Berry (1990) suggests that we extend our pleasure of eating by observation and/or experience of food production and preparation, to the extent that we can. In particular, he suggests the following:

- Grow something to eat in a pot or garden if there is one; learn what is involved in healthy gardening by observation and/or experiences.
- Make a compost of kitchen scraps and use it for fertilizer.
- Learn the origins of the food you buy, and buy the food that is produced closest to your home. The locally produced food is the most secure, the freshest, and the easiest for local consumer to know about and to influence.

- Think big. Ask the global questions about foods: how does this food or that practice fit in the food system? Is it sustainable?
- Become familiar with enjoyable diets comprised of locally grown organic foods.
- Link up with others and be creative together to re-integrate the parts of the food system.

Researcher

The organizers at Crossroads initiated a garden in the backyard of the Crossroads house during the summer when I spent time there.

Conveniently, this coincided with my interest to explore the alternative of people growing food together.

One of the volunteers organized the garden helpers and I offered to help.

Initially, Jonathan was concerned about soil contamination by paint & other materials used for house construction, and by the dog's excrement. It turned out that the dog moved to another home before they started turning a grassy area slightly removed from the house.

Many people came to help including turning the grass, removing the rocks, designing a walking path through the patch, planting, watering, weeding, harvesting and so on.

Voices from Out of the Cold

As I was preparing the soil with some volunteers, Joyce reminisced several times how working with the soil reminded her of pleasant times in her childhood.

Researcher

Planting the Crossroads garden was a good experience for most people. Particularly rewarding was the hardy Marigolds that decorated many tables at OOC.

However, I learned some things to keep in mind for future community gardens especially in public areas. This includes protecting gardeners from injury and theft.

Voices from Out of the Cold

One time, I found a syringe on the soil. Fortunately, it was on top of the soil such that I saw it before I touched it. Thereafter, I tried to remember to wear garden gloves every time I worked in the garden.

Noah said, "I 'd been involved in the community garden at Cottonwood gardens. We all ended up ripping up each other's food. I take a little bit of their food and they take a bit of my food without telling. They took all my corn. Only a couple of people ended up getting food that they planted. Six of us on one garden...my patch was about 5 by 3 feet. I didn't do it again. I got busy with other stuff."

Jonathan said, "The Victoria Park is big...especially the centre of it for planting a community garden. Theft could be a problem. But, 'could give half of it to the transient young people who hang out at the park and get them involved to look after it."

Researcher

I asked OOC guests about their thoughts on community gardening. Here are some of their comments:

William responded, "I support that. Some form of agrarian society that brings us back in touch with life. We don't allow cows, pigs, horses. High rises should have a green house, grow vertically on south-facing wall or balcony. Plant fruit trees. Let fish into streams. Tear down concrete. Set up farms and offer rides to the country."

Another man said, "I am not living in a place where I can grow things in the yard. There is concrete. I like the idea of growing things for my own consumption. The stuff will probably taste good, because it is organic."

"I'm not much of a gardener. Not my favourite."

Researcher

Crossroads and the church participate in the recycling of plastic, cardboard, refundable containers. However, I had not seen efforts to compost organic kitchen waste. Enclosed outdoor composts could decrease the garbage load and feed the garden.

6. Purchase Food From Local Farmers and From Wholesalers

Context

As shown in Appendix II, primary food products potentially go through many hands. Instead of selling the product via a broker, packinghouse or wholesaler, some farmers have chosen to bypass these "middlemen" and sell directly to eaters. Decreasing the number of transactions in the food chain is potentially economically advantageous. Spending locally allows money to circulate and multiply in the community. It provides opportunities for local businesses and increased employment (Bullock, 2000).

Researcher

If OOC were to buy products directly from primary producers such as farms in the lower mainland, the primary producer can capture a greater portion of the profit margin and OOC could save some money.

7. Ongoing Evaluation

Researcher

The stakeholders of OOC are changing and the contexts in which OOC sits are changing. Ongoing evaluation such as through an OOC PAC would help people involved in this dynamic program to keep focused on the reasons for OOC, and to maintain relevancy by encouraging creative activities to meet the changing needs.

F. Secondary Investigator Questions the Practicality of Program Ideas

Researcher

To maximize the quality of this research, I built in rigor-enhancing strategies. One of them was to build redundancy into data collection methods. I requested Dr. Art Bomke to be a secondary investigator. He served as a source of data confirmation by assessing the believability of my report based on his experience in the same situation.

Secondary Investigator

Dr. Art Bomke who visited the OOC supper said, "I have no problem with believability of the report. However, I have some questions as to the practicality of some of your recommendations, useful though they may be to ensure better standards of food safety and quality by more training. My impression is that the volunteers have already reached their maximum capacity. How will you get them to put more time in than they already do? This, along with the very tiny budget may be the biggest constraints to sustaining the OOC program. This seems to support Graham Riches' arguments that downloading social services to NGOs is not satisfactory."

Researcher

This is a real dilemma. Community-organized poverty-relief initiatives arise due to government cutbacks, but in turn these initiatives allow the government to evade its responsibility for maintaining an adequate public safety net. At this point, withdrawing programs to make a point to government would be morally difficult. It would be also unsatisfying to allay program improvement ideas. What are the options?

One option is to keep the program afloat while organizers advocate for funding and support. One example for getting support from government sources is recruiting publicly funded professionals such as the area Community Nutritionist, Health Inspector, Nurse and Social Worker to train volunteers. OOC can also explore partnerships with community college training programs.

Although volunteers appear to have reached maximum capacity, more guests could be given support, training and formal recognition to be volunteers, a type of empowerment that could be of benefit to them.

Secondary Investigator

Art responded to my comments above by saying, "My thoughts stray to Dr. Alejandro Rojas's concept of utopia and how utopia may not be possible. However, being aware of utopian concepts may help us to get closer to them. The question is, given the withdrawal of governments from social programs and the increased reliance on volunteerism and NGOs, could the

government be called upon to provide meaningful support for the private sector efforts. Having the community nutritionist involved in volunteer training, etc could be used as an example. Providing politically realistic options for government may be useful in the near term to keep good programs afloat. You do have to draw a line, however, below which government participation is unacceptable.

Anything that can be done to empower the guests to help themselves is a good thing. But, again, this will require some volunteer time and energy."

G. Implications of Study Findings for Policies, Programs, Services or Practices

This chapter weaves together my report of what I discovered at OOC and my literature review. Some topics in my literature search prompted strands of OOC voices to be brought in; some topics raised through OOC prompted my literature search.

If we looked at OOC in isolation, this study may have been adequate for meeting the urgent needs of OOC. However, comparing and contrasting perspectives at OOC with that from the literature review and secondary data and in enlarging geographic contexts, the outcomes of the study have enhanced transferability.

A summary of the theories in this chapter that may have implications for policies, programs, services or practices related to people who need free meals or shelter include the following:

1. Malnutrition that food programs try to address is a serious global problem. Specifically, poverty-related hunger and micronutrient deficiency incur great costs to individuals and the society.
2. Some health professionals prefer community development projects that give a "hand up" instead of a "hand out" as charity is viewed to do. However, participation in community development projects usually requires people to have some degree of stability and hope that many do not have.
3. Community-organized food programs provide emergency relief, as political and economic structural changes occur slowly. Community sit-down meals also provide social contexts that facilitate relationships, which are important to reconnect isolated people with the rest of the community and vice versa, and important for empowerment on other levels.
4. Empowerment opportunities are important for people who do not have the resources to free themselves from whatever entraps them in poverty. Since power is expandable and experienced in relationship with things and people, empowerment occurs in relationship with others at various levels, such as at the level of the individual, group, and community, and occurs within sociological, psychological, economic, and other dimensions. Practical experience in trying to

empower people taught OOC organizers that much care is needed in the placement of people and in maintaining good structures within which people can be comfortable and creative.

