



---

## May/June 2007 Newsletter

---

### Welcome New Board Members

**Mark Buchanan** is the pastor of New Life Community Baptist Church as well as an author. He loves the Cowichan Valley and its people and is honoured to serve the community through the SPC. Mark has lived in the Cowichan Valley for almost 12 years. He is married to Cheryl and they have three children.

**Anne Murray** is a Councillor with the Municipality of North Cowichan and was a School Trustee from 1978-1990. Anne has been active in many community non-profit social services, including the committee that developed Social Planning Cowichan. She is a retired nurse.

**Debbie Williams** is the Executive Director of Hiiye'yu Lelum (House of Friendship), a position she has held for 20 years. The primary mandate of the Friendship Centre is to serve the urban Aboriginal population through health, social, recreational and cultural services to promote individual, family and community self-reliance. Debbie is a member of Cowichan Tribes.

### Social Planning Cowichan Hires Executive Director

SPC Board Chair Candace Spilsbury announced that Social Planning Cowichan hired its first Executive Director on May 14. Diane Kennedy started her new position on May 22 and is working parttime out of the organization's offices at FutureCorp Cowichan on Third Street in Duncan.

A graduate of UVic with a degree in Social Work, Diane has been involved in social planning and community development in Victoria for 25 years. She moved to Cowichan in 2004 and for the past two years she was the manager of the South Cowichan Chamber of Commerce.

Diane's first priority will be to work with the Board to carry out the recommendations of two Social Planning Cowichan reports: Inadequate Shelter in the Cowichan Valley and the Status of the Community Report. One of her first tasks on the job will be to establish a local Affordable Housing Council.

"Serving as the first Executive Director of Social Planning Cowichan is quite an honour," said Kennedy. "I am looking forward to working with individuals and community agencies and groups who are actively involved in addressing issues such as homelessness, child care, support for the working poor, mental health issues and addictions. There's no shortage of dedication and commitment within our communities – together, we can make great strides."



### Feedback on the Status of the Community Report

Social Planning Cowichan is actively seeking feedback on the Status of the Community Report which was released last fall.

This report covers the Cowichan Region and presents a compilation of statistics and facts on services in the region, pointing out both the positives and gaps.

We are seeking feedback from many different agencies and community organizations to be sure that we have community feedback and themes for a future report.

---

## Cowichan Valley Housing Report Officially Released

Social Planning Cowichan has officially released the first housing report of its kind in the Cowichan Valley. 'Inadequate Shelter in the Cowichan Valley' is a comprehensive, 120-page study that details how lack of affordable housing is affecting people of all ages and backgrounds in the Cowichan region. This includes young families, single parents, seniors and youth.

Most importantly, the study provides a detailed step-by-step action plan toward increasing affordable housing. "It's no secret that the need for affordable housing is critical here in the Cowichan region and throughout our province. The personal stories in this report are often heart breaking. They hinge on three central themes: Severe lack of affordable housing, lack of community support systems and poverty," said Candace Spilsbury Social Planning Board Chair.

"We may not be able to solve the housing problem overnight because the issues are complex, but we do need to start the ball rolling. This report outlines a clear game plan that we can follow," she said.

Members of Social Planning Cowichan recently hosted a housing 'think tank' which included region mayors and other community decision makers. "We discussed the underlying causes of housing problems and reviewed the report's recommendations. As a result, we are moving forward with the report's first recommendation – to establish a Cowichan Valley Affordable Housing Council", she said.

While the composition of the Council will be decided soon, it is anticipated that it will include representatives of local housing groups, municipal government, developers and the community at large. This group will be the central point of access for addressing affordable housing in the Cowichan Region. "One of the Council's tasks will be to learn about affordable housing strategies in other communities, to see what works and what can be applied here in the Cowichan Valley," she noted.

The report was developed in partnership with Duncan United Church and funded through BC Housing. For a complete copy please visit [www.socialplanningcowichan.ca](http://www.socialplanningcowichan.ca)



## Childcare Action and Research

Social Planning Cowichan is responding to the funding cuts and related issues surrounding childcare in our area, specifically that every childcare program in our community has a waitlist and the total numbers are causing concern.

We are continuing our involvement and research on the issue in order to follow-up on the response to a letter from Minister Linda Reid and will be meeting with her to discuss the need in our community. This issue is attracting attention from a broad cross-section of the community because childcare and early childhood education affects all aspects of life.

## Island Social Planning Network Meeting and Workshop

A Vancouver Island Social Planning Network meeting and workshop was hosted by Social Planning Cowichan on May 10, 2007. Representatives of various municipalities and communities attended, including Courteney/Comox, Nanaimo, Cowichan and Victoria.

The workshop focused on the issues of affordable housing and poverty. Presenters of the workshop were Karasima Brands and Christina Peacock from the Community Council of Victoria. Each brought with them a variety of experiences in the field and did a great job of the presentation.

It was agreed that the network meeting was a worthwhile undertaking and the group plans to meet semi-annually.



## Summer Student Funding

Malaspina student Kylynn Peerens has been hired with funding from Canada Summer Jobs program as a research assistant to assist with collecting, organizing and analyzing data regarding affordable housing in the Cowichan Valley.

The research will include investigating barriers to accessing adequate housing such as child care, training, educational opportunities and support services.

Kylynn is also conducting follow-up interviews regarding the Status of the Community Report.