S P A R C BC

CREATING COLLABORATIVE
COMMUNITIES PROJECT

Fact Sheet **1**

Creating effective collaboration in our communities

The **Creating Collaborative Communities Project** is a one-year project undertaken by SPARC BC to support the development of broad collaboration across sectors in four British Columbia communities (Cranbrook, Prince Rupert, the Sunshine Coast, and Williams Lake). The project, funded by the National Crime Prevention Strategy's Community Mobilization Fund, utilizes a number of strategies to promote collaborations that support economic and social development within our communities.

This brochure is the first in a series of two fact sheets developed in conjunction with the Collaborative Communities Project. See Fact Sheet 2, **Building Economic and Social Security in Our Communities**, for information on the relationship between social and economic development.

In a world that is changing rapidly the development of effective collaborative efforts to address community issues is becoming increasingly important. Large scale trends such as globalization, climate change, changing demographics, and shifts in the resource economy are placing pressures on communities that can only be addressed by working together in new and innovative ways. The development of modern, healthy communities depends on effective collaborative efforts involving a wide range of community members.

This fact sheet is intended to assist community social planning organizations in initiating a dialogue with community leaders, municipal decision makers, federal and provicial government ministries and agencies, and other partners about the need to strengthen collaborations to address community problems.

See inside for information on:
- Common types of collaboration
- Comprehensive community initiatives
- Community success stories
- Resources to support further action

From isolation to empowerment

COMMUNITY BUILDING THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS

Communities across British Columbia are increasingly recognizing that the development of effective partnerships is an essential step in the creation of comprehensive solutions to community issues. More and more communities are moving from isolation to empowerment by developing strategies based on coordinated commitment and action.

Although there have been many successes associated with partnership development, it is also true that partnerships can present significant challenges. Communities must address these challenges to realize the full benefits of partnership building . One organization with extensive experience working with communities on partnerhsip bulding activities has suggested five essential truths about partnerships; they are:

1. **Partnerships are critical to the long-term success of any initiative.** Addressing complex issues requires a multi-sector, comprehensive approach.

2. **Partnerships are challenging to manage and to master.** While partnership is an essential part of creating effective solutions, very few of us are trained to master all the complexities of partnerships.

3. **Partnerships are built on two pillars: Form and Process.** Form is about the organization of the partnership. Process is about how people in the partnership treat each other. If either pillar is weak the partnership will collapse.

4. **Partnerships are easier to start than to sustain.** The initial enthusiasm can wain as partnerships develop. It is essential to maintain momentum.

5. **Partnerships go through stages of development.** For example, in early stages building trust provides an essential foundation for the work of later stages.

[Source: Community Matters]

In addition, it is important to understand that not all partnerships are created equal. Partnerships are formed for a variety of purposes. Some partnerships involve simple information sharing, some are "one-time" projects with clearly outlined goals and objectives and outcomes, while others are long-term partnerships involving multiple actors and objectives.

When a local church donates its basement to a hockey team to hold a book sale as a fundraiser, the resulting partnership is

THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF PARTNERSHIP
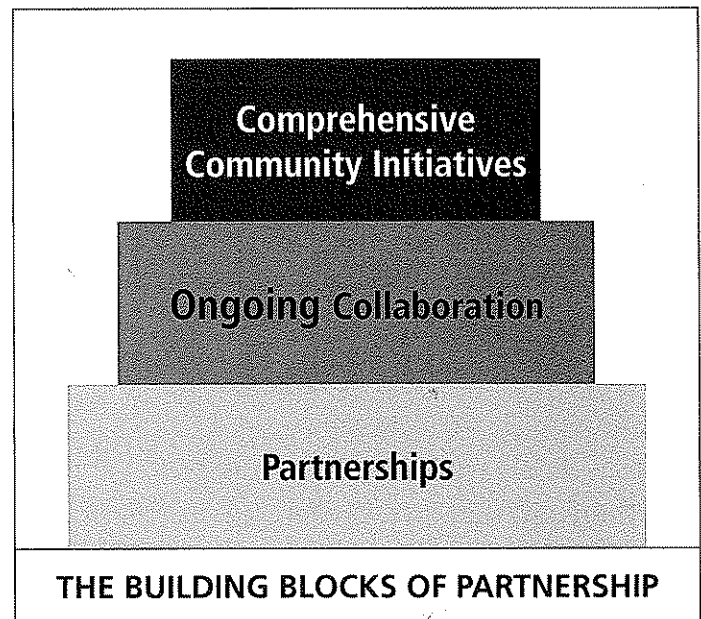
easy to manage. More complex partnerships may involve a large number of members from a variety of sectors working to address fundamental community issues.