5. Although community-organized poverty-relief initiatives arise due to government cutbacks, these programs in turn allow the government to evade its responsibility for maintaining an adequate public safety net. One option is to keep programs afloat while organizers advocate for funding and support. An example of calling upon the government to provide meaningful support to private sector efforts is requesting publicly funded professionals to assist with volunteer training.
6. Another example of advocacy for massive structural changes is educating the public. Many people in our society are not aware of poverty-related needs. For instance, poverty is the primary cause of hunger and the growing need for emergency food programs. In British Columbia, the increasing cost of eating coupled with decreasing social services make hard-pressed people even more desperate. People cope by using food banks and soup kitchens in order to save money for other essential expenses such as transportation, utilities, and hygiene supplies. Even with the assistance of such food programs, special dietary needs are particularly difficult to meet.
7. Seeing OOC in global and agroecological contexts led to the question, "How would this program look if long-term sustainable food security for everyone equitably were a goal?" Program objectives would be holistic and encompassing humane/spiritual development, social equity, economic stability, and ecological soundness.
8. Helping people increase their awareness of food origins may lead to a number of benefits that include: decreasing reliance on expensive value-added foods advertised to us; decreasing need for imported products that get to us at ecological, social and food safety costs; supporting local economies; and encouraging local farmers and communities to provide a range of agricultural products that promotes diversity and regional self-reliance. Activities such as gardening, preparing foods together and buying from local sources could help people increase awareness of food origins.
9. Networking with other programs in the area takes time away from frontline work, but it is important in helping to "close the gaps."
10. Volunteer training, ongoing volunteer management and follow-up of volunteers who do not come back are not only vital to the running of programs, they also have the potential of empowering individuals, educating the public, and improving the programs.
11. One suggestion for community building was through training a group of people who have the aptitude to do outreach. They would be a coherent supportive group meeting regularly among themselves with the intention of reaching out to know other people and connecting them with resources.
12. Even though volunteers are passionately interested in the program, the program is only a small part of their lives. There are many limitations to a reliance on

voluntarism, especially in coordinating roles. Namely, all the aspects of the program that are affected by consistency, such as maintenance of safety standards and establishment of trusting relationships, may be compromised.

13. Disruptive incidents that pose risk to the safety of other people and/or to a good atmosphere are generally not in line with program goals. There needs to be strategies and/or guidelines to prevent and manage incidents especially in a volunteer-run program.
14. In crowded environments such as in a free community meal, some people who are usually under much stress and/or under the influence of addictive substances at the time find themselves in conflict with others. Yet they need a welcoming meal. At the least, controls are needed to limit crowdedness and other common environmental stressors. Personable interactions with regular volunteers or staff are important in maintaining a welcoming atmosphere. Also influential are music, smells, signage and decor.
15. Providing good food is important in helping people feel worthwhile. Food quality perception is relative depending on personal values and the setting in which the food is served. As part of food quality assurance, nutritional assessment of the meals and food safety training for food handlers could be quite helpful.
16. Many people prefer meals that are not given in exchange for religious expressions such as sermons or prayers. Yet, some people feel that these belong in the church. There are creative ways of respectfully providing for guests' felt need of spiritual nourishment without making it mandatory for all. However, such opportunities also risk being so well hidden that people do not become aware of them.
17. Determining the target population may be highly influential on the program. For example, encouraging elderly people and women who are in low attendance to the program may entail changing program time.
18. From this study's experience of community-based group work for the purposes of participant empowerment and program improvement, we learned a number of important elements including the following:
 - a. Expectations of the group's roles and responsibilities to be made clear from the beginning.
 - b. Time and opportunities for group members to become comfortable working with one another.
 - c. Meetings scheduled to accommodate the long-term regular stakeholders as well as the guests who need adequate meeting frequency for continuity.
 - d. Recruit group members through both open announcements and personal invitations in order to provide fair opportunity to everyone including those who may not have the self-confidence to come forward in response to announcements.
19. The "host-guest" relationship works well in a program where structure and flexibility are needed. Hosts who offer their hospitality receive among themselves program participants called guests. Hosts are answerable to the organization's

Board of Directors in meeting the goals of the organization and by carrying specific responsibilities such as the safety of the facilities and the patrons. This concept of guest-host relationship can be fluid with the host actively anticipating that the guest/stranger may provide something that the host didn't even know he lacked. The risk in using these terminologies is that other types of desirable relationships such as "family" between hosts and guests may be squeezed out.

CHAPTER IV. SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I have presented at length my rationale, plan and experience of Out of the Cold (OOC) in the previous chapters. Here, I try to summarize the study and my recommendations for consideration.

OOC is a locally specific free meal and shelter program, but study of this program could also provide insights to organizers of other agencies involved in parallel activities in their communities. In particular, I found that much insight emerged from participatory observation in various capacities and from interviewing various OOC stakeholders with open-ended questions.

By immersing myself into the program as a user, volunteer, cook, group facilitator and researcher, I gained multiple perspectives of the program. The analogy of the movie camera filming this program from different angles and using varying depth of field describes this experience well. Even as the camera cannot be omnipresent, I could not do justice to the perspectives of all the different individual stakeholders with the given time. Although I try to reflect upon the experiences from some emotional distance, the best that I could do is to tell the many stories through the filters of my own experiences and interpretations of them. Yet, it is from trying to see the program from various perspectives that I was able to gather many rich insights about the program and its stakeholders.

One of my goals in this study of OOC was that the study would produce results that could be useful to the stakeholders of this weekly meal and shelter program. Soon after I started attending the meals, I developed a set of preliminary open-ended questions primarily about people's perspectives of food and how the program can be improved. From my interviews of people using these questions and from my general participatory observation of the program, much about people's perspectives of food emerged. However, their greatest concern of OOC at the time was not about the food. Rather, the program users and organizers wanted to urgently deal with the tensions and safety risk posed by disruptive behaviour in the crowded dining hall. The quick growth of OOC from about 30 people attending during the first months of operation in November 1999 to about 130 two years later necessitated re-evaluation.

Coinciding with my research objective of empowerment through community-based exploration of problems and negotiation of solutions, the organizers discussed the forming of a Participant Advisory Committee (PAC) to deal with the emerged issues of tensions and safety risk. Empowerment has been an underlying movement in the church and the way the pastor sees programs being started and sustained. To the Crossroads organizers, empowerment begins with relationships that can help move people beyond the barriers that entrap them. Empowerment in the OOC PAC had components of relationship building, but it also gave increased participant awareness and confidence, exposure to skills and knowledge for group-work, and organizer experience in participant involvement.

