

# Homelessness Action Week

October 7th - 13th



STOPHOMELESSNESS.CA



*Patrick Stewart of the Aboriginal Homelessness Steering Committee; Geoff Meggs of the Metro Vancouver Housing Committee; and Alice Sundberg of the Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness face the press scrum at the HAW launch event October 4<sup>th</sup>. Chairs of the Community Homelessness Tables support the presenters with the CHT perspectives.*

# REPORT TO COMMUNITY HOMELESSNESS TABLES

fall / winter 2012



HOMELESSNESS, TOGETHER WE CAN SOLVE IT.

## Homelessness Action Week 2012 Report on Regional Activities

This year's Homelessness Action Week's (HAW) regional activities featured the results of an Angus Reid public opinion poll on homelessness and a workshop on NIMBYism by past UBC planning professor Dr. Wendy Sarkissian.

### Public Perceptions of Homelessness in Metro Vancouver

The Angus Reid public opinion poll on community values and perceptions related to homelessness revealed indicative results for the region, drawing one of the largest press scrums ever for the 2012 HAW launch event. The RSCH and AHSC each contributed an op ed featured in the October 4<sup>th</sup> and October 15<sup>th</sup> issues of the Vancouver Sun. The RSCH op ed focused on NIMBYism, and the AHSC op ed addressed the abysmal results on public perceptions of Aboriginal homelessness.

In less than a week of the launch of the poll results, 23 articles appeared in the regional and local papers, eight of those articles within the first day. Global TV's noon news featured a three-minute segment on the result that nearly one in four knows someone who is currently homeless or was homeless within the past five years. Beyond what was featured in the news, the poll results provide a rich data set of public perceptions, offer some direction for prioritizing future awareness

raising activities, and is an important resource for the community. Alice Sundberg, RSCH Co-Chair later presented on the differences between opinions of men and women to Women Transforming Cities, noting that - more than income, age and community - gender was the most significant aspect dividing opinions on homelessness.

### Workshop on NIMBYism by Dr. Wendy Sarkissian

On October 16<sup>th</sup> a workshop was offered to HAW organizers on NIMBYism by Wendy Sarkissian, a planning consultant specialized in housing and past adjunct professor at UBC's School of Community and Regional Planning.

Dr. Sarkissian's workshop deconstructed community conflict over affordable and supportive housing initiatives by analyzing the meaning of 'home' from an architectural design perspective, and best practices in community engagement.

Thank you to our sponsors: the Vancouver Foundation, BC Housing, Vancouver Coastal Health, Fraser Health, Surrey Homelessness and Housing Society, Vancity Community Foundation, Vancity Credit Union, the City of Burnaby, and the City of Vancouver. Further information is available at [stophomelessness.ca](http://stophomelessness.ca).

### IN THIS ISSUE



**HAW 2012 Community Connect Events** Page 2



**The Vancouver and Surrey Rent Banks** Page 3

**The Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness (RSCH) is a coalition of community organizations and all levels of government.**

**Vision** | To eliminate homelessness in Greater Vancouver through the full implementation of the Regional Homelessness Plan: Three Ways to Home.  
**Mission** | To inspire and lead a co-ordinated response to homelessness in the region.

For more information, about the RSCH, please contact Metro Vancouver Homelessness Secretariat 604-451-6065 [kristi.galovich@metrovancover.org](mailto:kristi.galovich@metrovancover.org) Or [rsch@metrovancover.org](mailto:rsch@metrovancover.org)

# HAW 2012 Community Connect Events

Connect events took place in Vancouver, Surrey, Tri-Cities, New Westminster, Burnaby, Maple Ridge, Langley, Richmond and the North Shore. Created in the City of San Francisco, Connect events are a successful model of connecting clients with much needed services at a single access point, to facilitate a transition from living on the street to housing.