In addition, there is an emerging understanding that communities go through an evolutionary process related to their ability to manage partnerships. At an early stage, communities may work on the level of partnership building. This may involve activities such as information sharing and collaboration on short term projects. As trust and experience builds among community members, organizations that promote ongoing collaboration among community members may develop. For example, a community social planning council can provide a forum for ongoing coordination in the areas of research, advocacy, and public education.

Once communities reach this second stage, the next challenge is to build relationships across sectors. Establishing comprehensive community initiatives is one approach to building collaboration around priority community issues by inviting participation from across sectors.

This approach, which is outlined on the following pages, has been used in neighbourhoods and communities across North America and has proven itself as a successful vehicle for addressing the complex issues facing communities.

Meeting the challenge

USING COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY INITIATIVES TO
ADDRESS COMPLEX COMMUNITY ISSUES

For communities that have a track record of partnerships and relationships and who have developed a solid leadership and sound institiutional base, the opportunity exists to develop a comprehensive approach that supports coordinated action to address community issues. Since the 1990's, in the United States and more recently in Canada, communities have been gaining experience in developing holistic approaches to community development that move beyond a single issue approach.

The Aspen Institute defines comprehensive community initiatives (CCIs) as:

"neighborhood-based efforts that seek improved outcomes for individuals and families as well as improvements in neighborhood conditions by working comprehensively across social, economic and physical sectors. Additionally, CCIs operate on the principle that community building—that is, strengthening institutional capacity at the neighborhood level, enhancing social capital and personal networks, and developing leadership—is a necessary aspect of the process of transforming distressed neighborhoods."

Such efforts begin with what is called an "entry point." The entry point is a single issue that has support across sectors as a priority, and for which sufficient resources are available to support coordinated action. An entry point can identify an overarching community issue (e.g. poverty, housing, transportation, unemployment, safe streets, food security, racial tolerance or early childhood development). The entry point may also be connected to improving the condition of a particular population within the community (e.g. children and families, youth, seniors, immigrants or Aboriginal Canadians). Through collaboration with key players in the community, the CCI determines the wide set of interconnected projects and possible actions that fall within the domain of the overarching issue or particular population.

Comprehensive Community Initiatives seek to weave together the various skills, resources, networks, and knowledge of various levels of government, social services, business, labour, educational institutions, and anti-poverty groups. They encourage partnerships and collaboration.

As one commentator has noted "what is important is not that a comprehensive initiative attempts to address all interrelated issues at once, but rather that their strategic actions are rooted in a comprehensive analysis and plan." (Caledon Institute, 2003)

KEY FEATURES OF COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY INITIATIVES (CCIs)

Several features distinguish Comprehensive Community Initiatives from other forms of collaboration:

- **Comprehensive** – CCIs address a range of issues rather than a single concern.
- **Holistic** – CCIs seek to identify the links between various social and economic issues.
- **Community-driven** – Citizens play a primary role in both identifying and prioritizing issues and determining appropriate interventions in CCIs.
- **Multilevel** – CCIs intervene at three levels:
    1. Individual and household level – CCIs can support projects that address issues such as food access, employment training, and childcare.
    2. Community level – CCIs can create new or improve existing assets through building physical and social infrastructure.
    3. Policy level – CCIs can influence the broader social and economic context, recognizing that policy changes are also required to make a substantial dent in such areas as homelessness, poverty, or environmental restoration.
- **Multisectoral** – CCIs engage diverse sectors to tackle the inherent complexities of such initiatives and to help create innovative solutions.
- **Long-term** – CCIs need time to recruit people and organizations from various sectors and to build the trust required to collaborate effectively.
- **Inclusive** – CCIs make broad social inclusion a priority both in terms of committed resources and as a focus for ongoing learning and improvement.
- **Asset-based** – CCIs seek out the assets and resources embedded in communities and build upon them to expand local capacity and opportunities.
- **Focus on both outcomes and process** – CCIs must set transparent goals, track their work, and achieve designated targets.

Meeting the challenge

USING COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY INITIATIVES TO ADDRESS COMPLEX COMMUNITY ISSUES

For communities that have a track record of partnerships and relationships and who have developed a solid leadership and sound institiutional base, the opportunity exists to develop a comprehensive approach that supports coordinated action to address community issues. Since the 1990's, in the United States and more recently in Canada, communities have been gaining experience in developing holistic approaches to community development that move beyond a single issue approach.

The Aspen Institute defines comprehensive community initiatives (CCIs) as:

"neighborhood-based efforts that seek improved outcomes for individuals and families as well as improvements in neighborhood conditions by working comprehensively across social, economic and physical sectors. Additionally, CCIs operate on the principle that community building—that is, strengthening institutional capacity at the neighborhood level, enhancing social capital and personal networks, and developing leadership—is a necessary aspect of the process of transforming distressed neighborhoods."

Such efforts begin with what is called an "entry point." The entry point is a single issue that has support across sectors as a priority, and for which sufficient resources are available to support coordinated action. An entry point can identify an overarching community issue (e.g. poverty, housing, transportation, unemployment, safe streets, food security, racial tolerance or early childhood development). The entry point may also be connected to improving the condition of a particular population within the community (e.g. children and families, youth, seniors, immigrants or Aboriginal Canadians). Through collaboration with key players in the community, the CCI determines the wide set of interconnected projects and possible actions that fall within the domain of the overarching issue or particular population.

Comprehensive Community Initiatives seek to weave together the various skills, resources, networks, and knowledge of various levels of government, social services, business, labour, educational institutions, and anti-poverty groups. They encourage partnerships and collaboration.

As one commentator has noted "what is important is not that a comprehensive initiative attempts to address all interrelated issues at once, but rather that their strategic actions are rooted in a comprehensive analysis and plan." (Caledon Institute, 2003)

KEY FEATURES OF COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY INITIATIVES (CCIs)

Several features distinguish Comprehensive Community Initiatives from other forms of collaboration:

- **Comprehensive** – CCIs address a range of issues rather than a single concern.
- **Holistic** – CCIs seek to identify the links between various social and economic issues.
- **Community-driven** – Citizens play a primary role in both identifying and prioritizing issues and determining appropriate interventions in CCIs.
- **Multilevel** – CCIs intervene at three levels:
  1. Individual and household level – CCIs can support projects that address issues such as food access, employment training, and childcare.
  2. Community level – CCIs can create new or improve existing assets through building physical and social infrastructure.
  3. Policy level – CCIs can influence the broader social and economic context, recognizing that policy changes are also required to make a substantial dent in such areas as homelessness, poverty, or environmental restoration.
- **Multisectoral** – CCIs engage diverse sectors to tackle the inherent complexities of such initiatives and to help create innovative solutions.
- **Long-term** – CCIs need time to recruit people and organizations from various sectors and to build the trust required to collaborate effectively.
- **Inclusive** – CCIs make broad social inclusion a priority both in terms of committed resources and as a focus for ongoing learning and improvement.
- **Asset-based** – CCIs seek out the assets and resources embedded in communities and build upon them to expand local capacity and opportunities.
- **Focus on both outcomes and process** – CCIs must set transparent goals, track their work, and achieve designated targets.