The OOC PAC agreed to deal with overcrowding as a cause of the tensions and safety risk. After the fourth meeting, the PAC implemented two measures to try to mitigate problems with premature and lengthy food lineups that hindered access throughout the dining room and creating tensions amongst guests. Firstly, rather than having people

lineup on a first come-first served basis, they had people get seated, and when the tables were filled, they began randomly calling tables by pulling numbers from a hat. Secondly, those who were not able to find a seat were asked to wait in the hallway and a side room, designated as a reception area. Larger portion sizes were also provided to decrease people's need to line-up for second servings. Most people seemed pleased with the changes in space and order arrangements. One suggestion posed by someone upset at the gambling nature of being picked was to fill tables as people come in, and then call tables by the same order to get the food. If people prefer different tables, they can wait in the reception area. This process of community-based action research taught lessons that could be useful for any group work at OOC and at other programs, including lessons for recruitment of members, scheduling of meetings and group dynamics.

My second goal of this study was to demonstrate the importance of considering OOC in its contexts. By zooming the analogical movie camera in and out, into the OOC situation and out to the contextual settings, I wrote my findings of this study. I tried to compare and contrast the stories from the voices at OOC and the contextual information found through literature review and interviews. I saw interesting links between the two. I found that the growing crowd of OOC is part of the global picture of hunger and malnutrition. Some of the factors that feed into this picture of hunger and malnutrition also apply to OOC. Namely, poverty is related to political and economic policies. For example, different standards for the poor are reflected in the donated cheap excess foods that are also poor in micronutrients. Many people reliant on charity for survival are forced to allay their concerns about nutrition, food safety and costs to others. The policy of globalization feeds into a trend of alienation from our food source causing a culture of reliance on advertising that make important food decisions for us. Globalization also brings cheap foods imported to us at exorbitant labour, social and environmental costs to the exporting country; and international free trade requires compromised food safety standards such as those for pesticides and genetic modification.

In face of criticisms against charities, is OOC a valid way to help people? Yes and no. No, because there are signs of unhealthy dependency and of the public safety net falling related to the emergence of community-organized relief. Yes, OOC is valid, because many people do not have the resources to free themselves from whatever entraps them in poverty. Community development projects require participants to have a basic level of stability and hope for the future that many OOC guests do not have. It is a place for some of the most vulnerable people in our society including the mentally and physically ill, homeless, addicts, and elderly.

OOC guests value meals that are safe, fresh, nutritious, tasty, creative and appetizing, and meals that provide a choice of vegetarian and non-vegetarian. I heard many compliments about the food at OOC, and nutrition assessments show that it is generally nutritionally adequate. However, it also showed that both vegetarian and non-vegetarian meals are low in vitamin E and vegetarian meals are also low in vitamin B12. Borderline adequate nutrients include fibre, vitamin D and zinc for the vegetarian meals and fibre, calcium and vitamin D for the regular meals. More whole grains, milk/milk products, beans/lentils, and nuts/seeds would bring those nutrients closer to adequate levels.

A question derived from looking at OOC in its contexts asks, "How would OOC look if long-term sustainable food security for everyone equitably were a goal?" OOC objectives

would be holistic and encompassing humane/spiritual development, social equity, economic stability, and ecological soundness.

Some exciting ideas towards developing a more holistic OOC program include the following:

- Formalize more vigorous volunteer training programs to include food preparation and meal service, and peer counseling and advocacy for outreach volunteers at OOC.
- With all volunteers, coordinate mandatory volunteer training and ongoing communication around topics such as safe food handling and sanitary practices, nutrition, and conflict resolution.
- Start the OOC supper at an earlier time than 8 p.m. to include more women and elderly, time for entertainment, and more time between eating and clean up than currently.
- Concentrate the efforts into fewer meals a month and when most needed. Overnight shelters that serve breakfast and community kitchens can fill in the gaps. Community kitchens can include a drop-in kitchen for people to cook foods that they bring, as well as an organized group of people cooking together.
- Purchase food and supplies more directly from producers such as from local farmers and wholesalers. Consider purchasing and getting donations from organic food producers/wholesalers.
- Facilitate an OOC Participant Advisory Committee to advise and work along side organizers, and to encourage participant ownership and empowerment.
- Develop a community garden with a composting program.
- Network with other parallel agencies for mutual support and individual case management.
- For OOC suppers, use a black or white erasable board to present the menu and any announcements to help people feel more informed and welcomed.
- Assign regular volunteers familiar to guests to serve the OOC meals for greater service consistency and more personable interactions.

The above ideas were born out of seeing OOC in context, through the Community-Based Action Research and by the autoethnographic writing of my experiences at OOC and Crossroads. They are the results of my desire to produce useful and holistic results for an existing community. This study is both a test of my strategies/methodologies and an exploration of the content findings regarding the relevancy and effectiveness of OOC. Other agencies interested in holistic evaluative processes may want to explore community-based action studies that explore both the locally specific information and the contextual data.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I. Crossroads Information Package



Crossroads Community Project

Information Packet

Revised 14 Oct 2002

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Mission Statement

- Crossroads Community Project is a non-profit Christian initiative in east Vancouver to empower people to dismantle barriers of poverty, addiction, or social isolation thru mutually transforming relationships forged by practical aid, therapeutic activities, spiritual growth, and building on people's strengths.

We Value

- nurture of the dignity each person possesses by being created in God's image
- an environment where people are drawn to explore faith in Jesus voluntarily
- motivation through love and thankfulness
- responsive programs on a human scale
- release of the talent and potential of our volunteers and guests
- creativity and artistic expression as ways to build up the community thru sharing of self
- hospitality that heals social divisions by welcoming all guests as gifts
- unity in diversity, for both our organization and neighbourhood
- promoting the health of our *whole* community thru personal conversion and social change

A History of Crossroads Community Project

December 1996

It all started with a party. Two women in our church (Grandview Calvary Baptist) wanted to say "thank you" for help they had received during personal difficulties. They decided to celebrate with a free community meal on Christmas. But who knew that hundreds of our neighbours would show up? Who would have guessed how much fun it was to host them? This one event awakened our congregation to the poverty surrounding us in our east Vancouver neighbourhood of Grandview Woodlands. And it gave us an appetite for table fellowship with the poor and the outcast.

For the next eleven months we searched for a meal and shelter program that modeled biblical hospitality. We wanted to open God's house for warm encounters and mutually transforming relationships. We wanted our guests to experience with us, in however small a way, the grace and peace of breaking bread together. With the strength of such nourishment we might learn to help one another overcome our weaknesses, whatever form these take. We found our model in an initiative from Toronto called "Out of the Cold," where churches throughout the metro area take turns opening their halls during the coldest months of the year.

November 1997

We began to offer, every Thursday evening, a three-course meal prepared with home recipes and a vegetarian option. Attendance grew slowly through word of mouth, from about a dozen in the first few months to a present average of 110. During colder months, up to 15 people spend the night and wake to breakfast. But the most important feature of Out of the Cold is its casual atmosphere that promotes friendship. We open the doors an hour and half before the meal for coffee, newspapers, board games, music, and conversation. The sole responsibility of some volunteers is to sit with people, to talk and eat with them, to be present to them gently and consistently. Many of our guests, some of whom have been coming every week for years, tell us they come for this social interaction as much as for the food. Just like at home, guests who are good friends ask what they can do to help—and the more help we need, the more help is offered. Camaraderie is the sweetest thing tasted on any given night.