Connect events are held throughout the year in many communities, some as often as once a week. Each year the RSCH offers grants to communities to offer an augmented Connect event for Homelessness Action Week. Funds typically go towards venue costs and hygiene or care kits filled with supplies to support the day-to-day health needs of clients accessing the event.

Highlights from this year's HAW events include attendance of 28 past Burnaby Connect event clients who had since been housed, a "best food" competition among caterers at the Vancouver event, a donation of

600 pairs of socks to the North Shore event from students of Capilano College, opening of a drop-in centre in Richmond (photographed above), and the launch of the first Connect event ever in Langley.

Suggestions for improvement for future connect events are to hold the events in bigger venues, to not publicize the events at "Homeless Connect Events" but rather "Connect Events" so as to not stigmatize the patrons of the events, and to designate the HAW date earlier so that local planning may

begin earlier.



Opening of the Richmond Drop-in Centre at the Richmond HAW Connect Event. Left to Right: Councillor Bill McNulty Reverend Margaret Cornish, Mayor Malcolm Brodie, Dianne Woodhouse and Councillor Linda Barnes.

### FURTHER RESOURCES AVAILABLE

A manual has been developed by Ethos Strategy Group to guide organizers interested in holding their own Connect event. It can be downloaded from [stophomelessness.ca](http://stophomelessness.ca) and the templates provided may be customized by contacting Ethos at [info@ethosstrategygroup.com](mailto:info@ethosstrategygroup.com).

## Quick Connect Event Stats

Contributed by the CHTs and City of Vancouver Staff

Six communities provided data on their Connect events, reporting an estimated 858 clients who accessed six out of the total nine Connect events. Of note is that at the Vancouver Connect event, 57% of clients reported that they were paying rent. In other communities, as little as 20% of the Connect event clients reported that they were homeless. It is difficult to tell the exact number of homeless clients in survey results as social stigmas on homelessness often affects self-reporting of a person's situation of homelessness. An overview of the data collected is provided in the adjacent table, with full reports available at [stophomelessness.ca](http://stophomelessness.ca)



	No. of clients	Change from last year	No. of service providers	Other data collected
<b>Burnaby</b>	224	+42	24	Total attendees, no. of volunteers, special guests, and no. of clients accessing each service.
<b>Vancouver</b>	350 (est.)	No change.	58	247 surveys completed on client profile: age, ethnicity, origin, residence, time lived in the Lower Mainland, where they spent the night.
<b>North Shore</b>	100 (est.)	Not reported.	11	76 surveys completed on client age, housing status, and services accessed at the event.
<b>Richmond</b>	53 (est.)	Not reported.	Not reported.	44 surveys completed on client age, gender and services accessed.
<b>Tri Cities</b>	41	-52	18	13 exit surveys completed on client feedback and services accessed.
<b>Langley</b>	90 (est.)	N/A (First connect event.)	13	No. of volunteers, and no. of clients accessing services.

**RSCH REVIEW OF ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

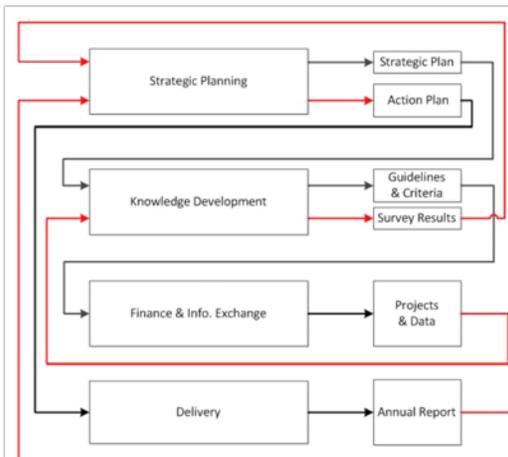


*RSCH members gather to study the organizational challenges in a process simulation exercise.*

**Update on the RSCH Organizational Review**

The RSCH Organizational Review is moving into its final stages. RSCH members have been discussing and developing the proposed new operational and decision-making processes, as well as a new membership structure. The new processes and structures are based on feedback gathered from the membership, the Community Homelessness Tables, Metro Vancouver and other key stakeholders of the Committee. The feedback collected was analyzed by members through a process simulation exercise designed by the project consultants, pictured above. The goal is to stimulate reflection on the organizational dilemmas with a hands-on activity that simulates the obstacles to progress created by structural and procedural inefficiencies.