CCIs are typically governed by a coordinating mechanism in the form of a leadership roundtable or steering group that is at least multi-organizational and at best multisectoral. This body is responsible for acting as the champion of the issue, convening key players, setting out a clear vision for the effort and associated strategic plan, and acting as the liaison between the broader community—including the media—and the initiative.

COMPREHENSIVENESS CHALLENGES

The above features of CCIs, while enabling them to deal with complex social and economic issues, also bring challenges in achieving clarity and agreement, both around the root causes of issues as well as strategies to address them.

CCIs will differ on how they unfold their work. The following approaches seem to be emerging as common features of successful initiatives:

- **Be comprehensive from the outset;** seek to make and address the links among key areas. But the scope of these issues can be overwhelming. The challenge is to find the balance between a broad definition of the issue and a targeted strategy that tackles its various elements. A clearly defined set of outcomes will help the community to see that it is having an impact on the issue.
- **Use a few strategic drivers to focus the activities;** i.e. work on an issue around which the community knows it already has made some headway.
- **Be opportunity driven;** i.e. start with one type of program that already has some actual or potential investment and add others as the initiative or organization matures.

Many key challenges have been articulated in the literature surrounding CCIs. These include leadership, resources, engaging in "big system" partnerships, and engaging marginalized residents. CCIs must also balance process and action, the short-term and the long-term, and the need for evaluation at the levels of both process and outcome.

Because CCIs are community-driven, they will typically have different entry points. Recognizing that different entry points exist includes understanding there will be different pathways to success from impetus created by community-building activities (such as creating a community park or staging a community play), to building a response to an incident that raises awareness around community safety.

Successful communities realize that it is unworkable for a community to tackle all the interrelated issues at once. For one thing community efforts are typically limited in their budgets and resources so they realistically can achieve only so much. The defining factor of CCIs is that they are rooted in comprehensive analysis that can then lead to strategic action.

> "The defining factor of CCIs is that they are rooted in comprehensive analysis that can then lead to strategic action."

COLLABORATION TO SUPPORT CRIME PREVENTION THROUGH SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

The National Crime Prevention Centre currently supports two types of comprehensive and collaborative approaches being embarked upon by communities.

I. Crime Prevention through Social Development (CSPD) – A social development approach that emphasizes crime prevention and reductions in crime and/or victimization through reduction of risk and building of protection amongst children and families living in high-risk environments. Programs based on this approach address the social factors that underlie crime such as child abuse, inadequate education and housing, unemployment, and health problems. They center on individual and small-scale change by focusing on a specific crime problem and addressing the risk factors associated with that problem.

II. Comprehensive Community Initiatives (CCIs) – An approach that emphasizes linking social and economic development to achieve social justice outcomes such as reduced poverty and homelessness. Programs based on this approach attempt to catalyze a process of sustained improvement in the circumstances and opportunities of individuals and families, and foster a fundamental transformation of poor neighbourhoods and regions. They recognize that community building is a necessary component of the process of transforming distressed communities and seek to engage diverse sectors in working together on a collaborative basis over the long-term to tackle a wide range of interrelated issues. Such programs do not always have a specific linkage to crime prevention, but it is recognized that their outcomes contribute to building safer communities.

Community success stories

GREATER VICTORIA: SUCCESS BUILDS SUCCESS

Victoria has a long history of building collaborative relationships to address community challenges. In the1990s, a group of service providers and funding agencies working in the downtown core decided to approach other downtown stakeholders for their perspective. The CRUNCH project developed out of these efforts, and brought together "partners from various sectors to develop common vocabulary, goals, and trust."

The project, which came to be facilitated by the Community Social Planning Council of Greater Victoria, developed a structure for working together to address identified problems. Participants included business, local government, the health region, the Downtown Neighbourhood Association, downtown housing providers, First Nations, youth, and religious groups. Action groups were developed to address issues such as safety, health, housing, economic development, food, and resource sharing.