November 1999

We hoped from the beginning that Out of the Cold would be the introductory gesture of welcome and solidarity that our guests so often need before they can secure a healthier life for themselves. After two years of deepening relations with our guests, we took steps to make our hospitality more available and more holistic. Combining our observations at Out of the Cold with input from neighbouring social service providers, we decided to open a centre where people could attend to some of their greatest felt needs (such as laundry and showers) as well as participate in a community that offered clinical counselling and structured activities—all designed to promote a sense of belonging and to encourage movement toward healthy interdependence. We applied to the Trinity Opportunity Fund, a grant-making instrument of the Baptist Union of Western Canada. The Baptist Union approved our proposal and agreed

to fund three half-time staff for three years. The church agreed to cover all other costs through fundraising.

June 2000

A clinical counsellor, a volunteer coordinator, and a program coordinator were hired. An Advisory Board consisting of church members was struck. We quickly found a suitable location near the church on Commercial Drive and started the permit process. However, merchants and residents in the immediate area fiercely opposed our efforts, because they suspected we were part of a city decision to increase social services so as to shift residents from the Downtown Eastside to the Drive (if such a plan exists, we don't know about it). So we decided to withdraw our permit application to show we wanted to work with and for the *whole* community rather than just part of it. God used this difficult event to help us round out our vision and implement it more effectively. We now saw that, before our guests could assume their rightful position in the wider community, we needed to get both sides of the socio-economic divide to see each other as neighbours rather than enemies—that our hospitality had to lead to reconciliation, not re-integration. We saw that our community itself needs support in the form of urban relief and development, and we made this a long-term goal. For the near-term, we organized our programs into a structure that reflects our desire to draw people out of destructive lifestyles and into healthy interdependence. That structure includes four levels: street outreach, practical aid, personal development, and advocacy.

October 2000

When the staff was hired in June, we had found office space for them by renting, month to month, the middle floor of a house located half a block off the Drive. We decided to open the centre here temporarily, while we looked for another storefront location. Within a couple of months, however, we had plenty of evidence that a house would be better than a storefront for at least two reasons. First, a house was naturally the best setting for the kind of *home-like* hospitality we meant to offer. Second, the average-sized house would have enough space for us to do all we wanted to do; yet it would keep us from growing beyond *a small, human scale*.

August 2001

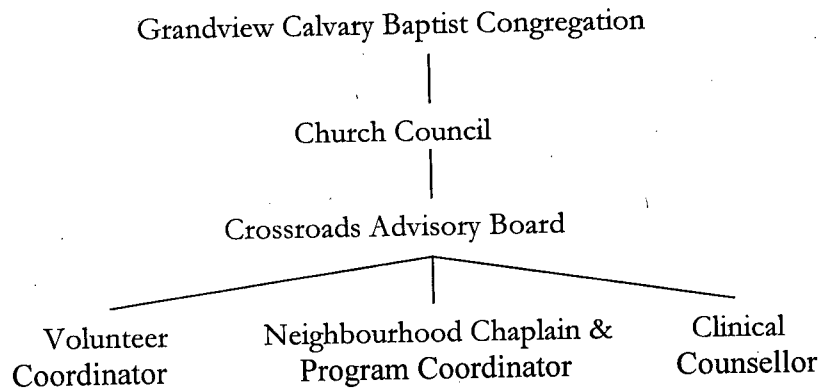
We tried unsuccessfully to purchase the house we were in at 1745 East First, nor could we negotiate a long-term lease for it. So we continued looking for another home. Meanwhile, the house was being used to capacity for laundry, showers, access to phones and the Internet, counselling sessions, group therapy, and art workshops. Two church members opened a pottery studio in the church basement and offered free training and material at cost to Crossroads guests. Strong ties were forged between Crossroads and the Salsbury Community Society, a Christian intentional community. Our guests could occasionally find emergency housing or even a permanent space in Salsbury's supportive living environment. Our Advisory Board strengthened with the addition of several members with experience in social work and community development. We elected a new chairperson, Tej Minhas, to tighten our

organizational structures and procedures with his experience as C.E.O. at a succession of companies.

May 2002

The tenants in the house at 1636 Salisbury, which is owned by Grandview Calvary, told the church that they will be moving at the end of August. The house's size, floor plan, and condition; its yards and gardens; and its location right next to the church—all make it a very attractive site for Crossroads. The Advisory Board and the congregation agreed to begin the process of moving Crossroads. At the same time, the staff and the Advisory Board began to prepare the organization for the partnerships in the local neighbourhood as well as in the city-wide Christian community that will sustain it in the coming years.

Organizational Structure



Crossroads Community Project is an arm of Grandview Calvary Baptist Church. The congregation has ultimate authority over all programs of the church, and it must approve annual budgets and large non-budgeted expenses (small ones are approved by Church Council). Because the church is a charitable organization, it is required to have a governing Council elected by the members of the congregation. This Council has given practical oversight of Crossroads to an Advisory Board made up of adherents to the church. Crossroads staff operate non-hierarchically, report directly to the Board, and vote in its decisions.

Crossroads Advisory Board

Shirley Bentall	Tej Minhas (Chairperson)
Howard Bentall	Thomasina Murdock
Dave Deiwert	Brian Romanuck
Tim Dickau	Carolyn Stewart

Staff

(all are currently on half-time salary)

Neighbourhood Chaplain & Program Coordinator: Jonathan Bird
Clinical Counselor: Rose Clarke
Volunteer Coordinator: Karl Johnston

Funding

As a program of Grandview Calvary Baptist Church, Crossroads Community Project receives most of its funding from the church and its denomination, the Baptist Union of Western Canada. The balance is made up with donations from other churches, grant-making agencies, businesses, and private donors. Donations to Crossroads are made payable to Grandview Calvary and then allotted to the appropriate category in Crossroads' portion of the church's annual budget. The church issues a tax receipt for donations over \$10. Grandview Calvary is registered charity 88181 2812 RR0001.

Our Four-Level Response to Need

Level One: Outreach

We enter street life and community life to listen to and be with our neighbours. Out of our knowing each other comes our working together.

Level Two: Practical aid

We address some of our guests' most basic felt needs. Every Thursday evening at Grandview Calvary we offer "Out of the Cold," where people find a free meal, a place to sleep for the night, and a safe atmosphere where relationships can be cultivated. Several afternoons each week at the Crossroads House we offer showers, laundry, a small selection of clothing, a public fax and phone for local calls, and high-speed Internet access with websites bookmarked for a broad range of information. Many of our guests have used the Internet successfully to find employment and housing, and we assist them in writing resumes and letters. Just as importantly, email has proved a popular and cheap way to communicate with distant relatives and friends. We are increasingly able to educate our guests about welfare and tenants' rights, and we frequently refer them to other services offered in east Vancouver.

Level Three: Personal Development

We focus on our emotional, social, and spiritual growth. Everything we do is meant to foster friendship and community in an atmosphere of sanctuary. One of the most significant things we can give our guests is our own selves, with our hurts and hopes and consistent, supportive presence. If we are open and honest—real—with them about who we are and what we face, then they may respond in kind. Only on this basis can any of us progress far toward wholesome living. Much of this open exchange happens informally, but structured programs have a way of moving us forward faster. One of our board members leads a 12-step support group for people on Methadone maintenance. For those wanting more formal help, we have a registered clinical counsellor on staff and a registered social worker on call as a volunteer. We occasionally offer art therapy for individuals and groups. We have an art studio and a pottery studio where those with skill can work in the company of others and those with interest can learn (many of our guests have creative talent, and not a few have formal training). An optional bible study after the Out of the Cold dinner continues to be popular. Staff and volunteer hosts are always available to pray with guests, and we have a room dedicated for prayer and meditation. We lead spiritual retreats. Finally, we encourage our guests to go thru the application process to volunteer with us—in this way we truly blur the distinction between "us" and "them."