Key challenges that are hoped to be addressed with a new structure include increasing the effectiveness of the decision-making process, decreasing the time and work commitment of membership, and greater clarity of roles and responsibilities. The project is expected to conclude in early January at which time the results will be made available to the membership and wider homeless-serving community.



*RSCH draft process design map from project consultants the Process Pros (under discussion).*



# The Metro Vancouver and Toronto Community Advisory Boards

In December and January of 2011 – 2012, Carey Doberstein of the Department of Political Science at the University of Toronto observed the proceedings of the Community Advisory Boards of Metro Vancouver and Toronto as part of his PhD research. His analysis of the two CABs appears in his research article published in the Journal of Canadian Public Policy, “Applying European Ideas on Federalism and Doing it Better? The Government of Canada’s Homelessness Policy Experiment”. The article makes the argument that CABs across Canada could benefit from a comparative performance measurement process, institutionalized information sharing among CABs, and greater CAB influence on national policy and program design.

Doberstein uses the differences between the Metro Vancouver and Toronto CABs to illustrate the learning that might be possible through comparisons between more of the HPS CABs. He writes that in contrast to the Toronto CAB, the RSCH has more involvement of community groups in the decision-making process, not just in determining funding priorities but also in recommending funding allocation. In Toronto, the role of the CAB is limited to helping guide the strategic priorities for funding allocation only. The comparatively larger local profile and legitimacy of the RSCH to the Toronto CAB by way of its history, regular meetings, extra-HPS projects such as the Homeless Count, and representation of the region give it the ability to “drive the agenda on homelessness in Vancouver”. In contrast, the CAB in Toronto is only convened for HPS funding-related purposes; limiting the opportunity for it to

function as a representative and legitimate voice on homelessness in its region.

Carey Doberstein’s article is published in the Journal of Canadian Public Policy, Vol. 28, No. 3 2012.

**Update on the Homelessness Partnering Strategy Capital Call for Proposals**

The most recent call for proposals for capital projects under the Homelessness Partnering Strategy closed at the end of July. A total of 28 proposals were reviewed by the Finance Working Group convened in mid-September to decide which proposals would be recommended for funding. Of the 28 proposals reviewed, fourteen proposals were for 390 plus new units for \$13.2 million, eight were renovation proposals to add 82 new units for \$2.6 million, and six proposals were renovations to enhance an existing 270 units for a total of \$1.6 million. Proposals were assessed against 14 criteria which included alignment with the provincial investment strategy for homeless-serving infrastructure, operational sustainability after the capital development, and matching contributions from the proponent for the amount of HPS funds requested.

All recommended projects were subjected to further staff due diligence on budgets, HPS terms and conditions, eligible costs and work plans. A total of 14 projects have moved forward to the budget negotiation stage and final awards will soon be announced.

# The Vancouver and Surrey Rent Banks

By Kate Hodgson, Executive Director, Network of Inner City Community Services & Judy Peterson, Team Lead, Surrey Rent Bank Sources Community Resource Centres

The Vancouver Rent Bank launched this October during Homelessness Action Week. Rent Banks have been successful in other provinces across Canada, and British Columbia has been experimenting with local models for the last several years. In Metro Vancouver, specifically, this has been part of the search for comprehensive solutions to homelessness.

The rent bank model is one that assists those in temporary financial crisis—a situation that those on the front lines will attest is becoming increasingly common. A repayable loan offers an alternative to low income renters who otherwise are faced with eviction or resorting to predatory lending by payday loan companies.