The CRUNCH initiative, which ended in 2000, laid the foundation for the establishment of the Victoria Homelessness Steering Committee. CRUNCH also helped build the relationships that were crucial to the development of the Quality of Life Challenge which is "a comprehensive community initiative in British Columbia's capital region that brings people together to create solutions in the areas of housing, sustainable incomes, and community connections."

LEARNING COMMUNITIES: EDUCATION FOR CHANGE

Learning communities create "formal and non-formal lifelong learning opportunities for individuals and groups to acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that will enable sustainable economic development and build social inclusion and cohesion."

The closure of the Lumby's largest sawmill lead to a series of discussions that culminated in the establishment of the Monashee Learning and Training Centre, a multi-purpose learning centre intended to support eduction and training for local residents.

In the Upper Skeena, the Learning Community Partnership supports The Learning Shop, a centre in Hazleton. Current and proposed activities include a youth coffee shop, service learning initiative, media literacy and video production, leadership exploration, outdoor eduction, and a youth cooperative kitchen and garden plot. The partnership also supports collaborative efforts aimed at building social capital in the community. These include

EIGHT KEY PRINCIPLES FOR WORKING TOGETHER

1 **Community Solutions:** Together we are building solutions that strengthen our community.

2 **Participation:** We seek out the diverse voices of our community, recognizing the value of broad input in identifying obstacles and opportunities.

3 **Commitment:** Solutions require an ongoing personal commitment to working together.

4 **Openness:** Our minds are open to other points of view. We build relationships and trust through listening, learning and respecting each other.

5 **Language:** We use plain language to communicate and build greater understanding.

6 **Cooperation:** We reach our goals more effectively by working together to identify the roots of a problem, make decisions and take action.

7 **Sharing:** For the good of the community we share power, information and resources.

8 **Leadership:** We take responsibility to act while applying these principles.

[CRUNCH Project, Victoria, BC, 2000]

planning, research, and training projects.

The Lillooet Learning Communities Society supports Lillooet Learns, a web site that provides access to community history, resources, and learning opportunities. The society focuses on buiding networks around various issues, including health, education, and employment.

ENDERBY: CULTURE AS A CATALYST FOR COLLABORATION

In May, 1999 a remarkable theatrical production was presented in the North Okanagan community of Enderby. The play, *Not the Way I Heard It,* told the story of the aboriginal and non-aboriginal residents of the area. It included traditional stories of the Spallumcheen Band, as well as scenes exploring isolation, youth, the future, communication, alcohol, and cultural dislocation.

The production involved nearly 150 community actors and attracted nearly 2000 people during a two-week run. A series of workshops and community events preceded the play and engaged many more residents. It is estimated that over 800 people played a role in the production, where theatre professionals from outside the community supported local residents.

One of the project's greatest achievements was the development of understanding between aboriginal and non-aboriginal residents of the community. Before the play, relations between native and non-native residents were virtually non-existent. The project is credited with opening up lines of communication and laying the groundwork for future projects and collaboration.

RESOURCES

GENERAL

ASPEN INSTITUTE
www.aspeninstitute.org
Look under the program menu for information on the *Roundtable on Community Change*, which supports people engaged in the field of comprehensive community initiatives (CCIs).

COMMUNITY ARTS AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT
www.assemblybcartscouncils.ca
Use the search engine to find information on the *Enderby and District Community Play Project*.

CALEDON INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL POLICY
www.caledoninst.org
Go to *Special Projects* and look for information on *Vibrant Communities* to find a series of research reports on the Vibrant Communities Initiative, a project intended to facilitate information sharing on local approaches to reducing poverty in select Canadian cities.

COMMUNITY MATTERS – PARTNERSHIPS AND COALITIONS
www.commatters.org/partner
"In addressing community issues nothing is more challenging than a partnership."

