

OUTREACH: Inviting and Engaging People in CRN Development

Presented at the Provincial CRN Conference

The following is an overview of the presentations made and the discussion held at this session.

Ellen Garvie - Saltspring Island, CRN Coordinator

Ellen is a Community Development Consultant working with several groups in the area of Social Health. She is a part-time parent, farmer and student. Ellen feels fortunate to live in a very community-minded neighbourhood. She is interested in integrated models of sustainable community planning.

Integrated planning, as previously mentioned, is a model which integrates wild life and plant life into the planning process for communities. There are many models from which to choose - a bio-diversity model focuses on the environment, a population health model focuses on people and a sustainability model focuses on profit. The integrated model allows for all of these factors to be considered.

At present the CRN on Saltspring is working in several areas. The professional service providers are working on protocol development and the CRN is reaching out to actively seek out people who are integral to the process. There is a commitment to integrate ALL relationships people are involved with into the bigger process.

Saltspring is a community of ACTIVE inclusiveness; in a community of 10,000 people there are 138 different associations, clubs, groups and societies. Only cultural groups are not included or highly visible. Ellen passed out a pictorial model of a "Web of Community Groups".

Keith Robinson - Surrey, RCMP

Keith describes himself as a simple, easy-going, quiet kind of guy.

Keith is a member of the Justice System Working Group, working with the Office of the Public Guardian and Trustee to integrate the legislation and CRNs into the work of police in B.C.

He pointed out that people treated him quite differently one day to the next depending on whether or not he was in uniform. But he is ALWAYS a member of the community - in uniform or not. We are all just people, he says.

Keith recommends that we go out and actively recruit the police into our CRN work. He started out being told to participate but that has shifted into *wanting* to participate. He reminded us that the police forces are hierarchical systems.

He suggests writing a letter to the Chief of Police or Commander. Outline what a CRN is and what you want from the police. Provide a key contact. Whatever you think will work to get them involved - the process has to be started!

It is a two way street - CRNs and Designated Agencies need police support, but the police need community support and a key contact in the community. They often come upon a situation where a person needs help but it is not within their mandate. Working together benefits everyone.

Lois Benko - Peachland, CRN Coordinator

Lois says she has recently changed focus in her life to dedicating time in her own community and to her family.

Lois gave an overview of the ideas that Peachland has been working on.

Involve dedicated citizens in the CRN such as:

- the druggist - he knows everyone and is known and trusted by people in the community.
- the food bank director - the food bank often serves young adults and there are few services for them
- the Canadian Legion - people with a history of service work
- the four local churches
- the Community Policing program
- the local hardware store owner

Lois pointed out the importance of giving volunteers a job to do and making them feel valued.

Peachland is focussing on all age groups in the community, not just seniors. They feel this will ensure that the CRN is sustainable.

Sandra Cusack - Tri Cities, Wellness Coordinator

Sandra is a Guttman-Gee Research Fellow in Educational Gerontology at Simon Fraser University. She is specializing in Third Age Education and empowerment of older adults as life long learners, as leaders and as service providers. Sandra's primary research interest is in the impact of health throughout adulthood. She currently works as a consultant to the Tri-Cities CRN.

We know that in many cases, CRN members are serving voluntarily or adding extra work to an already busy schedule so how do we keep them enthused, engaged, and involved? We give them what they need -- most importantly we give them the very best opportunity to learn what they want and need to know. Sandra used to the acronym, LEARN, to walk us through what we need to give them as community leaders, as chairpersons, as coordinators, as facilitators, whatever we call the person in charge of meetings:

L - leadership - To achieve important goals and get the task done requires expert leadership. Community action depends on skilled, inclusive leadership that motivates and inspires its members to contribute their best. Ideally, we would like our CRN's to thrive with everyone sharing the leadership and if that works for your group you've got it made. If you don't, you may want to consider finding, seconding or hiring someone who has the essential group leadership skills.

E - energy - As group leader, the most important ingredient you can give people is energy. How many meetings do you attend that leave you feeling drained? Energy is what everyone wants and needs - and you don't have to have a vacation or go to the gym to get it. Every CRN meeting should leave people invigorated and inspired. That's a tough one - but the most important ingredient.

A--is for attitude - As a group leader you need to model and encourage a positive mental attitude in the group. Hard to do when you are addressing a topic like abuse, but even more critical to generate a positive attitude. A positive mental attitude includes flexibility, willingness to accept other points of view, willingness to risk, and a general feeling of optimism. As group leader, it begins with the language you use - choose

language that is positive and inclusive and empowering. Turn problems to issues and challenges.

