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How Strangers Become Neighbours:

***Constructing Citizenship Through
Neighbourhood Community Development***

**Researched and written by Val Cavers
with Paula Carr and Leonie Sandercock**

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Metropolis British Columbia

Centre of Excellence for Research on Immigration and Diversity

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**Researched and written by Val Cavers
with Paula Carr and Leonie Sandercock**

A Manual to accompany the film, "Where Strangers become Neighbours: The story of the Collingwood Neighbourhood House and the Integration of Immigrants in Vancouver" by Giovanni Attili and Leonie Sandercock

Funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council and the National Metropolis Project

INTRODUCTION

GATHERING PLACES AND PUBLIC SPACES are increasingly rare in our urban neighbourhoods. Places in our cities that allow you to communicate with your neighbours, share ideas and collaborate on projects. Places where people can come together. Vancouver, like other cities, was not designed with public squares, and although malls may seem to be the new public space, they do not fulfil the need for a meeting place that is free, open to all, and a connecting force. Neighbourhood Houses fill that void. They are non-judgemental, they welcome all people equally, they are non-commercial, and they are democratic and, most importantly, they invite people to get involved. Neighbourhood Houses help those in need to define and achieve their goals. They foster leadership, and build strong relationships. A hub of information and resources, Neighbourhood Houses provide a framework for community members with aspirations to improve their community, and they bring people together through their children as well as through a set of shared values, that is, community values.

There are many community points where peoples' lives intersect with one another. A community that functions well has a set of services that each fulfil a purpose and these likely include, a library, a public health clinic, schools, parks, community centres, a variety of shops, and religious institutions. The less people have to leave their community to meet their needs, the more the community will develop both economically and socially. With a strengthening of the movement to re-localize, to consume locally and to travel less, the need for community hubs is increasingly important.

When the current Collingwood Neighbourhood House (CNH) facility was built in 1995, it attracted a number of other service providers such as the

Collingwood Community Policing Centre and Evergreen Community Health Centre (run by the Vancouver Regional Health Authority). Evergreen is now located a short block from CNH. The Neighbourhood House favoured the stand-alone model as opposed to the “one stop shop” that some suggested, believing that it could more easily develop its full potential if it were not encumbered by other service providers. As well, CNH recognized that the priority needs of the neighbourhood might not be shared with the regional and specific service- providing agencies. CNH does support other services, for example, a Native Health Worker who has space to do outreach work once per week, but it has benefited from not being the main location of other large providers. In a physically large neighbourhood like Collingwood, it is also beneficial for people to have services within walking distance rather than concentrated in one central facility. Dispersion of services encourages short travels around the neighbourhood and strengthens knowledge of place as well as understanding for the variety of issues that people in different parts of the community are facing. For example, prostitution is a major issue in one part of Collingwood. If you walk up to the library on Joyce Street from the Health Centre, you will undoubtedly see evidence of this. Neighbours who live near the Health Centre may not otherwise be aware of this issue. Travelling to various locations within a community builds familiarity with concerns and builds solidarity of all residents to find solutions.

When people of many cultures live together, they need a neutral place to meet, a place where they can participate as equals and relate to one another on a common topic, although not necessarily in a common language. For instance, people come to Collingwood Neighbourhood House to play badminton, and some participants may only have badminton in common, but this offers an interaction that would not have happened otherwise. Gardening is another

example: people who were interested in helping start the community gardens came together through a love of gardening. The Neighbourhood House is the perfect catalyst for these types of interactions, and in the community of Collingwood, where 70 percent of residents speak English as a second language, intercultural interaction is the norm. Classes in English as an Additional Language (EAL) are the obvious meeting places, but the Neighbourhood House can go so much further, engaging people on multiple levels.

By talking to newcomers to Canada, we can learn what kinds of things they feel are essential for building a successful community, and the list is probably not different from one that a group of Canadian-born people would come up with. Newcomers value safety and friendly neighbours, they look for good neighbourhood schools for their children, and they appreciate gardens and beautiful landscapes, quiet streets, parks, playgrounds and affordable daycare. They want places where their teenage children can go to meet other teenagers and participate in healthy activities. They value acts of kindness from their neighbours, like the shovelling of their sidewalks after a snowstorm, and offers of food. They want to celebrate and learn about other cultures. They need a neutral place in their community where they can meet other people, share their similarities and celebrate their differences.

Neighbourhood Houses are different from community centres in many ways. In the City of Vancouver, the community centre is run by the local city government. The Neighbourhood House, on the other hand, is a grassroots organization stemming from the work of individual residents and funded by a wider variety of sources. In the case of Collingwood Neighbourhood House there are sixty-two individual funders, each one responding to a different need and program area. As this manual will illustrate, the area of community development, while it exists within some community centres, is the man-

date of the Neighbourhood House. In general, Neighbourhood Houses have more flexibility than government-mandated and -directed community centres. Resident boards direct the Neighbourhood House. They can take risks, and usually react more quickly to trends. Neighbourhood Houses are run by and for residents; their mandates are set by the people affected by them. As is the case for many acts of social change, a catalyst event sparked the creation of Collingwood Neighbourhood House. In this instance it was the development of a huge mass transit system ploughing through the neighbourhood that galvanized residents to act together and discover common values and desires for improvement.

Collingwood Neighbourhood House is not about the protection of the status quo community. Our society is rapidly changing and by learning and sharing with newcomers as well as with old timers, with the poor and with children, CNH is helping to create a new reality. Members of Collingwood Neighbourhood House share a set of common values, human values that look beyond culture and religion. Collingwood Neighbourhood House defines itself around those core values.

CNH focuses on one person at a time, and as Board President, Bill McMichael says "We are not building a system to fix the world, we are dealing with individual situations, reflecting on them, discovering through that process what our commonly held values are, and then bringing them into practice." The values described in more detail here through stories, will give you a sense of the CNH purpose and how it works in practice.

The purpose of this manual is to describe how a neighbourhood institution called Collingwood Neighbourhood House approaches citizenship and community building.

COLLINGWOOD NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSE COMMUNITY VALUES

Family

- Founding CNH member Terry Tayler searched for people within her community that shared her value of family and who would help to form the Neighbourhood House in 1985 to ensure that there would be local services for her small children. Over the years, service development for families included childcare, family places, youth leadership, parenting classes, community events, advocacy for family housing and child- and youth-friendly planning. Most newcomers to Canada also consider family to be among the most important values. Generations of newcomers will tell you that they came to Canada for a better future for their children, and they will rank access to appropriate children's programs and good schools among their top personal values. The Neighbourhood House exemplifies family values in all that it does, including the treatment of staff. CNH is an extremely family-oriented employer, allowing staff to put the needs of their families first and being flexible in terms of schedules as well as providing unconditional support. Moreover, the Neighbourhood House is supportive of staff who have family members in various parts of the world and tries to understand what their special needs may be.
- Canadian-born parents have found CNH to be a place where they can work to provide their children with a sense of cultural community. Emanuela Sheena, for example, is married to native carver Gerry Sheena, and although she herself is not native, she feels a deep responsibility for her children to be connected to their father's Interior Salish culture. Emanuela first got involved with CNH through the Slocan Park revitalization project and then found a niche for herself at the Neighbourhood House. Gerry was

initially commissioned to carve a totem pole for the Synala Housing Co-operative. He then got involved in three other carving projects, one of them in Slocan Park. Emanuela has brought her own talents in First Nations' crafts to the Neighbourhood House as well as her knowledge of the community and her amazing organizational skills. She now co-ordinates the Canoe Club that mentors native youth in traditional cultural practices. Emanuela and Gerry's children are learning about their traditional culture right in their own community, while at the same time educating the non-native community and sharing with them the extraordinary arts, crafts, and practices of their culture.

Vision

- Collingwood Neighbourhood House has been purposeful in thinking of its visions. They have taken the time to reflect and dream. This has been accomplished through planned sessions, informal discussions and seeing and experiencing different things in our community, city, country and other parts of the world. All of these approaches have helped to envision and create new possibilities. The importance of sustained leadership cannot be underestimated. The Executive Director, for example, has been with the organization for eighteen years, some of the founding members of the Neighbourhood House continue to be involved, and Terry Tayler, the first Board President, now brings her grandchildren to Family Place. Terry also mentors her daughter who is increasingly active in the community. Several of the senior managers and frontline staff have been with the organization for more than twelve years. Not only do they share the vision and values of the Neighbourhood House, but as employees they are treated with fairness and dignity. With this longevity of community service, there is an

ability to fulfil visions, develop relationships, and plan for the future based on a knowledge of the past.