The Surrey (Sources) Rent Bank, or SRB, has been operating since March 1st, 2010. As of October, 2012 the SRB has delivered 115 loans securing the housing stability of close to 300 people including children, seniors, families and the formerly homeless.

SRB housing stability reports show us that the RSB has exceeded its goal of 100% housing stability for borrowers for 6 months and 75% stability for 12 months. Loan payback rates are currently 65%, and our goal remains 71%.

As awareness of the SRB has increased so have the inquiries. 800+ enquiries are received yearly. Folks who enquire but who are not eligible for loans are referred to appropriate services. Much of the service delivery time is occupied with this essential task.

For many, the SRB is the window to government support services. Staff observe that folks who have been working for long periods of time expect that they will get employment again quickly and do not start applications for Income Assistance or other services as they do not believe that they will need them.

This can lead to their housing crisis.

Similarly, through the Vancouver Rent Bank, residents—whether they are approved for a loan or not—have access not only to interest-free loans, but to a range of community supports in a network model, such as financial health supports, tenants rights information and multilingual supports.

However, a rent bank is meant to be only one tool in a continuum, and currently there are a number of gaps in our response to prevention of homelessness, particularly affordable rental housing. Lessons can be drawn from other provinces that have developed provincial rent bank strategies. Similarly, BC needs to create a provincial Rent Bank strategy that allows communities to prioritize how funds are designated and delivered.

The Surrey (Sources) Rent Bank is supported by private credit unions, local government and charitable foundations.

The Network of Inner City Community Services Society (NICCSS), is working with the Streethome Foundation, the City of Vancouver, Vancouver Foundation to deliver the Vancouver Rent Bank, along with our supporters at Vancity and UBC Department of Economics.



## FAST FACTS

100%

Rate of Surrey Rent Bank borrowers who established housing stability for 6 months.

75%

Rate of Surrey Rent Bank borrowers who established housing stability for 12 months.

65%

Surrey Rent Bank loan repayment rates. (Goal is 71%)

## Big Changes Underway at the GVSS

Update By James Pratt, GVSS

At the October meeting, the GVSS decided to:

**Incorporate as a non-profit** by April 2013 - with current Executive Committee as the founding board.

**Focus its membership** - this means that just shelter and related outreach providers, relevant provincial and federal agencies, health authorities and local governments will be invited to regular GVSS meetings. Public sector agencies will be non-voting members.

**Hold 3-4 larger meetings per year.**

Representatives of partner organizations, such as the Metro Vancouver Homelessness Secretariat, are invited to these general meetings for GVSS members and guests: March 22, June 27 and October 24, 2013, 9:00 to noon.

**Create a combined Strategic Service Plan.**

The GVSS asks that the RSCH and other partner tables provide feedback on this draft plan by February 15, 2013. For more information, contact admin@gvss.ca.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

Visit either the Vancouver or Surrey Rent Bank websites:

Vancouver: <http://www.niccss.ca/VRB>

Surrey: <http://www.sourcesbc.ca/> ("Newton">>"Sources Rent Bank")



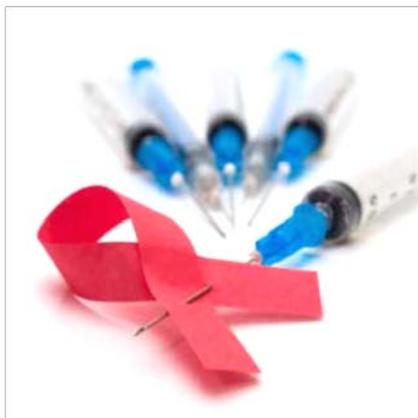
# Towards a National Network of Community Advisory Boards

In May the Canadian Housing and Renewal Association (CHRA) sponsored a delegate from the RSCH to participate and present at the second annual meeting of the National Network of the federal government-designated Community Advisory Boards (CABs) to exchange knowledge on preventing, reducing and ending homelessness. The meeting was attended by 33 CABs: four from BC, six from Alberta, one from Saskatchewan, three from Manitoba, three from New Brunswick, two from Nova Scotia, one from Newfoundland, one from the Northwest Territories and twelve from Ontario. Delegates and organizers observed low participation from Quebecois and Aboriginal CABs. The meeting included presentations on the Canadian Homelessness Research Network's proposed Canadian definition on homelessness and the Mental Health Commission's At Home / Chez Soi project. Panel discussions were held on client services, data collection & usage, social & labour market integration, and transformational governance.