Level Four: Advocacy

Most people find it very hard to form a realistic plan to improve their lives and harder still to stick with it. We do our best to accompany them on their journey and use our influence on their behalf. We also offer background information and a biblical perspective to the public about social justice issues in our neighbourhood. In the future, we would like to pursue community development goals such as social housing and job creation.

Hours & Calendar of Programs

Program	Location	Hours
Self-care facility	The Crossroads	Tue – Fri, 1 – 5 PM
Community Gardens	The Crossroads	Tue – Fri, 1 – 5 PM
Methadone Support Group	The Crossroads	Tue, 6:30 – 7:30 PM
Clinical Counselling	The Crossroads	Wed, Fri, 10 AM – 5 PM
Art Studio	The Crossroads	Wed, Fri, 2 – 4 PM
Bible Study	The Crossroads	Thu, 9 – 10:45 PM
Pottery Studio	Grandview Calvary	Thu, 1 – 4 PM
Out of the Cold	Grandview Calvary	Thu, 6 ³⁰ PM – Fri, 9 AM

These programs have been described in the previous section.

However, two additional notes may be helpful:

The Methadone Support Group is a 12-step program with 3-7 participants.

Counselling at Crossroads comprises individual and group work, formal and informal. The backbone of the counselling program has been individual one-hour sessions with a variety of clients who book sessions and attend for a length of time ranging from one appointment to a number of years. (As mentioned, a registered clinical counsellor is on half-time salary, and a registered social worker volunteers as needed.) A variety of issues are addressed, including addictions, depression, anxiety, interpersonal and relationship issues, work-related issues, sexual abuse, post traumatic stress, mental health and personality issues, grief and loss. Informal one-on-one counselling occurs at The Crossroads House and in the community, as the counsellor is available. Group sessions are provided in response to needs and as staff and volunteers are available. These group activities have included a women's spirituality group, a women's art exploration group, a women's spiritual group retreat (offsite), as well as an ongoing 12-step methadone recovery program headed by a volunteer. Informal group activities have included visits to art exhibitions and recreational outings.

VOLUNTEERS ARE VITAL TO WHO WE ARE

At present, ten people volunteer at Crossroads in a number of capacities, yielding an average monthly total of nearly 100 volunteer hours (see the statistics on page 9). About forty more people volunteer at our weekly meal and shelter program, Out of the Cold.

Committed Volunteers are obviously vital to Crossroads. We could not do much of what we want to do without them. But more importantly, we could not be what we want to be without them. We mean for Crossroads to be a community project—to be both an expression of the community and an experiment in building the community. Volunteers act on behalf of the community and, as they grow along with their neighbours they are trying to help, the character of the community they represent improves.

Crossroads staff are, in turn, committed to our volunteers. We want their experience at Crossroads to be an opportunity for personal growth. Rather than placing them in a role only according to our needs, we take great care in considering their personal interests and aptitudes. We give our volunteers a chance to cultivate the gifts they know they have, and we give them freedom to discover gifts they don't yet know about. Many of our volunteers have taken on a variety of roles during their time with us. We value them as colleagues. We orient them well to their specific role. We educate them, as we do ourselves, on an ongoing basis regarding the issues our guests face and techniques to help them better. We always welcome their input on how we can together improve our community project.

And we are committed to journeying with our volunteers through the triumphs and trials that are the landscape of their growth, just as we are committed to journeying with all our guests and colleagues. We mean for all of us to enter more deeply into God's kingdom together.

Volunteers may currently join us in the following positions:

Art Studio

Bible Study

Cleaning

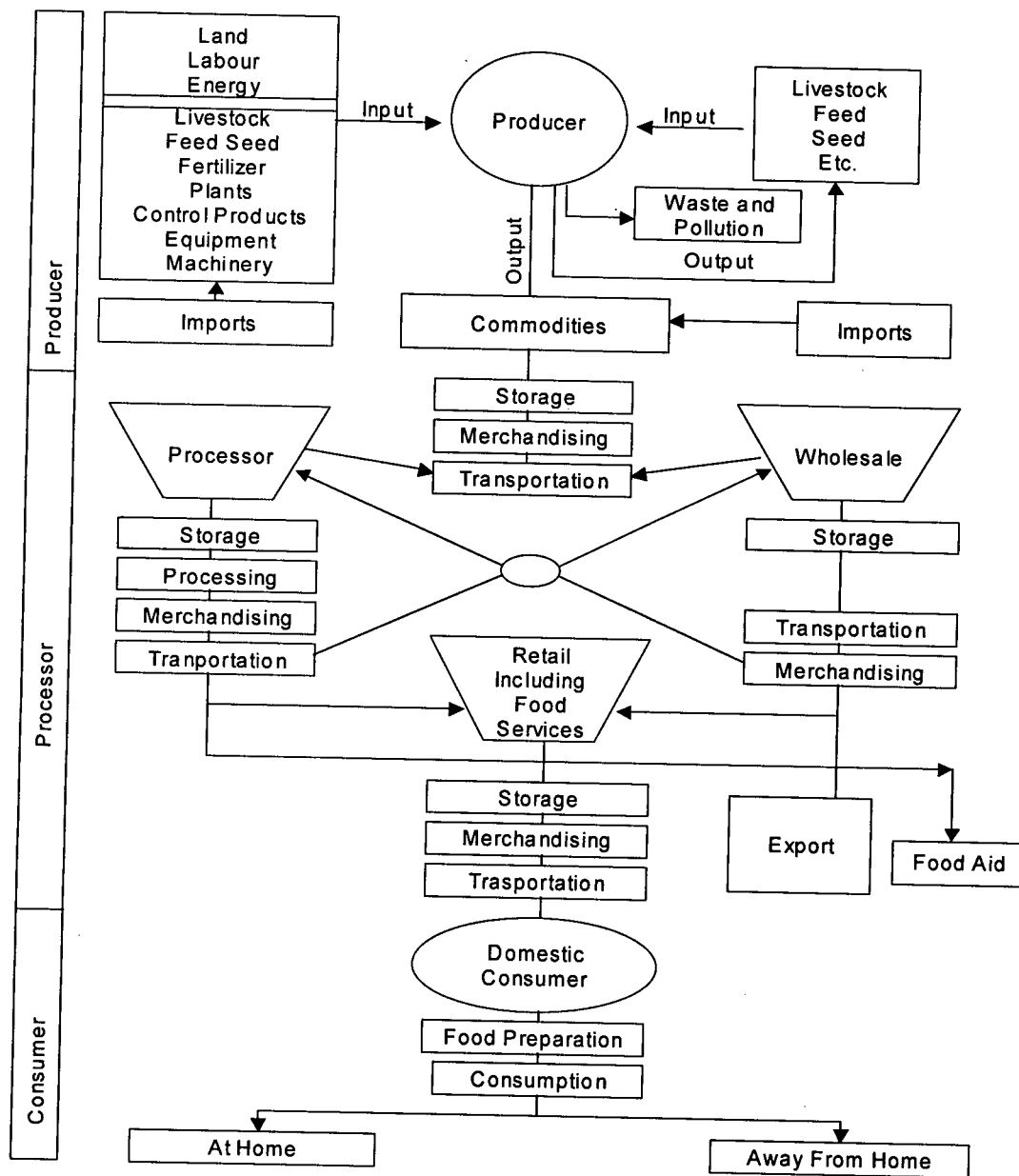
Host (drop-in monitor)

Office Support

Out of the Cold Dinner, Shelter, or Breakfast

Pottery Studio

Special Projects



Modified from Agriculture Canada, 1985, Publ. 5152

Appendix II. The Canadian Agri-Food System

Appendix III. Preliminary Interview Guide for meal participants

"I am doing research to help improve Crossroads food programs. I am interested in what you think is good food, and also what you think of the Crossroads food programs."