Relationship Building

- It is critical for staff and volunteers to have the time and flexibility to devote to the very valued work of relationship building. Participants are invited to volunteer in programs and encouraged to pursue studies, while staff can act as references and resources for newcomers. Nancy Sweedler is the Co-ordinator of the Families Branching Out program. While she does run several regular programs herself, her role is to build leadership within those programs so that the participants will eventually run them on their own. Nancy is very adept at this, helping participants to recognize and further develop their strengths, passions and ideas. She can spend a lot of her time working individually with people, building strong and trusting relationships with some of the most marginalized members of the community.
- Important relationships are formed throughout the Neighbourhood House. One example of how newcomers are quickly drawn in to services and connected to the community comes from Satinder Singh, the Family Life Education Co-ordinator and the Co-ordinator of the Family Place program. Recently, Satinder was called to the reception area to speak in Hindi to two newcomer families. The families had just moved to Canada and to Collingwood, and someone had suggested that they come to the Neighbourhood House for help in answering the many questions that they had. Satinder was able to immediately assess the families' needs and to offer referral information to them. She also took the opportunity to sign them up for Family Place, and to connect them with the Hindi speaking

nurse at the neighbouring health unit. One of the mothers was pregnant and the nurse works in Vancouver Coastal Health's Healthiest Babies Possible program, a program with which Satinder had been associated for many years. Both women later attended Family Place, and it was there that the other mothers took over from Satinder. They also quickly assessed the needs of the two women, and took it upon themselves to help with information, support, and friendship. As Satinder has pointed out on many occasions, Family Place is a neutral ground, where people come as parents; they may be from India and mix with people from Pakistan, but those political issues are swept aside to deal with issues affecting people in a similar predicament to their own.

- Many people come to the Neighbourhood House for very basic needs, and end up forming life-altering relationships that even replace tattered or distant family relationships. Noel Allan-Hughes is one such person. Noel came to the Neighbourhood House when past bleak events in his personal story had left him penniless, distraught and lonely. His own family had turned on him and robbed him of his grandparents' inheritance. What he had left was very little strength, and even less self-esteem. However, when he happened upon the Collingwood Neighbourhood House one day, his luck began to change. Being a helpful and caring soul, Noel immediately saw an opportunity for himself to help out in the Seniors' lunch program. He washed dishes in exchange for a cup of coffee. From that first encounter with the Neighbourhood House, Noel soon became indispensable in several programs. His warm character and sense of humour endeared him to staff and participants alike. The small meals that he took home improved his health, and regular outings to the Neighbourhood House improved his sense of himself. Nancy Sweedler, the Families Branching Out Co-ordinator

developed a relationship with Noel, and helped him to find a niche at CNH. He worked in most of the kitchen programs, including the Monday night family dinner where he eventually met his soul mate, Sandra. Noel and Sandra are now married and raising two children in the Neighbourhood House community.

- Three years on, Noel still helps out in the kitchen, but he is also sharing his computer skills by volunteering to run the computer lab as well as a computer class for youth. CNH has become Noel's adoptive home and family, providing him with the love, guidance and support his life was lacking. The appreciation and encouragement Noel received provided the motivation and the energy he desperately needed to involve himself in the community.
- Not all relationships are as easy as Noel's to establish. In 2004 the Neighbourhood House developed a plan in collaboration with a number of local partners, to provide a shower, breakfast, and clean clothes exchange for the growing number of homeless people in the community. The ensuing outreach work to the community's homeless members sparked strong reactions from Collingwood community members. On the one hand, the Neighbourhood House was accused of drawing more homeless people to the neighbourhood, thereby (some believe) jeopardizing the safety of residents; on the other hand, there was an immense outpouring of support for the program by people who wanted to help alleviate poverty in the community.
- The program for the homeless, now in its second year, provides a hot shower and breakfast once a week. Participants can also get clean clothing and household goods if they are making the transition into housing. Staff

and volunteers provide support to participants, acting as advocates and connecting them with government agencies as well as housing, detoxification programs, and other medical services. This program enjoys strong support from the neighbouring public health unit, which provides nurses, access to doctors and detox programs.

- The benefits to the community have been felt both by participants in this program and by other Neighbourhood House participants who have opened their minds to accepting this vulnerable and often misunderstood group. Through the sharing of stories and the focus on relationships, a greater understanding of the “other” has developed. However, there have also been challenges to this program, where people less inclined to include homeless people in their community have been outspoken in voicing strong concerns for personal safety when using the Neighbourhood House. Relationships continue to evolve and there is a sense of confidence that the program will prevail. Just as the initial years of the youth program drew criticism, it is hoped that current concerns regarding CNH’s programs for the homeless and the poor will give way to acceptance, eventually creating a more inclusive community.

Reciprocity

- Collingwood Neighbourhood House is a values-based organization, and from the beginning, one of the key values was to ensure that people be treated not just as having needs but also as having the capacity to help themselves. This value is practiced in looking at and operationalizing the broader community assets and needs of our neighbourhood institutions. However, this model only really works if people and organizations see

their role as both meeting needs and giving back, thereby establishing a system of reciprocity.

- Many of the stories that are told in both the film and this manual show the level of reciprocity that exists at CNH. One such story stands out as an example of someone who is reaching for his full potential with some help from the Neighbourhood House and, in return, has contributed so much back to the community. Jude Chun wanted desperately to find a place for himself in Collingwood Neighbourhood House. He felt comfortable there because it was one of a few places where he felt that he could fit in, where he was not perceived as different in a negative way. In fact, CNH welcomed Jude; his uniqueness was appreciated and people had the time to talk to him, to laugh with him, and to coach him into finding a place to share his skills. Michael McLenaghan, Director of Community Services at Collingwood, recognized Jude's uniqueness and together they found a fit. Jude became the indispensable aid in the Parents and Tots gym program, tirelessly hauling out the equipment twice a week, setting it up, and putting it away again. Jude was doing that job for three years when he expressed an interest in working in the Breakfast program; he is now a regular volunteer, helping in the kitchen, serving food and connecting with participants. In many ways, Collingwood has been the beneficiary of Jude's dedication, and Jude himself has grown and developed social skills that had previously been a challenge for him.

There are hundreds of stories about volunteers at Collingwood Neighbourhood House, and many of them are like Jude's. These are people who bring all that they have to contribute and share it willingly, and, as in any volunteer organization, these are the people that make the differ-

ence. Collingwood values the right and responsibility of individuals to civic engagement and is hugely indebted to its volunteers.

- Reciprocity is also created with local service providers. Within a neighbourhood, each service provider has special gifts and different perspectives to offer as well as challenges with leadership and resources from time to time. The neighbourhood agencies, working together, play an essential role in capacity building. For example, CNH offered the local Family of Schools space, grantsmanship, and assistance in lobbying to develop a school board position in the community dedicated to youth leadership; in response, the schools opened up their facilities for family and settlement services and supported CNH's proposals for development. The Collingwood Community Policing Centre is another example. It offered CNH safety audits, members to sit on committees and Boards, access to prevention and emergency police services, and police checks for volunteers. In return, CNH provided fundraising and grantsmanship support, advocacy to sustain the policing centre, and education about community development as a way to build safe communities. In another case, the Renfrew Park Community Association offered education to residents on Parks resources and systems and supported resident-led projects initially supported by CNH, such as Slocan Park and Renfrew Ravine. CNH offered knowledge and education about broad policy changes affecting the neighbourhood, connection to resident leaders for the Renfrew Park Community Association Board, fundraising support, and assistance in building their capacity for political advocacy and community development.

Collaboration and Co-operation

- Collingwood Neighbourhood House has fostered several strong connections with local service providers, for example the Evergreen Community Health Centre, the Collingwood Community Policing Office, the Renfrew Community Centre, religious institutions, and local schools. In addition, the Neighbourhood House maintains over 140 relationships with funders, other Neighbourhood Houses, businesses, immigrant serving agencies and various umbrella organizations.
- One program that benefits enormously from a wide range of community and regional partners is The Homeless Shower and Breakfast program discussed above. It has the support of all of the community agencies listed above and receives additional support from local businesses that supply everything from toothbrushes and soap to fresh daily bread and baked goods. This program reaches outside the catchment area and is supported by more regional homelessness initiatives, such as Burnaby's Progressive Housing Society.
- Development in partnership with regional service specialists such as immigrant serving agencies, childcare resource centres and family support agencies can contribute to the breadth of programming. Collingwood Neighbourhood House has a relatively small settlement services team made up of one part-time Co-ordinator, two Settlement Workers, two English as an Additional Language Teachers and two Childcare Workers. Outside settlement serving agencies have long-standing relationships with CNH to increase the number of services for newcomers. The Pacific Immigrant Resources Society (PIRS) offers EAL classes to women with preschool-aged children as well as bicultural and bilingual support in Kurdish and

Farsi. They also run a leadership program for immigrant women. Both are located at, and supported by, Collingwood Neighbourhood House. PIRS and CNH share many of the same values, making for an easy partnership. In much the same way, the Family Place parents and caregivers benefit from a roving toy-lending library that makes a weekly stop at Collingwood Neighbourhood House and is operated by the Westcoast Childcare Resource Centre.

