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**Social Planning  
Cowichan Council  
Newsletter**

**October 2006**

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**Social Planning  
Cowichan Council  
Members**

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**Message from the Chair**

The last few months have been exceptionally busy for Social Planning Cowichan (SPC). We've undertaken two major research reports, the Status of the Community and the Inadequate Shelter reports, hosted a community workshop and took lead role in planning a Shelter and Community Resources Centre. More recently, we welcomed Gerry Giles and Mike Coleman to our board.

Gerry brings with her more than 30 years of community service. She was President of the 2005 BC Seniors Games, and has been active on both the School District 65 and the Cowichan District Hospital boards. She was named Citizen of the Year in 2005 and Woman of Distinction in 2006. She is currently a Regional Director with the CVRD.

Mike has led the way toward improving quality of life in our community for more than three decades. He is a founding member of the local Big Brothers, United Way and Duncan's first legal aid clinic. He was also mayor of the City of Duncan for twenty years. On behalf of the SPC board welcome aboard Gerry and Mike! I am especially pleased to announce that Social Planning Cowichan received charitable status early this fall. We are now a registered society.

Candace Spilsbury  
Board Chair

**Community Building  
Through Partnerships**

More than seventy people attended an afternoon workshop facilitated by Scott Graham of the Social Planning and Research Council of BC (SPARC). Last April, SPC presented a public forum called 'Community Building through Partnerships.' The forum was for people interested in creating or strengthening local partnerships with a view to integrating social and economic development in the Cowichan Valley. The workshop is one of several workshops developed by the SPARC as part of a Community Development Education Program. Judging from the evaluations, the workshop was a resounding success.

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**Planning Moves Forward  
Toward a Shelter and  
Community Resources  
Centre**

Social Planning Cowichan is working with BC Housing and community organizations to establish a combined shelter and community resources centre for homeless people. The search for both appropriate and available land is proving to be a challenge, but the search continues. A Visioning Committee to determine the type of programs the centre will offer includes SPC board members Candace Spilsbury, Terri Dame and Patti Delisle.

## Status of the Community Report

Valerie Nicol, Project Coordinator  
Research Assistants: Edna Thomas, Nehru Manak, Agnes Caravati  
Project Advisory Committee: Terri Dame, John Scull, Pattie Delisle

This report, funded by the Government of Canada, is founded on the principles of the Earth Charter (which comprise the mandate of Social Planning Cowichan) and Visions 2020, a community development initiative to determine a common vision for the Cowichan region. The study expands on the work of Visions 2020 to provide a comprehensive look at where the Cowichan region is now

The research consists of 65 indicators grouped under ten broad categories: Arts, Culture and Recreation; Community Involvement; Economy and Employment; Education; Food Security; Health, Community and Social Services; Housing the Built Environment; Natural Environment; Public Safety and Transportation. The end result provides Cowichan region residents with a comprehensive set of indicators with which to make decisions about the future.

## The Inadequate Shelter Report

Veronica Scott, Project Coordinator  
Research Assistants: Jappy Sran, Ann-Marie Rice  
Project Advisory Committee: Candace Spilsbury, Terri Dame, John Scull, Jack Vanier, Anne Balding, Carol Donnelly.

The purpose of this report, funded by BC Housing, is to define and determine the nature, scope and causes of inadequate shelter in the Cowichan region; to identify housing 'best practices' in other communities and, based on the research, to suggest strategies for long and short-term solutions to improve affordable housing. Forty-five representatives of community agencies were interviewed along with thirty people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The research informs statistics and data through the voices of those directly experiencing housing issues.

### Highlights of the Study...

While affordable housing is an issue throughout BC, it is particularly challenging in the Cowichan region where the average income is lower than the provincial average.

Proportionately more people receive income assistance and spend more than 30% of their income on shelter than elsewhere. The Cowichan region also has significantly more people living with disabilities (including mental illness and addictions) than most other communities. Factors such as increased house prices, rising construction costs, diminishing rental stock, and long waiting lists for subsidized housing are increasing the number of people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. There is broad recognition in cities across North America that provision of affordable housing, often with appropriate supports, is the issue. This was confirmed in the Duncan area.

There are many options to increase affordable housing. A few of these include increasing housing density wherever possible (secondary suites, apartments above buildings are examples); offering incentives to developers; creating a long-term region-wide affordable housing strategy; promoting co-housing and partnering with the Cowichan Land Trust. Other examples are provided in the report.

The final report will be complete toward the end of December.