Optional information to gather if they come up:

- age
- country of origin
- resident in what area (if has a residence)
- general interests

1. *What does good food mean to you? What are some of your favourite foods? How did you come to like these types of foods?*

- Perception of what defines good food: taste, health, values
- History of how food preferences were developed: social experiences, addictions

2. *Are there things keeping you from eating these good foods?*

- Skills, facilities for preparing and eating food
- Income
- Opportunities to grow food

3. *What attracts you to come to the Thursday supper?*

- General impressions of Out of the Cold.

4. *What would you do to make these suppers better?*

5. *When you eat here, what proportion of the day's food do you eat here? Would you say this is more or less than half? About half? One third? Two thirds?*

6. *Does it matter to you if you eat B.C. or locally grown foods? Organic foods?*

- Interest in and knowledge about agroecological issues.

7. *Considering what you have been telling me about your ideals around food, do you have any ideas other than this kind of suppers that would help you get good food?*

- Community kitchen, community garden, link up with organic local producers?

8. *Would you be interested in helping to make some of your ideas happen if you were able?*

Appendix IV. Questions for OOC Organizers/Volunteers used at the Volunteers Meeting of June 7, 2001

"I have two sets of questions. One set is for understanding your philosophy about how Out of the Cold works. Perhaps expressing this will help also help you identify your underlying beliefs and assumptions. The other set of questions is for understanding about your ideals around food. What does good food mean to you, and how this relates to food for Out of the Cold?

Part I

- 1. Could you tell me about the reasons for which there is Out of the Cold program?*
- 2. What are your desired outcomes?*
- 3. How do you expect the program to achieve these desired impacts?*
- 4. How effective do you think Out of the Cold addresses the reasons for the program?*

Part II

- 1. What does good food mean to you? What are some of your favourite foods? How did you come to like these types of foods?*
 - Perception of what defines good food: taste, health, values
 - History of how food preferences were developed: social experiences, addictions
- 2. Does it matter to you if you eat B.C. or locally grown foods? Organic foods?*
 - Interest in and knowledge about agroecological issues.
- 3. Considering what you have been telling me about your ideals around food, do you have any ideas other than this kind of suppers that would help you get good food?*
 - Community kitchen, community garden, link up with organic local producers?

Appendix V. Time-chart of This Study with "Out of the Cold"

Research Activity	Year 2000												Year 2001												Year 2003								
	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug/Sep										
Project proposal development	██																																

Appendix VI. Consent Form

For participation in the Food Program Evaluation of the Crossroads Community Project

I consent to speak with Queenie Chu about my opinion about issues related to food in order to help evaluate the Crossroads Community Project food programs.

I can stop the conversation at anytime for any reason without affecting my access to services from Crossroads Community Project.

- ☐ **I do not want my comments attributed to me.**
 ☐ **I would like to choose my own false name.**
- ☐ **I want my comments attributed to me.**
- ☐ **I want to have the opportunity to review the report and to withdraw my comments. Inform me through _____**

Signature

Date

Signature of witness

Date

See reverse for information

page 1

Food Program Evaluation of the Crossroads Community Project

Queenie Chu will do this participatory study for her graduate degree – Faculty of Agricultural Sciences, University of British Columbia (UBC), telephone (604) 822-0494. She will be pleased to answer any questions that you may have about the process.

The interview will take half to one hour.

Only Queenie and her faculty advisor will have access to the data given by you.

The final report will be available to the Advisory Committee of the Crossroads Community Project, the UBC library and any other interested individuals.

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Alejandro Rojas, Agricultural Sciences, UBC, telephone (604) 822-0494.

Any concerns about your rights can be directed to Dr. Richard Spratley, Director of the UBC Office of Research Services and Administration at 822-8598.

Please receive a copy of this consent form for your own records.

Consent for Tape-Recording

***During participation in the Food Program Evaluation of the
Crossroads Community Project***

I consent to the tape-recording of our conversation. It will be erased after a written record is transcribed and checked.

Signature

Date

Signature of witness

Date

Version 23/02/01

page 3

Appendix VII. Crossroads 2001 Annual Report

2001 Annual Report

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Neighbourhood Chaplain & Program Coordinator's Report—Jonathan Bird

We celebrated the first birthday of Crossroads in June and the first anniversary of the opening of Crossroads House in October. These were signal moments of celebration and humility for us. As excited new parents, all of us who participate in Crossroads—hosts and guests alike—rejoiced in the mystery of a life that bears the unmistakable image of our communion. As struggling new parents, we stood in awe of the majesty of a life that exhibits a Spirit so much larger than our own spirits combined.

We needed to celebrate; it has been a difficult year for us. The tremendous gap between the rich and the poor of the world widened, especially here in our east Vancouver neighbourhood. Grandview-Woodlands is experiencing equal measures of gentrification and ghettoization. The political climate in Victoria changed, profoundly increasing this polarization by cutting taxes, slashing social spending, and fostering ill-will toward the marginalized. The systemic and societal pressures on our guests have never been greater and will apparently become far worse in the next few years.

We staff have had a difficult year for predictable reasons: after birth pains subside, the unrelenting challenge of caring for an infant begins. Crossroads easily absorbs all the energy we have; yet it seems always to require more. We are chronically, grievously fatigued. So God has brought to us two new staff. Roger Brown, who first came to us as a volunteer, has been seconded to us from Youth With A Mission for 30 hours a week as our Outreach and Support Worker. Kendall Lewis, a graduate student at Vancouver Art Therapy Institute, is interning with us two afternoons a week. Roger and Kendall are great people to have around, and they fill their roles better than we could have asked.

Toward the end of this year, we began revisiting staff job descriptions and the overall organizational structure for Crossroads. The current job descriptions for Jonathan, Rosie, and Karl were designed in the initial project proposal two years ago. They no longer reflect the needs of our expanded vision and operation, nor do they sufficiently take into account the gifts and interests of the staff. The Advisory Committee hopes to complete the new job descriptions by the end of March. The Advisory Committee is also weighing the wisdom of having Crossroads formally separate from GCBC. If it should separate, it would either become its own non-profit society, or it could integrate with an existing society, such as the Salsbury Community. In any event, Crossroads would continue to be driven by a distinct and explicit biblical mandate, and it would retain strong ties to GCBC. Finally, we have begun to strengthen our accountability structures. The Advisory Committee is expanding as we

invite persons with relevant expertise to join it. And, since August, we have instituted two Participants' Advisory Committees (PACs), one for Out of the Cold specifically and one for Crossroads generally. Each consists of long-time guests and is meant to provide them with a strong voice in our decision-making process.