- Collingwood Neighbourhood House is a member of a Neighbourhood House consortium that deliver a range of settlement services across the east side of Vancouver. Each of the consortium's four Neighbourhood Houses has settlement workers who provide service in various languages. The network benefits the newcomers by linking them to a Neighbourhood House closer to their home and by connecting them to a worker who speaks their first language. Newcomers are equally well cared for at all consortium Neighbourhood Houses, which play the same role in their communities as CNH does in Collingwood.
- Operating programs in off-site locations adds to the network of community connections. For example, Collingwood Neighbourhood House operates its government-funded adult English as an Additional Language classes, along with childminding, at the First Lutheran Church. This relationship has led to a greater understanding between the traditional congregation and immigrant newcomers. One positive spin-off has seen congregation members volunteering in the classrooms. The church also benefits financially from the rent paid for the space, which has contributed to the stability of the church in the community.

- Family of Schools is an initiative created in Renfrew Collingwood to develop youth leadership, increase community and school partnerships, and facilitate relationship building with youth and children in transition. The partnership was created through the area service network, with leadership support provided by CNH. The idea was to take the concept of a community school and broaden its reach through a community of schools made up of seven elementary feeder schools, one high school, and community partners such as CNH and Renfrew Park Community Centre. The focus would vary from a traditional approach of concentrating on a facility and broad needs, to focusing on youth and supporting their leadership throughout the whole community. Today there are over 1500 youth, many from immigrant families, who are leading initiatives and learning citizenship skills in the community. For example, older youth teach children how to play piano or plant a garden. Many provide safe environments for children after school in our parks and playgrounds; some are leading environmental and art projects; some are making recommendations on how to make our public spaces and institutions more child and youth friendly; and others are educating the community on sustainable purchasing. This partnership and creative approach laid the foundation for sharing resources and supporting youth ideas. As well, it is building leadership capacity among younger people, many of whom continue to actively practise citizenship as they become younger adults.

Leadership development

- Having staff who work in more than one program can have the effect of what CNH likes to call “cross pollenization.” For example, a staff person who looks after children in both an EAL class and a Family Place program

can link parents from one program to another. One such childcare worker actively promotes her “other program” and physically takes women and their children to Family Place with her after class. That type of introduction to a program can be invaluable to a mother who may need that extra encouragement to join in with a new group. Participants themselves become cross pollenizers, attending different programs and then sharing them with others, and introducing friends to new programs. These staff and participants become leaders, taking on this important role and developing it to the point of being indispensable. They are most often the same people who will, within their program groups, be confident enough to become leaders.

- Nina came to Canada in the early 1980s, fleeing the Chilean dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet. The violence and injustice that enveloped her country left her little choice but to seek refugee status in Canada. When Nina came to Canada, she had lost a lot of her life, everything that she had built for herself, her self-esteem and connection to her family. Nina had been living in the Chilean Housing Co-op in the Collingwood community for several years before she was introduced to Collingwood Neighbourhood House. A friend had offered to take her son to Family Place, and one thing then led to another. Nina felt an immediate kinship to CNH. She recognized that she shared the values of what was then a small community organization with a family focus. Her love of children led to an opportunity to work as a substitute childcare worker in the Nobody’s Perfect parenting program. Seventeen years later, Nina is now the ChildCare Co-ordinator for the adult EAL program. Working with newcomers comes naturally to Nina. As a non-native speaker of English, she often finds it challenging to fully express herself, leaving her feeling as though she cannot reach her full potential.

A fully participating, confident leader in her native Chile, Nina recognizes what it feels like as a newcomer to be spun backwards in your life and to have to prove yourself once again in a new culture. This personal experience has made Nina a leader at Collingwood Neighbourhood House. Not only does she mentor volunteers, many of whom have come under similar circumstances and are now getting their new start in Canada, but she also takes the concerns of parents in her programs seriously and personally helps as many families as she can, which includes inviting them to special celebrations at her co-op. Nina's story points to the enormous benefit of hiring staff who have been recent immigrants themselves and can identify strongly with the needs of newcomers.

- Mr. Hoo is a senior in our community who immigrated to Canada from Hong Kong. Mr. Hoo became connected to CNH through language classes and quickly joined the senior wellness program for companionship and to learn more about Canadian culture. Mr. Hoo loves to cook and to share his culture. He often hosts Chinese lunches for the seniors, decorates the facility for Chinese New Year, volunteers at many of our child care programs where the children have language challenges, and also sits on an advisory committee to further develop senior services as well as increase our elders' involvement in the neighbourhood. Mr. Hoo is one of many examples where senior citizens contribute their skills and ideas and are committed to lifelong learning. In doing so, they increase their personal health and happiness as well as the capacity of the community as a whole.
- Families Branching Out (FBO) is the name used by CNH to describe a series of programs intended for families with children aged six and under. The target families may be considered "at risk," meaning some risk factors exist, such as poverty, isolation, abuse, and/or being new immigrant,

first nation, or single parents. The Family Dinner is a weekly FBO program that focuses on providing a healthy dinner and social activities for community residents. It offers participants a chance to come together, make friends, improve their social interactions and lessen their isolation. This program encourages a fun and celebratory environment that, for many, is a relief from their challenging daily routine. Participants cook the weekly meal and plan activities together, which often involve trips to popular family venues that, although frequently unaffordable for individual families, can be enjoyed with the support of the programme budget. With the program's focus on parent leadership, it is no surprise that several participants have found their voice in other areas of the Neighbourhood House and have contributed to the operation of different programs (particularly those for women) through activities such as such as managing a snack bar, joining the Board of Directors, and coordinating a group for Latin American women and their children.

- The development of community leaders has been a natural consequence of the work that Collingwood Neighbourhood House does. There is one space in the house that tends, more than others, to attract involve people immediately. Not surprisingly, that space is the kitchen. The large commercial kitchen at CNH is located on the first floor, right next to the reception desk; the door is often open and there is some activity there at almost any time of any day. One fateful day, Teresa Dalby passed by. Her curiosity and her inclination to help out drew her into the warm and friendly Families Branching Out Family Dinner program. Teresa is a single mother who is raising her son Dale while tackling her own physical disability. She had recently found a space for Dale in the CNH daycare and was preparing to get her life in order. Her first stop was the kitchen. Teresa was quickly

recognized as someone who had a lot to give and the willingness to help out. She and Dale became fixtures in the Family Dinner Program. Teresa's involvement led to her being asked to attend the Renfrew Collingwood Leadership Institute, and after she finished the Institute course, she was chosen to join other parent leaders in a provincial Parents and Leadership program. Consequently, Teresa gained self-confidence and parenting guidance while enriching the programs in which she was involved with her special insight and experiences. Dale, too, proved to be a natural leader and became a big brother figure to many of the other children while still a preschooler himself. Living with a disabled single parent has given him a mature sensibility, and his mother's involvement at CNH has provided a place for him to flourish.

- The Youth Centre and Youth Buddy Program offer healthy alternative activities for youth aged ten to eighteen. Twice a week, the Youth Centre is a meeting place for all youth. In addition to games, cooking and recreational activities, the Centre provides homework help and actively promotes multiculturalism by involving youth in specific celebrations and art projects. The Youth Buddy Program runs out of five local schools and matches younger newcomer youth with older youth who have been in Canada longer or who were born in Canada. The "host" and "buddy" take part in group activities that strengthen awareness of personal safety and that help the "buddies" to become more comfortable in their new environment. These buddies and hosts learn leadership skills, which they then bring to other areas of the house. Youth Board members are now a fixture on the CNH Board of Directors, providing legitimate and meaningful leadership roles for youth.

- CNH along with other neighbourhood houses offer a neighbourhood grants program supported through funds from the Vancouver Foundation. Residents can apply for a grant of up to five hundred dollars to improve their community. A committee of residents promote the program and review applications, establish links and support, and host a celebration where recipients are able to share their stories. This community development approach has enabled new leadership to emerge in the community and has helped people who were isolated through cultural differences to feel more a part of their neighbourhood.
- Volunteers at Collingwood are encouraged to take on the roles and responsibilities associated with both organizational and community leadership. That's why, in early 2000, CNH explored the idea of a Leadership Institute where community members would have the opportunity to learn more about leadership relevant to their community and based on their individual learning needs. Initially, Collingwood formed a partnership with Langara Community College Continuing Studies to establish community-based learning opportunities. They hired an independent consultant with experience in community leadership, and they secured funding from the Vancouver Foundation, VanCity Credit Union, and VanCity Community Foundation.