R - is for respect - We all need respect. In fact, if everyone in the community was given the respect they need, abuse would not be a problem. As professionals, we often give the people we serve more respect than we give our colleagues or family members. We all need to be sensitive to abuse, whatever form it takes, so that we can actually prevent it in our personal and professional lives.

N - is for needs - And we are back to needs again. What more do people need? More than good learning opportunities, leadership, energy, attitude, and respect, people need to make a valuable contribution to their community, and the leader's job is to give them the right opportunity.

The bottom line is, learning is good for your health and when we offer good learning experiences, we contribute to individual and group health.

Wendy Thompson - Tri Cities, Wellness Coordinator

Wendy has a Masters degree in Educational Gerontology. She is an author, a thinker, a dreamer, a teacher, and a former Olympic speed skater. She is currently a consultant for the Tri-Cities (Port Moody, Coquitlam and Port Coquitlam) CRN. Wendy is passionate about the need for education to prevent abuse.

Wendy began her presentation with a quote from Theodore Roosevelt:
“Nothing is new under the sun except what we don’t know.”

Wendy says they are looking at outreach differently and defining it as “inreach”. They are working to ensure that CRN members stay involved.

Strong, skilled leadership is a key element of this strategy. When people’s needs are met they stay involved. You need to take time with people and allow them to tell their own stories.

Both outreach and inreach are ongoing activities; they are not something you “finish” and scratch off your to-do list.

One of the projects the Tri-Cities undertook was the creation of a brochure. They got copies of all available brochures (so they wouldn’t be re-inventing the wheel) and involved everyone in the production. Everyone felt a sense of ownership and accomplishment.

Wendy pointed out the importance of being sensitive to issues of language and shared an essay entitled “English is a Silly Language”, which is attached.

English is a Silly Language

There is no egg in eggplant, nor ham in hamburger; neither apple or pine in pineapple. And while no one knows what is in a hotdog, you can be pretty sure it isn’t canine.

English muffins were not invented in England or French fries in France. Sweetmeats are candies, while sweetbreads, which are not sweet, are meat.

We take English for granted. But if we explore its paradoxes, we find that quicksand can work slowly, boxing rings are square, and guinea pig is neither from Guinea nor is it a pig.

And why is it that writers write, but fingers don't fing, grocers don't groce, and hammers don't ham?

If the plural of tooth is teeth, why isn't the plural of booth, beeth? One goose, 2 geese. So one moose, 2 meese? Is cheese the plural of choose? One mouse, 2 mice. One louse, 2 lice. One house, two hice?

If teachers taught, why don't preachers praught?

If a vegetarian eats vegetables, what does a humanitarian eat?

Why do people recite at a play and play at a recital? Ship by truck or car and send cargo by ship? Have noses that run and feet that smell? Park on driveways and drive on parkways?

How can a slim chance and a fat chance be the same, while a wise man and a wise guy are opposites?

How can the weather be hot as heck one day and cold as heck another?

When a house burns up, it burns down. You fill in a form by filling it out and an alarm clock goes off by going on. You get in and out of a car, yet you get on and off a bus. When the stars are out, they are visible, but when the lights are out they are invisible.

And why, when I wind up my watch, I start it, but when I wind up this essay, I end it?

Heather von Ilberg - West Kootenay, Regional Mentor

Heather was one of the original Pilot Project Coordinators, in Castlegar and has continued to be involved in assisting communities in the Kootenays and around the province to develop CRNs. She is also a member of the Abuse, Neglect and Self-Neglect Planning Group.

Heather provided some very concrete suggestions for involving people.

- Write personal invitations and include and RSVP. People are more likely to show up if they are asked to respond.
- Translate brochures into languages used by different groups in the community.
- Involve and educate youth - either through the school or community groups. The legislation and CRNs are focussed on adults, but children live in families and will be adults one day.
- Get creative in involving the RCMP - we asked them if we could use their board room and figured they'd want to keep an eye on us.
- Build on and partner with existing groups. People will not attend an endless number of meetings. Ask one member to be a CRN representative.
- Put information in the newspaper, on the local TV channel, do a write up and include it in pay envelopes etc.
- Remember that Community Development is a PROCESS which creates ownership by the community.
- Don't expect people to represent a peer group which you define or without their consent. Someone with red hair does not automatically speak for all people with red hair.
- Ensure that people representing agencies and organizations are taking information back and that it is not just the individual who is involved with CRN work. If they move or change jobs, the connection will be lost.
- Redefine "participation". There are many ways to participate besides attending meetings

- during work hours.
- Use a buddy system to assist members who are coming into a process already begun or who need assistance to participate fully.
 - Acknowledge and share power. There is no “us” and “them”. We are all teachers and we are all learners in this process.