Our original vision of a drop-in centre grew into a more holistic approach involving four levels of services—outreach, basic aid, personal development, and advocacy. These levels represent a continuum of assistance that shepherds people toward shalom. With the addition of Roger, we are able to strengthen the ties between the first and middle levels, which has been widely proven to be the most effective strategy for helping people leave the street scene. However, we now recognize that the strengths of the Grandview Calvary congregation, as well as its limited resources, lay more with the first three levels. To this end, we will be concentrating our efforts in the coming year on increasing our knowledge base and our volunteer base, so as to be better able to help our guests set achievable goals and to accomplish them. In some sense this involves advocacy, our fourth level, particularly in matters of bureaucracy and tenancy. However, we also include in this fourth level such issues as job creation and transitional housing. For these services, we are seeking partners, especially from area churches.

Finally, the church bought in August the property at 1723 Victoria Drive, which adjoins the church's parking lot on the corner of First Avenue and Victoria Drive. The property was purchased for two reasons. First, it was a singular investment opportunity, since adjoining property rarely comes available. Second, it is a good location as a permanent home for Crossroads. In February, the Crossroads Advisory Committee will submit a detailed proposal to renovate the property to suit either Crossroads or another organisation such as Salsbury Community Society or Urban Promise.

Volunteer Coordinator's Report—Karl Johnston

Crossroads House Services Used

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Crossroads Groups, Activities, and Volunteer

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Some of the Activities at Crossroads House

There are several types of valuable activities that take place at Crossroads House on any given day. The first of these is community building. Crossroads guests can easily foster relationships with each other, the volunteers, and the staff in the intimate environment that a small house provides. This widening of community is an essential key in the empowerment of those who are often marginalized from the mainstream of society. A second valuable activity that goes on in the House is the giving and receiving of practical aid. Sometimes this is facilitated through staff or volunteers; other times it is initiated by the guests themselves. And it can take many forms: helping a First Nations person type a letter to his band to ask for funding for school; assisting an unemployed tradesperson update his resume or search for a job on the Internet; connecting someone with shelter, detox, or a recovery program; providing new socks and Epson salt for a squeegee youth whose feet are infected; allowing someone to release some stress by playing the House guitar; making the laundry facilities available so a student can fit in a little better while attending a ministry-funded course at a local college; providing a place where a homeless individual can heat up his can of beans. A third type of valuable activity at Crossroads House is the provision of spiritual support. This can also take many forms: informal spiritual counselling; prayer for someone weighed down with guilt; Christian reading materials; and an openness in sharing our own Christian journey.

The Crossroads/Out of the Cold Bible Study

Near the end of the year we finished our 15 month study of the Gospel of John, which has been co-led by Joy Banks and Karl Johnston. Over the course of the year, 40 different guests from Out of the Cold and Crossroads House have attended the Bible study at least once (with an average attendance of 10 people each evening). This study has been an encouraging part of the ministry. One of the highlights has been to see several people new to the Bible come out to the study quite regularly. It is also been good to see Christians who are unconnected to a church find some encouragement and fellowship through this study. A challenge in leading this study has been to interact with those who hold diverse and often strong opinions, as well as with those who tend to monopolize the conversation. But overall, it has been great to be able to provide a study like this, where people who might have a hard time

fitting in elsewhere can find some food for their souls. Please pray for this study as we move on to new topics in 2002.

Crossroads/Out of the Cold Volunteers

At the end of December 2001, we had 8 regular volunteers involved in activities relating to Crossroads house (5 from Grandview Calvary). We also had 4 additional volunteers connected with the pottery studio and the film discussion night, which are held at different locations. In addition, we had approximately 40-50 regular volunteers for "Out of the Cold" (at least 20 from Grandview Calvary). In regards to volunteer training, we had three morning seminars in 2001. Twenty-five people attended the first, which was held on January 27th and covered the topics of "Interacting with Mental Health Consumers;" "The Theological Mandate of Crossroads;" "The Essential Values of Crossroads;" and "Empathetic Listening." Eleven people attended the next seminar on June 2nd, which addressed "The Theological Mandate of Crossroads (continued);" "Community Building at Crossroads and Out of the Cold;" and "Understanding Addictions." Seven people attended the third seminar, on July 28th, where a representative from the Downtown Eastside Residents Association summarized issues relating to the Tenants Rights Act and BC Benefits.

The Crossroads House Participant Advisory Committee

On August 30th of 2001 we began the Crossroads House Participant Advisory Committee (or PAC). This is a committee made up of people who use the services of Crossroads house. The thrust of the Crossroads mission statement is to empower people to dismantle barriers of poverty, addictions and social isolation. We believe that those who have faced or are facing such barriers should have a voice in how we attempt to fulfill our mission. Those who are currently utilizing the services of Crossroads are in the best position to help direct and expand it in a way that is relevant to themselves and to others in similar situations. They can also provide us staff with better accountability as they are in the ideal position to evaluate our progress. Within the parameters of our mission statement and values, they serve to critique policies, recommend (and possibly create) new programs, and evaluate progress towards stated objectives. This is a group of eight members consisting of one staff, one Church Advisory Committee member, and six guests from Crossroads House. One of these guests is the chairperson of this committee and sits on Crossroads Advisory Committee as well. To date, PAC members have suggested, among other things, the need for a locked temporary storage area for guests; basic instruction in computer skills; and better regulation of the use of the Internet.

Clinical Counsellor's Report—Rose Clarke

Counselling

Individual Counselling Statistics 2001

Month	Number of clients	Number of counselling hours
January	6	10
February	4	11
March	3	7
April	3	14
May	6	10 Includes 1 client for
June	6	12 short term counselling
July	4	8 with volunteer counsellor
August	6	18
September	8	22
October	10	28
November	11	29
December	11	18

Number of counselling sessions per individual: ranges from 1 to 24

Total number of individuals receiving counselling: 20

Average number of sessions per individual: 7

Issues addressed in counselling included: self esteem, anger, anxiety, depression, Relationships, addiction, co-dependency, transitions, abuse, religious/spiritual concerns.

As predicted by the counsellor at the Reach Clinic during my initial research into community needs prior to the opening of Crossroads, by year-end the counselling service is at full capacity. Referrals have been received from local agencies, as well as self-referrals via Crossroads and the community. A goal for 2002-2003 is to work towards training suitable volunteers to provide basic counselling support.

Groups

The weekly Women's Spiritual Support Group ended, after the summer break, departure of some members, and transit strike made regular meetings difficult. Although there are no immediate plans to resume the group, informal meetings continue to take place.

Art

Art Studio

A core group of artists and people interested in art evolved, with participation in twice weekly art studio averaging 4 per week, with a total of 30 participants. Media employed were pastels, pencils, collage, charcoal, paints, and clay. Music in the form of guitar playing and singing has continued to be part of the art studio experience. A show

was held at the church in June. Caroline Stewart taught a series on pastels. Two art outings were held this year, to the VAG and to Artropolis, and one music outing, to the Folk Festival.

Kendall Lewis, a first year student at the Vancouver Art Therapy Institute, has been doing a practicum at Crossroads since October, facilitating and encouraging expression in the art studio, and working one on one with people as appropriate. Developing a therapeutic art expression group for women is being considered for spring 2002.