The Renfrew Collingwood Community Leadership Institute ran as a pilot in 2002 and continues to evolve, offering hands-on learning experiences designed to recruit new leaders and strengthen the capacities of existing volunteer leaders in the community. The curriculum is based on a set of core competencies for community leaders and changes annually to reflect emerging needs. In the past, workshop offerings have included: Leading Community Processes, Chairing Effective Meetings, Promoting Your

Community, Creative Community Fundraising, Community Mapping, and Writing Effective Grant Proposals. Seasoned CNH staff and local residents facilitate the workshops. In a three-year period, 456 Renfrew/Collingwood residents attended the thirty-five skill development workshops. The Leadership Institute has proven to be an outstanding way to develop leadership skills, connect with others in the community, and facilitate the exchange of information.

Respect

- Inclusion is central to the Collingwood Neighbourhood House philosophy. CNH strives to include all members of the community by providing translation and interpretation services; translating the annual program and services brochure into four languages other than English; hiring staff that reflect the cultural, generational and economic make-up of the community; and adhering to a multiculturalism policy that decrees the right of all people to participate equally in the organization. All people and all ideas are treated with respect. All cultural groups are invited to participate at CNH.
- In the months following September 11, 2001, several evenings were set aside at Collingwood Neighbourhood House to provide a forum for the local Muslim community to share information about Islam and answer questions. This was also when the Peace and Humanity Committee was formed. The Committee's first action was to organize a fundraising effort, in partnership with Oxfam, to aid the victims of war in Afghanistan. The Committee also organized an evening of storytelling called Stories of Peace and War. Six residents of Collingwood told their personal stories of persecution, fleeing war, surviving peril and escaping to Canada. These

powerful stories—told in poetry, prose, and through visual artwork—helped other community members recognise the struggles that their neighbours have faced. In trying times, Collingwood Neighbourhood House recognises the need for education in order to build empathy and respect.

Perhaps one of the greatest “shifts in attitude” has been the acceptance of the economic underclass, including the homeless, in the community. The homeless program has been a true test of the values of Collingwood Neighbourhood House. Gaining community respect for the homeless, the drug addicts, the mentally ill and the poor has presented a great challenge to the current CNH Board of Directors, staff and participants. As government services for these groups of people deteriorated, communities, including Collingwood, found themselves dealing more and more with these issues. The Skytrain had brought the drug users and dealers to the Collingwood neighbourhood. The adjacent community had managed to push out the prostitutes and johns, but this only moved the problem further east into Collingwood, and the huge increase in the population had increased the crime rate. The combination of all of these factors meant that the CNH Board could not ignore the people whose lives were intertwined with these external events, and these were largely the poor. Collingwood is home to a very active Community Crime Prevention Office (CCPO), and while it provides a resource and support service for victims of crime, it also joins with community partners to work towards alleviating the perceived causes of crime. The CCPO has a very important role on the Homeless Program Committee. Their task is to build a bridge in understanding between those who believe all crime to be the work of poor and homeless drug addicts and those whose goal is acceptance of and respect for these

members of the community, as well as advocacy on their behalf for government support to reduce the rates of homelessness and poverty.

Integrated Approaches

- English as an Additional Language classes are quite often the first meeting place between Collingwood Neighbourhood House staff and immigrant and refugee participants. All landed immigrants who are Permanent Residents, who have not yet become Canadian citizens, and who meet the English proficiency levels required by the federal government, are eligible to attend free EAL classes. Collingwood Neighbourhood House offers these free classes for adults, and provides childminding for their preschool children. Staff in the English Language Services for Adults (ELSA) program are trained not only to provide instruction in basic English but also to provide information, referral services, and support to newcomer families. They link families to other programs and services at CNH and in the broader community. The use of a theme-based curriculum that is structured around the needs of newcomers is an opportunity to introduce newcomers to the community and to the country. Monthly themes are accompanied by a guest speaker and a field trip, and include government and community services, health, education, law, and Canadian history and geography. Collingwood Neighbourhood House provides a number of other EAL classes for those who do not meet the requirements for ELSA. Refugee claimants, for example, are excluded from the government-funded programs. So CNH runs classes for refugee claimants using volunteer teachers-in-training from a local community college. The curriculum for this program includes useful themes such as Getting a Work Permit, Workers Rights and Tenant Rights.

Refugees are welcome in all other programs at CNH and can easily become connected through staff and volunteers to other opportunities.

- People migrate to Canada for a variety of reasons: family reunification, economic globalization, ecological crisis, discrimination, and political upheaval among them. For the hundreds of immigrants, government-sponsored refugees and refugee claimants that settle in the community of Collingwood every year, CNH provides a range of settlement services, which include personal support in Cantonese, Mandarin and Korean. CNH trains Information and Referral volunteers to assist the settlement workers when participants speak another language. CNH has established a number of relationships with immigrant serving agencies to enhance its ability to provide a range of quality services. These organizations rent space at the Neighbourhood House and run their programs from there. Programs include an EAL class for women; childminding for their preschool children; bicultural support in Kurdish, Spanish and Pashto; a multilingual income tax clinic; an adult HOST program matching newcomer adults and families with Canadian born or longer time residents of Canada; multilevel EAL classes for seniors and for adults; and a LEAD program designed for immigrant women. (This program focuses on group support and English language improvement).
- Collingwood Neighbourhood House runs five daycare programs, two Preschools, and five after school programs in a total of six locations throughout the community. These programs provide a high quality of care, often employing the Reggio Emilia philosophy of education, which advocates fostering the development of community participation in young children. Children make birthday cakes for the Seniors, participate in clean-ups and mural painting, and are out in the community on a daily

basis, learning about their environment. Their parents have started lunch programs in schools, improved local parks and streets, and shared their skills through teaching and mentoring others. In the early history of CNH, the Board was persuaded to get involved in childcare in part because Collingwood is a very family-orientated community and in part because childcare's phenomenal community-building potential. The Neighbourhood House saw the opportunity to connect people to a variety of opportunities and to learn about community assets through children, and this turned out to be hugely effective.

- Sanjeev Karwal is one of the many success stories attributed to integrated approaches, in which an apparently single purpose program such as Family Place can concurrently build both community and community leaders. Sanjeev is the current Youth Co-ordinator for Collingwood Neighbourhood House and is a great role model for youth leadership. Sanjeev was taken to Family Place as a baby, toddler and preschooler by his grandmother. He went on to volunteer at school as a Youth Buddy Host, and he now runs the Youth Centre and the Youth Buddy program.

Intercultural Diversity as opposed to Multiculturalism

- Collingwood Neighbourhood House runs more than a hundred regular programs and services, in addition to managing a dozen community development initiatives and participating in the organization of two annual community celebrations. Some of the programs and services that play a particularly important role in fostering social inclusion are Information and Referral Services, Family Place, Families Branching Out, the Youth Centre and Youth Buddy program, the Homeless Shower and Breakfast program, Day Care and Preschool programs, and English as an Additional Language classes.

- For the most part, Collingwood Neighbourhood House does not run language or culturally specific programming, tending instead towards intercultural programming in the *lingua franca* English that could potentially include all community members,. However, it is sometimes necessary when dealing with sensitive personal or parenting issues or acculturation, for a group of people who speak the same language to get together to sort through those issues. Also, in the case of the Aboriginal population in Collingwood, it has been important for them to have a space to gather together and to join the remnants of a shattered culture. The Neighbourhood House serves as the meeting place for these groups, providing common neutral space where issues can be discussed safely and people supported as needed.
- An excellent example of intercultural programming is found in one of CNH's oldest running programs. Family Place is a casual meeting place for small children and their caregivers. Many newcomer families are linked up to the Family Place through involvement in an English as an Additional Language class. Participants must register for all but two of the Family Place sessions (these two are drop-in). The registration process ensures that the children, and the adult who accompanies them, build a strong connection to a group. Children from the Family Place are prepared for other preschool or daycare programs and eventually school. For the adults, this may be the only way they have to connect with other parents, share experiences and find out about other resources from each other, the group leader, and the special guests that regularly visit the program. The children are also exposed to English, and for many, this is their only experience with English throughout the week. Here, they learn songs and stories in English that benefit them in later learning. From Family Place, adults have gone on to

join such things as parenting programs, the Leadership Institute, recreation programs, and volunteering. Every session is supported by several volunteers, often newcomers, many of whom would like to enter the early childhood education field. Approximately twenty-five volunteers have gone on to become teachers, and children who came to Family Place have returned as adults to volunteer.

Over the years, Satinder Singh, the first and current Co-ordinator of the this program, has provided a model for other women arriving from all over the world and wanting to participate in a meaningful way in Canadian society. Satinder herself arrived in Canada in the early 1990s from India. She had no formal training as an early childhood educator, but she had small children of her own, and she recognized her natural and magical connection with preschoolers. Eighteen years later, Satinder now has her Early Childhood Education Certificate, and she is able to counsel women who are interested in following that path. That the Family Place program thrives is due in part to Satinder's magic and in part to the program's inclusive and intercultural character. People are brought together rather than kept apart and learn, through this interaction, that for all their differences, what they do have in common is parenting.