The final component of the meeting was a decision on the next steps to sustain the network. It was decided that the goal of the network would be to share experience and evidence to facilitate collective action that prevents, reduces and ends homelessness. The delegates discussed priorities, membership, leadership and financing. Decisions were reached on all points except financing as delegates requested more information be gathered on the total costs of sustaining the network before deciding how to pursue funding. The network is currently hosted and supported by the CHRA.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

A full report and details of the meeting can be accessed from the CHRA website : <http://www.chra-achru.ca/en/>.



## New Research: Isolating the Impact of Homelessness on AIDS

Researchers have identified the significance of homelessness in a 13-year study on 240 HIV-positive injection drug users (IDUs) in Vancouver, published in the recent article "Homelessness as a Structural Barrier to Effective Antiretroviral Therapy Among HIV-Seropositive Illicit Drug Users in a Canadian Setting", in the Journal of AIDS Patient Care and STDs. While homelessness has been established as an important determinant of health and a common experience among IDUs, this is the first study that isolates the effect of homelessness alone on outcomes from HIV treatment among IDUs as cost was not a barrier treatment. Participants were recruited through the AIDS Care Cohort to evaluate Exposure to Survival Services, or ACCESS. The study found that "homelessness poses a significant structural barrier to effective HIV treatment" and that structural interventions to provide housing among patients that are homeless are needed to not only improve their adherence to treatment and outcomes, but to control the pandemic.

The article was authored by Milloy MJ, Kerr T, Bangsberg DR, Buxton J, Parashar S, Guillemi SA, Montaner J, Wood E and can be accessed from the BC Center for Excellence in HIV / AIDS.

## Events and Announcements

### Eva's Initiatives' Awards for Ending Youth Homelessness

Four awards of \$25,000 each are available to organizations working with homeless youth. The deadline for applications is December 10th 2012 and information can be found at [evasinitiatives.com](http://evasinitiatives.com).

### Screening of "Poor No More" December 5th

On December 5th, the Richmond Poverty Response Committee will be screening the documentary "Poor No More" about Canada's working poor. The screening will be followed by a panel discussion and will take place at 7 – 9 pm in the Ralph Fisher Auditorium of Richmond Hospital. It is hosted by the Richmond Poverty Response Committee, the Canadian Federation of University Women – Richmond, Unite-Here and Vancouver Coastal Health. More information available at [info@richmondprc.org](mailto:info@richmondprc.org).

### Welcome to Debbie Kraus, Regional Planner for the MVHS!

Deborah Kraus joined the Metro Vancouver Homelessness Secretariat in October 2012. Many of you know Deborah from her previous work as a consultant when she conducted numerous research projects on housing and homelessness. Deborah helped prepare the Regional Homelessness Plan – 3 Ways to Home, the Greater Vancouver Shelter Strategy (2006-2015), and homelessness plans for the City of Vancouver and Streethome. She recently completed a Masters in Public Policy degree from Simon Fraser University.

### Goodbye to Michael Anhorn...

Past member (and once a staff member of the Homelessness Secretariat!) Michael Anhorn has moved onto a new opportunity and will no longer be representing BC Housing in the RSCH. Michael's contributions to the Committee were highly valued and we wish him all the best as Executive Director of the Canadian Mental Health Association, Vancouver-Burnaby Branch. We look forward to welcoming a new BC Housing representative soon.

Report to  
Community  
Homelessness  
Tables