Art volunteers Paul Neufeld, Michelle Denault and in the summer, Andrew Alberg from Youth With A Mission, have been vital in keeping the art studio functioning. A presentation for the IMAGO Arts Conference at Holy Trinity on the Crossroads Arts Program was well received. Crossroads was the subject of a study on art programming in an inner city setting by two Regent College students. A goal for 2002 is to explore income-generating art projects, such as handmade paper and cards.

Pottery Studio

The Pottery Studio in the church basement, led by Rita Ringma and Joy Banks, continued to attract a diverse group of participants, averaging 7-8 per week in the second half of the year, with a total of 32 participants, producing an impressive range of functional and decorative pieces. Two shows and a sale of pieces were held.

Out of the Cold—Jonathan Bird

The first year of the new millennium was the fourth year of Out of the Cold. And it was indeed a year of transition. Throughout 2001 we saw, on average, more guests each week than ever before. We now average 90 guests per meal and at least once a month have more than 120. We frequently have more than 10 stay overnight and at least once a month we have 15 or more. Many factors explain the increase. Word on the street has spread our praises far and wide. Someone (we don't know who) put our information on the Free Meal boards set out all over the city. More troublingly, migration has greatly increased from the DTES into Grandview Woodlands, due chiefly to relentless gentrification and increased policing, the growing gap between the rich and the poor, and social service cutbacks. All of this has created intolerable overcrowding, tension, and threat at our meal and shelter program, which is still the only one of its kind in Grandview Woodlands.

In August, a Participants Advisory Committee was formed to develop appropriate responses to the worsening atmosphere at Out of the Cold and, more importantly, to give ongoing input into the direction of the program. This committee consists of Crossroads staff as well as volunteers and guests who have been participating for a long time in the meal. In November, we implemented the first of their short-term recommendations, which have markedly improved the program. However, the only long-term solution for overcrowding is to partner with another church or organization which would provide a second location for Out of the Cold at the same time on the same evening.

We have been blessed to have Queenie Chu among us for most of this year, conducting research for her master's thesis in Agro-Ecology at UBC. She is looking at how street-involved persons define and access "good food," particularly through Crossroads and Out of the Cold. We eagerly await her findings and suggestions, which she will give us in April. She has already catalyzed substantial improvements.

One of the most profoundly inspiring developments this year is the fact that more and more guests are stepping forward to help regularly in all aspects of the meal and overnight stay. In this atmosphere of co-operation and camaraderie, the kitchen island and the stove truly become altars offering up sweet smells to heaven.

The next year will be extraordinarily challenging. The trends of 2001 will continue, probably at an accelerated pace, in 2002. Any attempt to

improve our services—or even to maintain them at their current levels—will require a substantial investment in volunteers. We must find ways to sustain the commitment and spirits of current volunteers. We must recruit aggressively. We must nurture our existing church partnerships, which also are showing signs of weakening. We must seek new church partnerships for volunteers, sponsorship, and a second site for the meal.

- Most pressingly, we need a new volunteer coordinator for Out of the Cold. Karl Johnston, who has filled this role since July 2001, needs to step out of it, to make room in his life for his new wife and his renewed studies toward a master's degree. The volunteer coordinator essentially manages Out of the Cold by orienting, encouraging, and supervising volunteers as well as by obtaining supplies and liaising with the church regarding use of its facilities. This involves a minimum of 10-12 hours per week. I would like to see this become a paid position at some point in 2002. By comparison, First Baptist runs essentially the same program on Tuesdays and pays a full time intern to oversee it.

• OUR MISSION

- Crossroads Community Project is a non-profit Christian initiative to empower people of East Vancouver to overcome barriers of poverty, addiction, or social isolation through mutually-transforming relationships, basic aid, counselling, spirituality, and advocacy.

• OUR VISION

- We believe a person experiences well-being through discovering and exercising their unique gifts in service to others. A community experiences well-being as each of its members are recognized and enabled to contribute their gifts for the common good. Therefore, East Vancouver will be truly revitalized only by neighbours caring for each other. Crossroads exists to connect neighbours with one another and to facilitate their working toward new life together.

• WE VALUE

- Affirmation of human dignity
- Practice and cultivation of genuine hospitality
- Motivation through love and thankfulness rather than through guilt, shame, and duty
- A non-threatening environment where people have an opportunity to explore Christian faith
- Innovative programming
- Creativity and artistic expression as ways to deepen one's understanding of self and life
- The skill, talent, and potential of our volunteers, and we encourage their unique contributions
- Diversity in our neighbourhood and organization
- Abiding commitment to the concerns of our wider community

Appendix VIII. Nutrient Averages of 13 Regular Suppers
-- (%RNI)

Out of the Cold Guest (1 serving)

Nutrient	Actual Amount	RNI Amount	% RNI
Calories (kCal)	838.95	2,528.00	33
Carbo (g)	104.26	347.60	30
Fat (g)	36.72	84.27	44
Protein (g)	28.55	62.47	46
Fibre (g)	5.92	30.00	*20
Sat Fat (g)	10.07	28.09	36
Mono Fat (g)	16.10	28.09	57
Poly Fat (g)	7.59	28.09	27
Cholesterol (mg)	94.12	300.00	31
Calcium (mg)	224.69	1,000.00	*22
Iron (mg)	5.63	8.00	70
Phosphorus (mg)	433.88	700.00	62
Zinc (mg)	3.84	11.00	35
Magnesium (mg)	112.28	420.00	27
Selenium (mcg)	14.43	55.00	26
A (RE)	762.80	900.00	85
B6 (mg)	0.64	1.30	49
B12 (mcg)	0.96	2.40	40
C (mg)	89.46	90.00	99
D (mcg)	1.18	5.00	*23
E (mg)	2.45	15.00	*16
K (mg)	46.42	120.00	39
Folate (mcg)	108.67	400.00	27
Niacin (NE)	14.67	16.00	92
Thiamin (mg)	0.57	1.20	47
Riboflavin (mg)	0.56	1.30	43

Appendix IX. Nutrient Averages of 13 Vegetarian Suppers -- (%RNI)

Out of the Cold Guest (1 serving)

Nutrient	Actual Amount	RNI Amount	% RNI
Calories (kCal)	766.41	2,528.00	30
Carbo (g)	107.80	347.60	31
Fat (g)	32.60	84.27	39
Protein (g)	17.77	62.47	28
Fibre (g)	6.48	30.00	*22
Sat Fat (g)	8.43	28.09	30
Mono Fat (g)	14.18	28.09	50
Poly Fat (g)	7.74	28.09	28
Cholesterol (mg)	50.84	300.00	17
Calcium (mg)	319.43	1,000.00	32
Iron (mg)	6.10	8.00	76
Phosphorus (mg)	388.43	700.00	55
Zinc (mg)	2.32	11.00	*21
Magnesium (mg)	114.85	420.00	27
Selenium (mcg)	14.70	55.00	27
A (RE)	734.50	900.00	82
B6 (mg)	0.48	1.30	37
B12 (mcg)	0.36	2.40	*15
C (mg)	87.33	90.00	97
D (mcg)	1.17	5.00	*23
E (mg)	2.41	15.00	*16
K (mg)	51.68	120.00	43
Folate (mcg)	120.99	400.00	30
Niacin (NE)	9.51	16.00	59
Thiamin (mg)	0.55	1.20	46
Riboflavin (mg)	0.49	1.30	38