COMMUNITY TOOL BOX (UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS)
ctb.ku.edu
Provides over 6,000 pages of practical skill-building information on over 250 different topics related to community building.

EVOLUTION OF COMMUNITIES MATRIX (CENTRE FOR INNOVATIVE & ENTREPRENEURIAL LEADERSHIP — CIEL)
www.theciel.com/matrix.php
Allows communities to benchmark themselves by using a common measurement of capacity and to track their evolution over time.

LIFELONG LEARNING COMMUNITIES HOME PAGE
members.shaw.ca/rfaris/
Lifelong learning strategies, global education reform, and interactive learning technologies.

PARTNERING FOR RESULTS: INTERSECTORAL PARTNERSHIPS (UNITED STATES AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT)
www.usaid.gov/pubs/isp
A clearinghouse about the development and success of inter-sectoral partnerships (ISPs).

PARTNERSHIP HANDBOOK (HRSDC)
www.hrsdc.gc.ca/en/epb/sid/cia/partnership/handbook.shtml
A handbook developed by Human Resources and Social Development Canada that aims to help people learn more about community-based partnerships and how to use them effectively.

SPARC BC (SOCIAL PLANNING AND RESEARCH COUNCIL OF BC)
www.sparc.bc.ca
Look for information on *Strengthening Communities*, a series of community develoment skills guides intended to support groups as they are starting out.

TAMARACK: INSTITUTE FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
www.tamarackcommunity.ca
A charitable organization dedicated to helping Canadian communities take ownership of local issues by making use of proven strategies for community engagement.

CRIME PREVENTION THROUGH SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

CANADIAN COUNCIL ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT (CCSD): CRIME PREVENTION THROUGH SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
www.ccsd.ca/cp
In collaboration with the National Crime Prevention Centre, CCSD produces a bulletin that profiles research and programs that promote crime prevention through social development.

NATIONAL CRIME PREVENTION STRATEGY (NCPS)
www.prevention.gc.ca
In addition to outlining NCPS funding programs, this website contains a wealth of online resources on community-based early intervention efforts that deal with the root causes of crime and victimization.

SAFER FUTURES
www.saferfutures.org
Researches issues of personal security for women, children, and other marginalized groups in their communities, and works at the community level to develop and implement solutions.

WORKING TOGETHER FOR SAFE COMMUNITIES: SAFE COMMUNITIES KIT
www.pssg.gov.bc.ca/community_programs/publications
Designed to assist communities and individuals in preventing crime and enhancing safety across BC.

DOCUMENTS

COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY INITIATIVES (CALEDON INSTITUTE, 2003)
www.caledoninst.org/Publications/Detail/?ID=4

CONVENING A COMPREHENSIVE, MULTISECTORAL EFFORT TO REDUCE POVERTY: A PRIMER (VIBRANT COMMUNITIES INITIATIVE)
www.vibrantcommunities.ca

CULTURAL DEMOCRACY IN THE ENDERBY AND DISTRICT COMMUNITY PLAY (CANADIAN THEATRE REVIEW, 2000)
www.utpjournals.com/product/ctr/101/101_Little.html

LEARNING-BASED COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT: LESSONS LEARNED FROM BC (RON FARIS AND WAYNE PETERSON, 2000)
members.shaw.ca/rfaris/LL.htm

POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION IN COMPLEX FILES (CANADA SCHOOL OF PUBLIC SERVICE)
www.myschool-monecole.gc.ca/Research/publications/html/p125/1_e.html

WATERLOO REGION'S GUARANTEED INCOME SUPPLEMENT CAMPAIGN (CALEDON INSTITUTE, 2005)
www.caledoninst.org/Publications/Detail/?ID=519

SHARING INFORMATION TO STRENGTHEN RURAL COMMUNITIES: LESSONS LEARNED FROM BC PROJECTS
www.fraserbasin.bc.ca/publications/documents/2002-Mar-SharingLL.pdf