- The times that CNH has run culturally specific programming, the results have been less successful. CNH started providing segregated English as an Additional Language classes for newcomers in the 1990s. The demographics at that time showed three prominent language groups represented in the community: Cantonese, Punjabi and Spanish. CNH targeted these three groups for EAL classes. A space at the First Lutheran Church was secured and teachers hired, along with three bicultural/bilingual assistants to provide additional support to the students. These students all

shared the same plight. They all needed to learn English to fully adapt in their new country; however, by separating them, they were unable to experience this plight together. Instead, tensions flared around cultural stereotypes: one group was described as poor and lazy, another as snobbish, and so on. Eventually, putting these people together into the same classroom placed them all in the same predicament, allowing them to strip away the superficial stereotyping.

It wasn't easy to get to a place of understanding. The three groups and the staff were entrenched in their fears and sometimes loathing. In order to make the change to an integrated classroom philosophy, the Neighbourhood House brought in a cross-cultural facilitator, who worked with the students and staff. Now, you wouldn't know that cultural stereotyping had ever been an issue among the various communities. Today's EAL students are absorbed by the real issues that face them all: learning English and learning how to live successfully in Canadian society. This is not to say that there are never tensions among cultural groups as well as the subtle racism that ignorance affords; stereotyping and racism do reappear from time to time. However, teachers and support staff are in a much better position to deal with these issues when they arise within a mixed group and can be seen for what they are.

- Collingwood Neighbourhood House values all types of diversity, and this includes intergenerational programming. A recent initiative is bringing youth leaders together with seniors in the community. Team 16 is a project of the Drug and Alcohol Committee in which youth work on projects throughout the year with elementary school children focussing on topics like drug and alcohol abuse prevention, anti-bullying and anti-racism. The youth hold a huge prevention fair every year, attracting more than six hundred chil-

dren from local schools. When asked who they like to talk to in their families, the youth told the committee they felt most comfortable with their grandparents. This inspired the committee to pair Team 16 youth up with seniors. Seniors, who often express fear of youth, also needed to bridge the gap between generations. One result of this initiative of the Drug and Alcohol Committee was that during a Vancouver water crisis, youth carried bottled water to help isolated seniors. Similarly, after a snowstorm, youth assisted seniors by shovelling their walkways.

Capacity Building

- The “neighbour helping neighbour” approach is widely applied to service delivery at CNH, most notably to the delivery of Information and Referral services. In this program, volunteers who speak English and an additional language are recruited to be information specialists. They compile and distribute resource materials on subjects that are of interest to community residents, including legal information, parenting information, city guides, transit information, and a variety of government forms. Newcomers who volunteer in this area quickly learn for themselves valuable information about their new home, and they are empowered to pass that information on to others. People who are interested in pursuing careers in settlement services find the Information and Referral Program an entry point for gaining confidence and knowledge of local and regional resources. Volunteers are also called upon to provide interpretation and translation services, and workshop co-ordination.
- Kulwant Kaur is the interim Co-Executive Director of Collingwood Neighbourhood House. Kulwant came to Canada with her husband and two young children almost sixteen years ago from Malaysia. They came

for various reasons, one of which was to escape a multicultural society that wasn't working, a society that promoted racism, especially towards non-indigenous peoples and religions like Sikhism. There were also major changes in the education system: English was no longer the first language, and school children were required to study the Koran. Kulwant quickly settled into a position at an ethno-specific agency before joining Collingwood in 1994. Her personal values matched those of the Neighbourhood House perfectly, and she knew that her need to do meaningful work in the service of other people could be met at CNH. As the Office Manager, Kulwant had opportunities to interact directly with people in the community by providing information and referral services. She soon grew to deeply appreciate the multicultural nature of CNH and to value the interactions that she had with staff and participants from all over the world. After a review of the administration department, Kulwant's position was changed to the Office and Volunteer Co-ordinator, and she was later offered the position of Director of Operations. During the current six-month absence of Executive Director Paula Carr, Kulwant is leading the Director's Team as the Co-Executive Director. She is proud to be a part of an organization that encourages internal promotion and recognizes the value of mentoring and building capacity from within.

Creativity

- In the mid 1990s, Collingwood Neighbourhood House underwent a fundamental shift back to its community development roots. The organization had become absorbed by the provision of programs and services; the huge expansion into the areas of childcare, recreation and settlement services; and by the capital campaign and the move into the new facility

on Joyce Street. By 1996 the time was right to begin working again with the aspirations of residents. January Wolodarsky was a mum attending Family Place with her new baby girl. She had just returned to Canada after spending eleven years in Japan, and in many ways she felt like a newcomer to Canada. She lacked connections, and she had no family close by. January worked as an environmental artist in Tokyo, designing and building large-scale urban beautification projects using gardens, sculptures and water. She now found herself in Collingwood with a small child and a new set of priorities. Her idea was to do something about the neglected park that she lived near, which happened to be Slocan Park. While attending Family Place, she became familiar with the Neighbourhood House and was connected by the Co-ordinator, Satinder Singh, to Paula Carr, Executive Director of Community Development

Paula was beginning to think of a return to a community development focus, and January arrived at exactly the right moment. January, together with two other residents, Julie Cheng (a community developer) and Cecilia Boisier (an artist and art educator), conceived of and formed the Arts Pow Wow, a group that drew people together to share their cultural assets. The Pow Wow became their gathering place, and from there, many creative initiatives emerged including the Renfrew Collingwood Newspaper, the Music Club, the Multicultural Artists Gathering Association, the Aboriginal Carving and Canoe Club, and the Slocan Park Revitalization Project.

One of the first community development projects that the Neighbourhood House undertook was the creation of a Cultural Skills Inventory, which was accomplished with provincial funding for a Multiculturalism Week.. The idea was to create a database that would store all of the cultural assets in the community and that could be tapped into by any community group

or individual. The project uncovered a treasure of artists, musicians, visual artists, weavers, carvers, dancers, and traditional healers. Fourteen of these people were showcased during the Multiweek celebrations, and many of them were invited to perform at other neighbourhood events. Some of the artists and performers who were “discovered” through this project later became permanently involved in community development initiatives. The project left CNH with a reputation for initiating community art projects. At the same time, visual arts programming was expanding in the recreation department, and the two groups quickly got together, leading to a strong visual arts presence in the community and a succession of public art projects that continues today.

Artists and musicians, dancers and organizers alike seemed to be drawn to the Neighbourhood House, and in the wake of Multiculturalism Week, they set to work on beautifying Slocan Park, and the Renfrew Ravine. This was the beginning of big celebrations like the Moon Festival and Collingwood Days. Artists were needed to improve the wall beside the new community gardens, and banners had to be painted to replace aging city-issue banners. There has never been a shortage of projects, or ideas, or dreams. January Wolodarsky is now the Director of Community Development at CNH, overseeing and supporting a range of cultural, educational, social and environmental initiatives envisioned and led by local residents.

- Yoko Tomita was an artist working as a Japanese tour guide after she arrived in Canada in 1989. She had no previous experience working in community art but, following a few key connections, she became immersed in the beautification of Collingwood and the use of art for community development. In 2002, Yoko met Cecilia Boisier, the Visual Arts Instructor at CNH and also a member of the Arts Pow Wow, and it was Cecilia who

introduced Yoko to community art. She began helping out at classes and then running workshops, coming to terms with processes that involved many people and incorporating their ideas into artwork. Initially, it was a struggle. There were times when no one would show up for a workshop, and the threat of cancellation was always present. Yoko had to make art that fit criteria that someone else had come up with. She had to learn about motivating, networking and marketing herself. To help augment her own abilities, Yoko enrolled in the Renfrew Collingwood Leadership Institute, to which she credits learning many of the skills necessary for her to become a successful community development artist. Yoko learned to coordinate children and non-artists, and to work with multicultural community members expressing many ideas on a single canvas, murals or street banners. It was a challenging experience, but ultimately, Yoko recognized the value in this process and she began to thrive on the energy and ideas.

Since 2002, Yoko has worked on more than twenty projects in the Renfrew-Collingwood neighbourhood including lantern workshops for the annual Moon Festival and running the summer art camp for children. In addition to her involvement in community art projects, Yoko is the Visual Arts Instructor at CNH and is living her dream of supporting herself through art.

