

## **The Transformative Role of Voluntarism in Aging Resource Communities**



2013

**Final Report for Quesnel, BC**

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## **Acknowledgements**

In the summer of 2013, our research team visited Quesnel to conduct interviews about the transformative role of voluntarism in aging resource communities on various aspects of the community. We wish to thank all of the residents, community groups, service providers, and leaders who took the time to help out and to answer our many questions.

We would like to extend our special thanks to our community partners with the City of Quesnel.

Funding for this project was provided by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council.

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Prince George

Fall 2013

## Availability

The project work reported here was carried out by a research team from the UNBC Community Development Institute, in collaboration with colleagues from Trent University and the University of Guelph, in the spring of 2013 with the goal to explore a range of roles in the voluntary sector and in community development in order to explore how seniors' engagement and voluntary initiatives are reshaping and changing the community. Copies of this report have been provided to the Cariboo Regional District Library and the City of Quesnel. Copies of the report have also been provided to all participants. Reports have also been posted on the UNBC Community Development Institute's website: <http://www.unbc.ca/community-development-institute/research-projects>.

## Project Reports

- A Review of Socio-Economic Characteristics in Quesnel, BC
- A Review of Socio-Economic Characteristics in Tumbler Ridge, BC
- The Transformative Role of Voluntarism in Aging Resource Communities: Community Report for Quesnel, BC
- The Transformative Role of Voluntarism in Aging Resource Communities: Community Report for Tumbler Ridge, BC

## Past Project Reports

- Dimensions of Voluntarism in Aging Resource Towns: Preliminary Scan of Tumbler Ridge, BC
- Dimensions of Voluntarism in Aging Resource Towns: Preliminary Scan of Quesnel, BC
- Voluntarism, Ageing and Place: A Critical Review

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# The Transformative Role of Voluntarism in Aging Resource Communities

FINAL REPORT FOR QUESNEL, BC

## Project Description

Originally planned to address the needs of resource industries and their younger labour force, many northern communities undergoing economic and population change are experiencing the relatively new phenomena of 'resource frontier aging' in which people are growing old in places that have never dealt before with population aging. This situation is complicated by the fact that many communities have attempted to market surplus housing to retirees as a means of offsetting the out-migration of younger residents. These communities must now meet the needs of growing numbers of longer-term elderly residents and in-migrant retirees who are aging in place and create the conditions for positive community development. As many communities have experienced a restructuring of industries, jobs, and service supports, the voluntary sector and volunteers have been expected to step-up to both support individuals aging in place and the development aspirations of their communities. Very little is known, however, about the evolving role of voluntary (non-profit) organizations, community groups and volunteers in supporting older people and influencing community development trajectories in the unique context of Canada's aging resource hinterland. This project examines the role that voluntary organizations, community groups and volunteers play in both supporting older people and in influencing community development in aging resource communities. In BC, Quesnel and Tumbler Ridge have been two communities participating in this project.

The project work reported here was carried out by a research team from the UNBC Community Development Institute in the spring of 2013 with the goal to explore a range of roles in the voluntary sector and in community development in order to explore how seniors' engagement and voluntary initiatives are reshaping and changing the community. Understanding changes, pressures, and actions in the voluntary sector is important to inform policies, programs, and infrastructure investments that can support voluntary and aging initiatives.

**Table 1: Timeline**

April 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>UNBC Research Ethics Board process completed.</li> </ul>
May 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Research team established.</li> <li>Project logistics schedule completed.</li> </ul>
June 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interviews completed.</li> </ul>
July 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Analysis of interview data.</li> </ul>
August 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Completed draft project reports.</li> </ul>
September 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review of draft reports by community partners.</li> <li>Final reports completed and distributed.</li> </ul>

## Methodology

The data and information for this report was conducted through key informant interviews with community clubs and organizations in Quesnel, BC.

### Selecting Key Informant Interviews

Interviews were conducted during May 2013. The purpose was to examine the role that voluntary organizations, community groups and volunteers play in both supporting older people and in influencing community development in aging resource communities. Previous visits and conversations with leaders and groups in the community were used to identify key voluntary initiatives that are shaping community development and aging experiences in Quesnel. Based on these recommendations, participants were recruited using publicly available lists of community organizations and groups. A total of 18 residents were interviewed. While many participants were long-time residents of the community, we also spoke with participants who had moved to Quesnel within the last ten years (Table 2). To explore the role of voluntary groups in various community development initiatives, we spoke to a range of volunteers, service providers, and leaders. A general breakdown of participating stakeholders is included in Table 3.

**Table 2: Length of residence – Quesnel**

	Number of Participants	% of Participants
31 years and over	11	61.1
21-30 years	2	11.1
11-20 years	2	11.1
10 years or less	3	16.7
Total	18	100.0

Source: The Transformative Role of Voluntarism in Aging Resource Communities 2013.

