

Appendix 18 - Community Council Initiatives

These initiatives were collected in conversation held with Community Councils and from annual reporting that occurred during 2013. Some of the descriptions go beyond what any one particular Council did.

Addressing gaps and informing and educating communities regarding inclusive approaches to services

Example 1

A Community Council was interested in learning more about what contributes to people feeling included and welcomed in their community. They thought that once they knew more about this there might be a way to acknowledge the positive practices as a way to encourage others and to appreciate those who “get it”.

The Approach

- A facilitator met with a group of people with developmental disabilities and invited conversations with people on where in their community they feel welcome, where they contribute, where they might be missed if they didn't show up and what gifts they bring
- To illustrate the answers and share it with others in the community, the Council created the opportunity to put stickers up identifying “I feel welcome here” in those community places that demonstrated being welcoming of all citizens

Example 2

One Council had discussions with individuals and families who found it challenging to find a dentist who was skilled, comfortable and accepting of new adult patients with developmental disabilities. The experience of many was that when they were children, their dental needs were addressed at Children's Hospital or by a paediatric dentist. Now that these adults are over 18, they have been challenged to find a good dentist.

The Approach

- The Community Council wanted to help address this need and began by sharing information about dentists they knew whose practices are “*disability friendly*”, still accepting new patients, and have no barriers to service
- Committed to influencing a larger community discussion about barrier-free health services, the Council is developing a plan to gather information about health-related services that are available, skilled and interested in serving people with developmental disabilities, mental illness or other “labels” that can be experienced as limiting. These other services include:
 - ◆ Family medicine
 - ◆ Psychiatry
 - ◆ Naturopathy
 - ◆ Chiropractic
 - ◆ Dentistry

- If their research bears out a gap the Council will develop a campaign to inform practitioners of this gap in service and of the missed business opportunities

Example 3

A Community Council talked about plans in their community to build and renovate a community hospital. They shared stories about experiences that some members had in the existing hospital, and its inadequacy in meeting the emergency needs of people with developmental disabilities.

The Approach

- The Council identified issues that concerned them, based on their stories of their experiences, and identified Council representatives to take these forward to the planning committee
- The planning committee welcomed their input

Example 4

Council members shared stories with one another about adults with developmental disabilities not feeling welcomed or comfortable in local recreation centres. The stories led to thinking about how helpful it might be to the recreation centres and the adults if there were volunteer mentors who could provide individuals with support when it is needed. The discussion considered how the activity of and preparation for being a mentor might be a valuable experience for young people and others who would enjoy and contribute to this solution.

The Approach

- To influence recreation centres to acknowledge the lack of supports, and to see that working with community partners could address the gap, the Council identified a member to talk with recreation centre administrators and design a process to help inform them of the current concerns of people with developmental disabilities
- The Council made suggestions regarding potential partners whose constituents might benefit from and be interested in providing mentoring
- Recognizing the benefits of educating and influencing local volunteer centres and high schools that need to meet requirements for community volunteering, to become partners in this initiative, the Council identified a member to approach each of these groups
- A “business case” was developed for why this benefits everyone and strengthens citizens’ experience of living in a welcoming community

Example 5

A Community Council became concerned that some young people who have developmental disabilities become involved in the youth justice system.

The Approach

- Concerned that youth with developmental disabilities were more vulnerable to peer and other pressure to participate in criminal activities, Council members and CLBC staff joined a larger community discussion, bringing their concerns forward
- Opening this conversation is leading to a longer term project with more steps to be identified

Example 6

A number of Community Councils are concerned that the lack of affordable and secure housing options for adults with developmental disabilities contributes to these adults feeling unwelcomed in their communities.

The Approach

- Councils are generally well informed about what exists and what the barriers or contributing factors are to the lack of opportunity to find housing and feel welcome - they want to know if there are others who share these concerns
- Some Councils have taken steps to learn more about what housing models and options exists in their community and to identify other community groups and individuals who are also concerned about people feeling excluded and unwelcome
- Some Councils have taken steps to hear from individuals with developmental disabilities and their families about their experiences seeking housing options
- Challenges that Councils need to address moving forward include:
 - ◆ identifying people whose work includes some level of decision-making on housing options
 - ◆ identifying strategies to get to know and to influence these people
 - ◆ raising the community's awareness of the benefits of renting to or sharing a home with an adult with developmental disabilities

Example 7

Some Councils are aware that community fairs, celebrations and other events often do not include adults and children with developmental disabilities as planners, volunteers or event participants.