Accessibility

- The Neighbourhood House provides accessible services that address a wide variety of educational, social and recreational needs. This ensures that more people will be attracted to the agency and be able to find something for every member of their family. Many community members face financial challenges, and the Neighbourhood House has a number of subsidy pro-

grams that ensure equal access to services. They also conduct outreach to marginalized groups, offer programs and services in first languages, provide childminding to encourage involvement, and embrace flexible approaches to support individuals' access to services, all in order to enhance the ability of all community members to contribute to community life.

Celebrations

- CNH is an organization that loves to celebrate. In the early days at the strategic planning sessions, it would become a question of "what have we accomplished this year and how are we going to celebrate that" as much as planning for the future year. There is no reason too small for a celebration, whether that be a birthday, an anniversary, the birth of a baby, or the accomplishments of an individual. Celebrations keep CNH healthy by giving people a break and a chance to reflect on accomplishments.
- Every February, the Neighbourhood House celebrates multiculturalism during the provincial Multiculturalism Week. Festivities intentionally try to be intercultural in nature and have included a Polka Party with Ukrainian food for a Chinese dance group, Nigerian storytelling and dancing in a tepee, and an acupuncture demonstration for non-Asian seniors. Over the years, hundreds of residents, children, adults and seniors have participated in Multiweek celebrations, which involve dozens of local performers representing various cultures and art forms. Last year, twenty new street banners were hand-painted by Yoko Tomito and participants from various programs, including the homeless program. Yoko found a few homeless participants who were transformed by painting and creating. One man who had been coming to the homeless program for months but had never spoken to anyone, suddenly opened up and shared his vast knowledge of

art while helping to paint a dragon on a banner. Yoko, Jo-Anne Stephens (the homeless program Co-ordinator), and many others celebrated this achievement. The banners were hung on the lamp posts outside the Neighbourhood House on what is now called the Cultural Harmony Walk.

Advocacy

- Community advocacy comes to CNH naturally. Neighbourhood House staff are involved in day-to-day advocacy work in all program areas and at varying levels. Settlement workers work individually with people to help them solve complex immigration problems, referring them to other agencies when necessary and ensuring that they get the appropriate available support.

Building strong relationships with individuals leads to advocacy work and this has certainly been the case in the Homeless Shower and Breakfast Program. Many of the people who come for a shower and breakfast are often not treated fairly by government offices, health services, and others in our society. One of the most important roles of the program Co-ordinator, Jo-Anne Stephens, is to help guide people through various government processes and ensure that they are treated justly and with dignity. Since the Neighbourhood House took on the homeless program, Jo-Anne has been a constant advocate for the participants, even within the House. A great deal of work was, and still is, needed to ensure that all staff and participants are willing to accept these new members of the CNH community. It is not uncommon for Jo-Anne to have someone in transitional housing by the end of the day, even when that person had previously been told that there was nothing available for them.

One of the roles of the CNH Board of Directors is to advocate on behalf of residents when issues arise that will affect the community. Recently, residents and CNH Board members that were involved in the campaign to save historic Fire Hall 15 won a major victory. Board members along with a resident group addressed City Hall in an effort to save the Fire Hall from destruction. There are very few historic buildings in Renfrew Collingwood, and the plans to destroy this 1913 building came as a great shock. The residents banded together and launched a campaign to save the Fire Hall. In the end, they were successful. On July 20, 2006, Vancouver City Council approved the retention of the Fire Hall along with funds allocated for a full restoration of the building.

Social Justice

- For six years, Collingwood Neighbourhood House ran an Anti-racism Community Committee that consisted of one staff person and five community members representing the various cultural communities in Collingwood. The Committee's work was wide-ranging. They organized a discussion forum after the arrival of the Chinese "boat people." During Multiweek, they sponsored several anti-racism sessions for participants. These included sessions for parents who want to raise children who do not inherit society's prejudices and for immigrant youth who find themselves straddling two cultures, that of their family and that of their new country and school. The Committee also organized training for staff, giving them tools to support victims of racism. The Committee's largest project was the creation of a video that gave native youth an opportunity to tell their personal stories of racism, along with the development of a teaching guide to accompany the video.

This set of values that Collingwood Neighbourhood House shares with the community acts as the binding force behind the success of the agency. When we ask where these values came from, it becomes apparent that the work guides the values, as opposed to the other way around. The organization knows what needs to be done in certain instances without necessarily first locating the values underlying the action. There are many values interwoven into each of these stories. In fact, it is the people actually doing the work of CNH who determine and clarify the organization's values. Values that are not embodied by those involved in the work will certainly not be embodied by the organization. Core values have not changed, but in order to gain the force they need, they may occasionally have to be fine tuned, deriving meaning from present circumstances—and from the real life stories that embody them.

BALANCING BOTH COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND SERVICES

When Collingwood Neighbourhood House set out not only to provide a wide range of programs and services to the community but also to return to a community development model, it recognized the need to balance the two and make them supportive of each other. Key to this balance is the understanding that one cannot exist without the other and still fulfil the mandate of the House. The core programs and services are all funded from a number of sources, including government, foundations and program fees. This core funding allows for the community development work to take place. It provides a foundation to build community at a grass roots level. A portion of the funding that is received from all sources goes to support a strong administrative base. This base then supports the work of all Neighbourhood House departments, including community development initiatives. Community development initia-

tives receive their own funding from various sources such as the Vancouver Foundation, but they could never independently establish the base administration and connection to people-accessing services that is required to fulfil any initiative.

The Collingwood Food Security Institute is a good example of a community development project that has succeeded with the support of CNH. This critical community initiative grew out of a need to address poverty issues and coordinate available food sources and programs in the community. Food resources that were underused, such as backyard fruit trees and gardens, were discovered through a mapping project. Backyard gardeners volunteered to “grow a row” for those in need, and fruit that would have gone bad was harvested and distributed. The start-up work for this project was not costly as volunteers did most of the work. But the organization and distribution of the food, as well as the coordination of a number of new projects that were inspired by this initiative required a start-up place. That meant a place with resources, with staff who could set up systems, and an administration to manage it all. The Collingwood Food Security Institute now applies for its own funding and employs a full-time Coordinator. Moreover, it has many other resident-initiated projects underway, including two community gardens, a roof-top garden at Collingwood Neighbourhood House, food-growing workshops, and a breakfast program.

The story of Slocan Park shows how the stability of CNH supported a group of residents in pursuing their dream of an improved neighbourhood park. Through the Neighbourhood House, the residents were able to apply for funding, make use of contacts already well known to CNH, have a meeting space to gather and plan, and most important of all, feel the support of a neighbourhood institution. They were not alone. When another group of resi-

dents feared that changes to the park would increase crime and vandalism, their opposition could be channelled to the Neighbourhood House, the more objective partner. The Neighbourhood House and the residents' group came together at a meeting with the landscape architect to talk about the proposed plans and to hear the opposition. What became evident was that those residents opposed to the plan considered the park more or less an extension of their backyards. They had, for many years, been stewards of this neglected park, but their calls to the City for changes had long gone unheeded. Their frustration had fed their scepticism of this new plan. Eventually, when they saw the plan and felt that they had been heard, they backed off and the plan went ahead, leaving development of the park area around their houses for a later date .

Without Collingwood Neighbourhood House, it is unlikely that any of the changes to Slocan Park would have taken place. In order for CNH to be stable enough to provide this level of community support, it needs the resources provided through core programs and services as well as strong community partnerships.

The number of people in a community who benefit from community development work greatly outnumber those who are program participants, but it is imperative that they exist together. And of course, they often intermingle. There are certainly members of the outdoor Tai Chi group at Slocan Park who attend the indoor sessions at the House. Similarly, there are program participants who learn about the Neighbourhood Small Grants Project—or other community development initiatives— while at their weekly class.

The challenge is to balance the two, ensuring that resources are fairly managed, that space, along with the time and energies of staff and volunteers,

are utilized in the best interest of all Neighbourhood House users. CNH has managed this balance by clearly communicating its values to the community and ensuring that those involved with the Neighbourhood House share those values, and are willing to contribute towards building a strong community.

MAKING THE POLICY LINK

Staying up to date with government policy changes and those of other funders has proved critical for Collingwood Neighbourhood House. In the mid 1990s, it was clear that the City of Vancouver was going to invest heavily in children. They had just hired a new children's advocate and Collingwood, with one of the highest number of preschool children in the city, was perfectly positioned to take advantage of this new trend. The CNH Board liked the idea of providing children's services, particularly childcare, for a number of reasons. Not only did it provide support to families in this predominantly lower income neighbourhood, but perhaps more importantly, children are community connectors: they bring people together. The Board saw the opportunity to use children's services as a launching pad to support a whole range of community interactions. Having the funding become available from government at that same moment that the Neighbourhood House was ready and able to take on children's services is a prime example of the importance of being linked into the policy loop.