**Table 3: Sector of interview respondents – Quesnel**

Sector	Number of Participants	% of Participants
Housing	4	22.2
Community services	7	38.9
Sports and recreation	4	22.2
Seniors	3	16.7
Total	18	100.0

Source: The Transformative Role of Voluntarism in Aging Resource Communities 2013.

Many of these participants were also involved with multiple community organizations, such as community services, community groups, food and agriculture, business groups, sports and recreational, government, service clubs, and arts and cultural groups (Table 4). When we asked people about the role they had within these groups, most noted that they belonged to these groups either as volunteers or general members, followed by people who were involved as executive members, management staff, board members, and committee members (Table 5). Interviews lasted between 20 minutes and one hour.

## Research Ethics

Research conducted by the Community Development Institute is bound by protocols at the University of Northern British Columbia that require all survey or interview guides be submitted to UNBC's Research Ethics Board for review. A key component to this protocol is to provide research participants with a copy of the consent form (Appendix B) that outlines the purpose of the study, how the research process will protect their anonymity and confidentiality, and that their participation is voluntary.

**Table 4: Do you belong to any local clubs, committee, associations, etc.? - Quesnel Respondents**

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**Community Services (32)**

Seniors' Centre (3)  
 Affordable Housing Action Committee (2)  
 Big Brothers Big Sisters (2)  
 One to One Reading (2)  
 Senior's Advocates (2)  
 AA Board of Directors (1)  
 Amata House (1)  
 BC Long-term Care Association Board (1)  
 Better at Home (1)  
 Climate Action Group (1)  
 CNC (1)  
 Community Response Network (1)  
 CT-scan Committee (1)  
 Dunrovin (1)  
 Fraser Village (1)  
 Meals on Wheels (1)  
 Native Friendship Centre (1)  
 Northern Health Renal Committee (1)  
 Palliative Care (1)  
 Quesnel Teachers Association (1)  
 Shirao Twinning Society (1)  
 Social Concerns Committee (1)  
 SPCA (1)  
 Sustainability Task Force (1)  
 Voice for North Cariboo Seniors (1)  
 Women's Centre (1)

**Arts and Culture (8)**

Quesnel Theatre Action Group (2)  
 Arts and Recreation Centre (1)  
 Canada Day Celebration Committee (1)  
 Friends of Reliability (1)  
 Genealogy Club (1)  
 Winter Carnival (1)  
 Writers Group (1)

**Service Clubs (7)**

Lion's Club (3)  
 Legion (1)  
 Quesnel Elks (1)  
 Quesnel Lion's Housing Society (1)  
 Rotary (1)

**Community Groups (6)**

Advisory Committee for Volunteer Centre (1)  
 Canadian Cancer Society for Relay for Life (1)  
 Katimivik Program (1)  
 OAPA Branch 77 (1)  
 TOPS (1)  
 Volunteer Centre (1)

**Food and Agriculture (6)**

Quesnel Farmer's Market (3)  
 Community Garden (1)  
 Crooked Leg Ranch (1)  
 District 8 Farmer's Institute (1)

**Business Community (4)**

Community Futures (1)  
 Quesnel Community and Economic Development Corporation (1)  
 Quesnel Downtown Association (1)  
 Q-Mag (1)

**Sports and Recreation (4)**

Multi-Centre Fundraising Committee (2)  
 Quesnel Youth Soccer Association (2)

**Government (2)**

City of Quesnel (2)

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Source: The Transformative Role of Voluntarism in Aging Resource Communities 2013.

Note: respondents could provide multiple answers.



**Table 5: Community roles – Quesnel respondents**

Sector	Number of Participants	% of Participants
Volunteer	15	83.3
Member	14	77.8
Executive	12	66.7
Management	10	55.6
Board member	9	50.0
Committee member	5	27.8
Participant	2	11.1
Council	1	5.6
N=	18	

Source: The Transformative Role of Voluntarism in Aging Resource Communities 2013.  
Note: respondents could provide multiple answers.

## Interview Questions

The purpose of this project was to explore the roles, activities, and issues associated with voluntary groups involved in a range of community development initiatives. This report assembles a summary of key issues and lessons that emerged from our interviews. A detailed description of questions asked in each section of the interview guide is provided in Appendix C. In general, participants were asked questions in the following areas:

- Background questions;
- How the initiative began;
- The key activities that were involved in the early stages of development;
- The key activities and processes that shaped the implementation of the initiative;
- The impact of the initiative on the community;
- Challenges and lessons learned; and
- How the organization’s capacity, partnerships, and relationships helped or hindered the overall project or program.

