

## WHAT IS A CRN AND WHERE DID IT COME FROM?

In the spring of 1989, a group of community organizations and interested individuals met to discuss Adult Guardianship. They all agreed that the existing legislation was obsolete and did not represent the values of those present. Project funding was acquired to review the legislation. The project to review adult guardianship in B.C. was a community consensus building process. As a result of the efforts of grassroots organizations, committed individuals within government and those persons affected by the legislation, new legislation to protect vulnerable adults in B.C. was passed in 1993. It was not until February 28, 2000, however, that the majority of the package of legislation was proclaimed and came into force.

Part Three of the Adult Guardianship Act, known as the abuse and neglect provisions, is in force and provides some legal tools for people who are abused or neglected and are extremely vulnerable due to some form of incapacity.

While waiting for proclamation, project communities learned that offering support to abused or neglected adults, and having access to some new legal tools, is only part of what will make a difference in peoples' lives. As well there is a need for increased coordination at the community level, not only of responses to individuals who are abused or neglected, but also coordination in terms of working towards prevention over time. **Community Response Networks** (CRNs) are the vehicles for achieving increased coordination of community responses to abuse and neglect. Today, there are about 50 CRNs in BC.

A Community Response Network is a diverse group of concerned community members who come together to create a coordinated community response to adult abuse, neglect and self-neglect. CRNs provide a foundation for the community, as a whole, to work together as a team on an equal playing field, sharing power and responsibility.

CRNs around the province are reaching out to the community to establish a network of community agencies, local businesses, government agencies, (Health Authorities, Ministry for Children and Family Development) as well as adults experiencing or at risk of experiencing abuse, neglect and self neglect. Working together as a CRN, people and their communities are making a difference.

In the West Kootenay and Boundary area there are CRNs, at various levels of activity, in Salmo, Nelson, Castlegar, Kaslo and Grand Forks. They are involved in activities such as educating the community at large; providing a discussion forum on issues of abuse and neglect; documenting ways of working together that best meet the needs of adults and keeping track of community needs and progress.

The specific work of each CRN is as unique as each community – in Kaslo, theatre has been a very effective medium; in Grand Forks a day-long education session was held; in Castlegar, a half-day of watching educational videos started things off; in Trail the CRN was instrumental in developing the Gate Keepers program, and in Nelson a 'Breakfast with Bankers' was done where "Money Matters for Seniors" was watched and discussed.

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