

Report of

Collaborative Communities Forum - Cranbrook – Nov 1, 2004

“Building social and economic security in our communities”

The full day workshop, held at the Anglican Church Hall, 46 – 13 Ave S., provided an introduction to community social planning and explored the links between social and economic development.

The morning session featured a presentation by Jim Sands, SPARC BC (Social Planning and Research Council of BC). This was followed by a panel presentation comprised of six community leaders representing a variety of sectors (Chris Ondrick, health sector; Nick Rubidge, education sector; Mary Ann Jenkins, business sector; Mayor Ross Priest, municipal sector; Darrell McNeil, community policing; and Gwen Phillips, representing the aboriginal community). The panel was moderated by Doug Perry. Panel members spoke to their experience relating to the value, opportunities and challenges of social planning as the topic related to their sector.

The afternoon session focused on building a collaborative community process locally through development of partnerships between sectors such as government, business, and social sectors. The format was small group sessions to identify issues, priorities and next steps followed by reporting back in a plenary session.

The following are the findings from the afternoon small groups sessions and the plenary session:

1. PRIORITY ISSUES

Group 1

- Action, need to move forward, enough talk
- Cultural Awareness
- Definition of Groups – inclusion
- Funding for preparation and organization, process implementation and programs
- Participation of Decision Makers – (observation – panel members left and did not participate in the rest of the day)

Issues in communities that need to be addressed and considered in the process:

- substance abuse
- employment – economic opportunities or the lack thereof
- education
- domestic violence
- mental health and wellness

- accessibility
- affordable housing
- poverty

Group 2

- Accept and address the need for social planning
- Government will consider social impact before decision making (much like the environmental approach)
- Integrating consultation processes (by bringing various groups together)
- Finding a common language for values and quality of life in each community
- Finding a Regional Social Planner: Perhaps each municipality can contribute money. This person would develop private/public/NGO relationships.
- Build partnerships and learn how to leverage funding from already existing ministries with various mandates. For instance, HRDC has money available if we incorporate the unemployed into our plan of action, in order for them to develop job skills.

Why are these priorities?

- These are priorities since they have to be in place before selecting specific issues to address.

2. WHO SHOULD BE INVOLVED?

Group 1

Education, health care, business, environment, special interest, social service, tourism, youth, seniors, consumers, "power people"

Group 2

Community representatives – but the majority should be people with a social conscience. This could be like a 'citizen's assembly.'

3. WHAT SHOULD THE NEXT STEP BE?

Group 1

- Social Planning Officer
- Engaging some power players
- Review what has happened in other communities

Group 2

Involving various groups already active in economic/social planning. In the past two months, three organizations have met to discuss community development. We can have a rep from these organizations meet with the established group of interested people.

MISC.

- Every community should be encouraged to have a sub-committee that provides information to a regional committee.
- We need to have a flexible definition of 'community.'
- The word 'issue' should be flexible.
- Let each town select their own priorities instead of the regional committee doing so.
- Some established committees could fall under the 'social planning' umbrella. For instance, the literacy group meets as a way to combat the effects of illiteracy on a community since it leads to future employment and health problems.
- Fernie has established a Quality of Life Index for their community. This could be a guideline for how we establish our planning committee since they've utilized the expertise from the grassroots to the officials of their community.
- We have lots of social programs but many face barriers in accessing them.
- We have to be sure our social planning isn't trying to reinvent the wheel by duplicating services.
- We have to ensure we don't create a plan without implementation.

RECOMMENDATIONS/COMMENTS DURING CLOSING SESSION:

1. Uncertainty about whether or not "Social Planning" should be done at a local community or regional level.
2. Ways would have to be found to engage people in the process.
3. Social Planning needs to be arms length and independent dollars to fund the process should be arms length with no strings attached as to outcomes.
4. The decision makers need to include those who clearly appreciate and understand social impact.
5. Currently there are "silos of activity" that need to be brought together.
6. Common language, values and a process of documentation must be developed.
7. One solution to inclusion of all communities is to have a Regional Coordinator dedicated to social planning who will work with sub-committees in every community.
8. Another solution might be to link with the College of the Rockies' Community Development Department.
9. Communities need to develop their own unique Community Plan.
10. Start with projects that are easy and promote early successes to encourage the process and keep participants engaged.

PEOPLE WHO SELF IDENTIFIED THEIR DESIRE TO BE INVOLVED IN THE PROCESS:

Fern
Sylvia Tremblay
Pate Cope
Kevin McMullen

Keri Rinehart
Deb
The Metis Association
Judy

Cst. Darrel McNeil
Janice Bradshaw