The Approach

- Community Councils know they need to learn if event / fair planners are aware of this omission and get a sense of whether the Council can assist them to more intentionally welcome people with developmental disabilities to their planning and volunteer committees
- Councils have identified local events and assigned members to talk with, learn about, and influence the planners to broaden their scope of who they recruit to help with the event
- Council members have agreed to offer to join the effort to recruit / invite community people to attend the event, with particular emphasis on the Council's constituency of adults with developmental disabilities and their families, friends and supporters
- One Council became actively involved in sharing in planning for a community Canada Day celebration
- Another Council focused on ensuring that the general community is invited to events that shine a light on the accomplishments of individuals with developmental disabilities such as horseback riding, organized sports games, selling of crafts and art work

Example 8

A Community Council identified that many people in the community are unaware of the Council and have little if any experience with people with developmental disabilities. The Council knows that some citizens underestimate the contributions their fellow citizens with developmental disabilities make to community life and how their inclusion can enhance everyone's experience.

The Approach

- A Council was committed to raising the profile of its activities and its mission so more people in the community know about the Council and its goals, vision and the concerns Council members share
- The Council knew it needed to interest others in joining them as members, allies, and partners on particular tasks or goals to help raise the Council's profile
- The Council decided it can make a five-minute presentation on its work, and on one way the community is demonstrating being welcoming and inclusive; and perhaps on one area in which the community could improve
- This type of presentation can also be made to the local City Council, Chamber of Commerce, Board of Trade, School or Health Board meeting, and so on
- A Council might consider hosting a photography contest that invites all members of the community to capture examples of how their community welcomes and celebrates inclusion and diversity. They might recruit a diverse group to act as judges, perhaps including a municipal elected official, a person with developmental disabilities, a newspaper photographer or editor, and so on. The contest could be run in October to celebrate community living month.

Providing information to CLBC based on the experiences of members and others in the community.

Example 1

A Council discussed members' concerns related to their own aging and that of their parents and their children. Some concerns emerged related to how services might need to adjust to their changing needs. The conversation included discussion about needs and concerns that were disability-related and those that were not. It generated questions about how CLBC was thinking about and reviewing its services in light of these imminent changes.

The Approach

- The Community Council wanted to find out what CLBC had been doing and thinking regarding issues related to aging and whether other Councils were having similar discussions and questions
- The Council made a presentation to the Provincial Advisory Committee - this contributed to CLBC developing a draft aging strategy that was circulated to other Community Councils for discussion and input
- Since that time, aging has become a major CLBC focus

- Aging is also being addressed by the Services to Adults with Developmental Disabilities project which is focused on creating an integrated service delivery model, and the Ministry of Health

Example 2

A Community Council had concerns that Councils' Terms of Reference were no longer relevant to the role of Councils and that they should be reviewed.

The Approach

- The Council Chair shared these ideas with the Provincial Advisory Council, and they in turn, shared it with the CLBC Board
- This contributed to a decision to establish a Community Council Task Force to review the Terms of Reference, and the materials and practices to support the Councils
- The Task Force made a series of recommendations, identified priorities and this resulted in a project to redraft the current Terms of reference, the appointment process for new Council members, and to develop new support materials including this updated Handbook and orientation package

Other ideas for Councils to consider

There are many different ways Councils can approach building more welcoming communities in partnership with others. For example, have you ever considered:

- Promote diverse ability in your community. You can learn more about a diversability campaign led by Shelley DeCoste by watching this video - <http://youtu.be/m5SLLgN8Dfk>
- Bring local leaders together for a visioning day to talk about what a more welcoming community could look like for everyone
- Promote a "Say hi to your neighbour day"
- Support self-advocates to map the places in their communities that are welcoming and share the findings with community leaders to help build more inclusive communities for everyone. Read how Spectrum Society for Community Living helped self-advocates to do this in Vernon by visiting this link - <http://101friends.wordpress.com/2013/03/20/community-mapping-project-journalmarch/>

These are all simple, yet powerful ideas that will resonate with many people and organizations in your local community, for example, thought leaders, elected officials, businesses, charities, clubs and groups, academic institutions, etc.

Importantly, implementing community building activities like those above puts Councils in a leadership role. Councils and people with developmental disabilities will develop a high profile because the community sees Councils taking an active role in making the community a better place for everyone (not just championing specific individual causes or needs).

If you have an idea that can be added here, send it to CLBCCouncils@gov.bc.ca