In other instances too, CNH has followed available funding to shape programming that not only meets the needs of the community but also adheres to its common values. In the early days of the Neighbourhood House, it was clear that the demographics of the community were changing rapidly, as immigrants from Hong Kong, China, Central America and South Asia were moving into the reasonably priced neighbourhood in increasing numbers. ESL

and/or EAL classes were an obvious choice of program for the Neighbourhood House to provide. At that time, in the mid 1980s, the federal government was funding free EAL classes under the name of Settlement Language Programs, or SLP, and a number of other programs for newcomers under the Immigrant Settlement and Adaptation Program, or ISAP. Collingwood Neighbourhood House received only the language training stream of the funding, but this was ample and included childcare for parents with preschool-aged children. It was a natural fit for Collingwood.

Over the years, the relationship with federal government funding changed and eventually these free classes with childminding morphed into a provincially administered program that suffered a number of serious cuts and alterations. In the late 1990s, the province of British Columbia began changing the tendering process for the EAL contracts. In the name of accountability, the province dismantled the strong networks that had formed and put all of the contracts into an open bid environment. This single event had enormous repercussions throughout the settlement sector. Non-profit agencies, public schools and businesses (the previous model had providers from all three sectors) were forced to bid on contracts that they had held for more than a decade. Now they were competing with providers who had previously been partners; together, they had worked to develop networks and collaborate on curriculum in order to provide the best possible environment for the newcomer students.

In the end, the government favoured the Neighbourhood House model of providing EAL within a multi-service context, and CNH and other Neighbourhood Houses that bid on the contracts were mostly successful. The Neighbourhood House argued that the multi-service model, in conjunction with the inherent community development model, uniquely positioned the Neighbourhood House to link newcomers to more than just EAL classes, including a whole range of

services and opportunities. It takes a great deal of capacity to adapt to shifts in government policy that are this fundamental. The Neighbourhood House survived this major upheaval in government policy by having the capacity to compete in the process and to do so in a co-ordinated way with support from other Neighbourhood Houses and longtime partners.

The earliest example of this ability to react to and to seize the moment of change is the actual inception of the Neighbourhood House. The development of the Skytrain and the increased housing density that the City and Province had in store for the community were the catalysts that first initiated the creation the Neighbourhood House.

Just as policy has influenced CNH, the Neighbourhood House has also influenced policy. In the earlier years, one of the objectives of the organization was to become a United Way member agency. One of the membership criteria, at the time, was that member agencies had to be multicultural organizations. The very culturally diverse Board of Directors worked very hard on a proposal for acceptance as a member and were very disappointed when CNH was rejected. The United Way had defined multiculturalism as serving ethno-specific groups. CNH was outraged and set out to educate the United Way leadership on how we defined multiculturalism and put the concept into practise. Eventually, United Way changed their definition, and CNH was accepted as a member the following year.

It is inevitable, perhaps, that ever since those foundational events of the 1980's, Collingwood is a community that insists on being consulted and involved. There was an upward shift in community esteem that occurred at that time, and that spirit keeps getting stronger.

RAISING RESOURCES

Financial

- Initially the Collingwood Neighbourhood House received foundational funding from the City of Vancouver through a community service grant under the Social Planning Department. This, and short-term funding from other government programs, supported the work of the house over the first three years. In 1989, the organization was granted membership in the United Way, after they had influenced that organization's definition of multiculturalism and met the newly established criteria for membership. In a planning session held after this achievement, the Board determined that the long-term financial approach would be to diversify sources of funding in order to protect the organization in case one major funding source was lost. It also established a target of increased provincial funding, particularly through gaming revenues. This was a highly debated issue as some felt the organization should not be supported through the promotion of gambling, while others felt that there were few other options available at that time. CNH decided to apply for provincial funding with the understanding that any monies received from gaming sources be used only to enhance the work being done rather than act as a foundational source.

Having the support of the United Way and the City of Vancouver increased the credibility of the agency and opened up many doors to other funding sources that had previously been closed. The organization developed an incredible grant-writing capacity. Initially, it was the Executive Director who wrote all the proposals, but eventually new staff were mentored and trained to write successful proposals to all three levels of government as

well as to many different foundations and corporate funding programs. Currently, over fifteen people are highly skilled in writing proposals.

- Another foundational funding source came with the building of CNH's new facility. The Board decided to embark on a capital and endowment fundraising campaign, which was very timely since people saw the new facility being built in the community. Through negotiations with the City and the developer, the Board had secured the funding for construction of the building. However, the organization required additional operational dollars to accommodate the growth of services and space. The Board and Executive Director worked with City staff to persuade City Council to allow CNH to raise additional capital dollars, and with each dollar raised, the City could redirect its funding commitment to an endowment. CNH, in partnership with the City, applied for provincial and federal infrastructure dollars. A \$1.4 million endowment was raised, allowing the organization to receive earned income every year in perpetuity for the operation of the organization and facility.
- The task of securing financial support required an incredible commitment from the Board to keep those in political positions fully aware of the work the organization was doing, as well as the plans for the future. During this period of growth, there were several different municipal, provincial and federal governments, meaning some relationships needed to be maintained and others newly established. The Board made sure that CNH always had a presence and spoke often to elected officials, both individually and in assemblies.

Human Resources

- The Collingwood Neighbourhood House, as already emphasized, is committed to relationship building as a way of increasing the sense of community. This same value was instrumental in helping the agency develop its financial resources. The organization had many champions within the City of Vancouver through the Social Planning division and the Planning Department. This relationship was further strengthened when the Collingwood Village proposal for housing development was introduced. This proposal was the largest development being undertaken by the City at the time, and CNH was greatly involved in both the planning and the design of the Village. Through this process, CNH met many City staff and developed strong relations that still exist to this day.

The same approach has been taken with federal and provincial government representatives of our area. The CNH Board and staff reach out to these individuals, introducing them to the work and visions of the Neighbourhood House. In addition to the advantages derived from a strong working relationship with various levels of government, CNH also benefits from the relationships they have with other organizations. The agency openly shares information and learns from others. For example, Kiwassa Neighbourhood House had been through a building campaign before CNH, and they readily shared their experiences, connections, and funding sources. This philosophy of cooperation rather than competition has served the organization well over the years and helped to increase the overall capacity of the community services sector, which benefits everyone.

CNH also uses fundraising consultants and groups such as the United Way to help in expanding capacity, possibilities and connections. Many people first known to the organization in one capacity, then changed jobs, moving on to positions of higher influence. The initial supportive relationships continued and further developed as the agency carried out its work over twenty years. The Neighbourhood House also developed many proposals that placed additional staff in other organizations in order to increase the latter's capacity, thus reducing their dependency on CNH. This also allowed for greater flexibility in approaches if applications for resources and/or funding could only be received by an organization once a year.

CAPITAL

CNH was initially located in storefront facilities. As the needs for space and administrative support increased, the agency adopted a practice of building a 15 percent administration fee into all funding proposals. This fee helped to develop administrative support while its inclusion in funding proposals educated funders that projects could only succeed with adequate support and space. The CNH had also, in part, raised capital to support the building of the new facility by utilizing a condition attached to rezoning. A developer who was building housing in the community wanted to increase the floor-space ratio, which would require changes to the zoning. In order for this request to be approved, the City required the developer to make a financial contribution to the services in the community. This contribution, in addition to City of Vancouver money, and federal and provincial infrastructure dollars, were the main sources of funding used to build the new CNH premises. Additional money was raised in the community as well as through foundations and corporations that had capital funding programs.

CHALLENGES

Over the years, the Collingwood Neighbourhood House developed over sixty sources of funds. This was initially manageable, but the movement towards increased accountability has left an incredible amount of paperwork for staff to complete each day. As a result, staff are finding an increasing proportion of their work to be with paper instead of people. In an attempt to rectify this situation, the Board is reviewing funding approaches in an effort to put energy where CNH can get the most benefit. They have also been lobbying for funders to simplify and streamline their requirements in order to minimize paperwork. In addition, the Board is exploring social enterprises, requests for endowments, and block funding approaches. The challenges to managing sources of funding have unfortunately not, as of yet, diminished over time.

DEALING WITH CONFLICT: HOW COMMUNITY APPROACHES ENCOURAGED ATTITUDINAL MOVEMENTS

In 1993, Collingwood Neighbourhood House was preparing to move from a small storefront space to a 25,000 square foot building on Joyce Street. The building of the new facility mobilized the Board, staff and community, and launched a huge capital campaign. The plans for the new House included the building of an infant centre, toddler centre, a three- to five-year-old child-care program, and a preschool. In addition, there is a licensed childminding centre. At the same time, the Neighbourhood House was working with the First Lutheran Church to open a daycare in the church's social housing project, Sarah House. Collingwood, already a local force in the provision of daycare, was expanding its childcare operations from relatively small preschool and after school care programs to become one of the City of Vancouver's major providers.

Around that same time, the City introduced the Portable Purchase Program, the purpose of which was to install pre-fabricated and inexpensive structures in communities in order to alleviate the cost of building stand-alone centres as well as to quickly address the need for more childcare spaces. CNH was seen as an organization with a strong track record in childcare in a high need community and was chosen to participate in this new initiative. All that was needed was an appropriate site. With the help of the City of Vancouver, the neighbourhood house chose a quiet corner of a local park. No one anticipated that this was to become the first major challenge that Collingwood Neighbourhood House would face.

The park site was chosen because it offered a convenient location on a major bus route as well as access to an existing playground and because it was a park. The Parks Board approved the location in principle, but since it was a park, a lengthy consultative process came into play. CNH recognized that a park could be a contentious place, so they carefully researched the site, watching to see who, if anyone, used that corner of the park. When they felt confident, the Parks Board began the consultation process, which included the door-to-door distribution of leaflets. Since they were talking about childcare and the community need was clearly identified, CNH, the City and the Parks Board didn't anticipate a lot of reaction. Of the thousand leaflets that they distributed, only a handful came back with negative comments. The Parks Board called a public meeting, and the House and City spoke of the need for childcare and the desire to use the park. It was at this meeting that the opposition became more apparent. People objected to the use of park space for anything other than a park. They were concerned that traffic congestion would increase as parents and other caregivers dropped off and picked up children.

Some even objected to children in the park. While most people didn't go that far, many shared concerns about obstructed views, noise and dirt.

The phone calls flooded in to the Neighbourhood House as the discontent spread throughout the community. The tension escalated and the Neighbourhood House found itself embroiled in a struggle in which it had more to lose, in terms of community support, than to gain. Several meetings took place in an effort to resolve the situation. CNH was afraid that without this location, the money would be lost for the construction of the facility. Nonetheless, with no imminent solution in sight and not wanting to make enemies in the community, the Neighbourhood House pulled out of the project.

At that point, some of the most vocal opponents came forward and offered to help find another location. Working with the City Realtor and CNH, these "opponents" found a piece of land on quiet, residential Duke Street. The property had an easement for a sewer, making it undesirable for most projects and not very marketable. The opponents of the park location now became the greatest allies in appealing to the neighbours at this new location. Duke Street neighbours were canvassed door-to-door and although some were concerned, most saw the benefits of the project, and in the end, offered overwhelming support.

Challenges for the Duke Street daycare project did not end, however, with residents' approval of the site. The Portable Purchase Program was a new project for the City, and the proposed portables were unique, custom-designed daycare centres. The Duke Street centre ended up being delayed by nearly one year as both the development and building processes and the construction processes for this new type of centre took much longer than anticipated.

Being behind schedule on Duke Street meant that in 1995, there were eight new daycare programs all opening at the same time. Four of the centres were in the brand new Joyce Street building, one was on Wales Street and three were at the Duke Street location. The logistics of hiring and training new staff, and ordering, furnishing, and setting up brand new spaces are mind-boggling. It was a chaotic time in CNH history, but one that helped to develop relationships with the community on an entirely new level.

DESIGNING A COMMUNITY: PHYSICAL SPACE AND DESIGN IN PUBLIC SPACES AND IN OUR FACILITIES

Collingwood Neighbourhood House's current home on Joyce Street was built in 1994 as part of a larger housing development that was constructed on an old light industrial site. The 25,000 square foot building was designed by Ron Yuen and Associates, well known in Vancouver for designing social, non-profit housing and service buildings. There was a great deal of consultation in the construction of the building, with over a thousand people involved in the process. Everyone from participants to staff viewed the drafts, made comments, and brought his or her personal perspectives to the design. People with firsthand experience in areas of childcare and special needs were consulted to ensure safety and accessibility. Details, down to the colour schemes and textures, were decided by the people who would be seeing them in their day-to-day lives.

Collingwood is the only Neighbourhood House in Vancouver to have a gymnasium. This was the result of an agreement with the City of Vancouver that gave CNH funding for a gym with the understanding that it would later be shared by an adjoining elementary school. The school opened in 2001, six years after the completion of the Neighbourhood House. The gym opened up a

very new program area for the CNH, and a Recreation Co-ordinator was hired to oversee programming for the new facility. Today, there are between forty and sixty recreation programs, ranging from arts, music, dance, and social activities to sports, and including all age groups and ability levels. The gym also encouraged people from diverse economic backgrounds to participate in the same programs.

The House also has four preschool and daycare centres, a family place, four large multipurpose spaces, a commercial kitchen, a rooftop garden, two levels of underground parking, a computer lab, several smaller multi-use spaces, and administrative offices. The large reception area is designed to be welcoming and is the first place that people can find assistance and referral information.

People entering CNH must pass through a totem gateway that was carved by Gerry Sheena and two youth apprentices and is dedicated to longtime community activist, Hernan Mendoza. On one side, the gateway shows a mother bear holding a cub, symbolizing family, and on the other, a wolf, symbolizing community. Across the top of the carving is a line of creatures representing all of the various cultures who now call Collingwood home. The carvers deliberately chose to create a gateway with the world's creatures on the same plane rather than having them compete for the vertical top of a traditional totem pole.

For most participants, community members, and staff, CNH is more than just a physical space. In the minds of many, it is transformed into a special, even sacred and blessed place, a place to share stories. Comfort Adesuwa Ero is one such person.

Comfort came to Canada from Nigeria. Comfort is a playwright, a stage director, and a magnificent storyteller. For several years, Comfort has been organizing an African storytelling festival at CNH called Hut Tales. She draws together the best African storytellers in Vancouver for an afternoon of drama, comedy, and a uniquely African mix of drumming and dancing. The event reminds Comfort of her home in rural Nigeria, when storytellers would gather the villagers together in the commons to perform their stories, and the audience would participate by calling back responses. It was a chance for people to interact with one another, learn through stories, and create new ones. Comfort had grown up surrounded by stories, in a place that valued them. When she moved to Collingwood, she searched for that commons where she and others could tell stories, and she eventually found the Neighbourhood House. Comfort has shared her stories during Hut Tales and has performed for thousands of children in Collingwood during Multiculturalism Week. She has performed in classrooms, on a church stage and in a tepee. For her, it doesn't matter what the space is, as long as people can come together and share stories.

The development of the CNH premises is one example of how to increase community interaction through design. Resident involvement in planning Collingwood Village—and their current participation in the planning now underway for the El Dorado and 2400 Motel sites—ensures that final plans are relevant to the community, that they reflect both current and future needs, utilize and build on existing assets, and create ownership and options. Ultimately, this cooperative planning approach results in unique plans and neighbourhoods that best meet the needs of the community. Examples of this approach in action are also evident in the development of Slocan Park, Renfrew Ravine, Renfrew Library, First Lutheran Church and skytrain community garden sites.

BEING ACCOUNTABLE

Collingwood Neighbourhood House operates with an open and democratic organizational structure that allows for significant input from the community. All participants are asked to complete an evaluation form once per year. Staff elicit feedback on an ongoing basis, and the community is kept up-to-date via the Renfrew Collingwood Newspaper, a community development initiative, as well as through community meetings and informal conversations. The Neighbourhood House participates in monthly Area Services Team Meetings and shares information through this vast network of community service providers, which includes schools, the health unit, the Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA, provincial government representative) and the Member of Parliament (MP, federal government representative), the community centres, church leaders and libraries. Cultivating a relationship with the MLA and MP helps to keep the neighbourhood abreast of trends and changes and also allows CNH to potentially influence government direction. The MLA, in particular, can be a strong advocate for the Neighbourhood House in times of funding crisis, since the provincial government is a substantial funder.

PROMOTING SOCIAL JUSTICE: CLOSING THOUGHTS

Collingwood Neighbourhood House is a relatively young organization, and it has never been afraid of change. Because it is not yet set in its ways, CNH is in a good position in this current climate of seemingly constant change. The values of CNH remain its core strength, conceived by people committed to social justice. Nothing can sway the fundamental beliefs and values that are passed on through staff and Boards and volunteers.

There are issues that have yet to be resolved: the fight for social housing, securing better wages for staff, and the ongoing struggle to have sustainable core funding so that the organization can spend more time doing the work and less time looking for money to fund it. These are among the major trials facing CNH. In the meantime, the Board and community continue to dream of a better place. There are emerging needs they want to be able to address, including family counselling and legal assistance programs, homelessness initiatives, more opportunities for involvement for the growing senior population, and expanded settlement services to ensure that even the smallest voices continue to be heard.

It is easy to imagine many communities like Collingwood. Some of them may be lying dormant, waiting for the spark, the right combination of people, the catalyst that will begin to transform their neighbourhood into a living community. Starting small and, as Terry Tayler says, "Dreaming Big."