## Analysis

During each interview, comments were recorded and notes were taken. After a final summary file was created for each interview, qualitative analysis was done to identify, code, and categorize patterns and themes that emerged from the data. A profile of each initiative is provided in order to share information about the challenges, opportunities, and lessons learned from each organization. The goal is to share the constructive experiences that have been acquired by different volunteers and voluntary organizations in order to strengthen the capacity and supports for these groups in the future.

## BIG BROTHERS AND BIG SISTERS OF QUESNEL

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### *Origins*

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Quesnel started their in-school mentoring program in 1999. In the early years of the program, they recruited volunteers from banks and eventually pursued teen volunteers for the program. High school teens were able to mentor elementary school students in preparation for psychology courses. Over the years, there were challenges getting more adults involved in the program. At the same time, there are a number of grandparents looking after their grandchildren in the community. For the in-school mentoring program, there would be a valuable benefit to having seniors engaged as volunteers as they would not have other school conflicts and commitments currently experienced by other high school volunteers. Following a call for proposals from the New Horizons Program, BBBS developed a successful application to support the development of a seniors' in-school mentoring program.

### *Early Stages of Development*

Big Brothers and Big Sisters in Quesnel has been in operation for a long period of time. However, their initiative to strategically target seniors for their in-school mentoring program is new. The goal is to have ten senior in-school mentors in place for March 2014. Key people who have been involved include Maggie Bello, the board and staff of BBBS, Ruth Scoullar, Jean Gelinis, and Betty Ann Russell. An advisory committee is also in place to guide the program.

Key tasks that were completed in the early stages of development include:

- The development of a successful funding application to the New Horizons Program,
- The development of an advisory committee, and
- Identifying seniors who could become involved.

### *Implementation*

BBBS will be delivering the program in partnership with the school district and seniors throughout the community. BBBS are hoping to have seniors in the in-school mentoring program by early October. BBBS waits to place in-school mentors until after schools have settled and students are no longer being moved into other classrooms. BBBS does not meet the children until volunteer mentors are screened. The schools select the students through their school-based team meetings. The in-school mentoring program will require seniors to make a commitment of one hour per week. Senior mentors can be placed in any school. To alleviate potential transportation costs, the goal is to place seniors in schools that are close to their home. All operations are coordinated through the BBBS office.

Key tasks include:

- Hiring a coordinator for the seniors' in-school mentoring program,
- Delivering an information session for potential senior volunteers,
- Developing posters and brochures to support the recruitment of seniors,

- Putting advertisements in the Bargain Hunter,
- Creating radio advertisements and stories,
- Providing stories to the Quesnel Observer,
- Having seniors complete application forms with three references,
- Having BBBS and the RCMP complete reference checks for volunteers,
- Examining the interests of youth and volunteers,
- Conducting interviews and pre-match training,
- Developing an orientation programs for the seniors' in-school mentoring program, and
- Raising profile and awareness of programs.

The program follows guidelines and procedures established by the national BBBS organization. As such, there have been no changes to the direction of the program. However, there have been some adjustments to typical recruitment strategies. Recruitment posters and brochures, for example, have been redesigned to include pictures of senior volunteers. If BBBS experiences difficulty recruiting older volunteers, recruiting strategies may be expanded through speaking to strategic seniors' groups. They may also consider using the Volunteer Centre to recruit new volunteers. Some of Big Brother Big Sister's other programs, however, have evolved to incorporate healthy living, healthy choices initiatives.

### *Impact*

Through its ongoing in-school mentoring programs, BBBS has already had an impact on youth in the community. BBBS has approximately 190 kids involved in their programs. The success of their programs has been influenced by strong support from a range of service agencies and the Aboriginal community. In fact, there is a representative from the Quesnel Tillicum Native Friendship Centre on the BBBS board of directors. As a result, there are more Aboriginal youth participating in the in-school mentoring programs. Several seniors have also expressed an interest in the program and have encouraged other seniors to come to the information sessions. It is too soon, however, to determine the impacts of the seniors' in-school mentoring program.

### *Challenges*

BBBS experienced some challenges during the early stages of the development of the program. Initially, there were challenges obtaining *funding* from government grants. However, BBBS obtained advice from other BBBS organizations around the province who had successfully obtained government grants from the New Horizons Program. Based on this advice, BBBS of Quesnel was able to successfully obtain funding to support the seniors' in-school mentoring program.

*Volunteer recruitment* and reference checks can take *time* and consume considerable resources. The process is designed to accommodate student volunteers who are on the semester schedule. Even on this semester schedule, elementary school students are usually matched with the same mentor throughout the year. By using seniors, however, mentors will remain the same for the entire calendar year. So far, there has been a good level of interest from potential senior volunteers.

There are also challenges obtaining a range of volunteers. For example, it can be difficult to get *male volunteers* to support the in-school mentoring program. In response, BBBS has broadened and deployed new recruitment strategies targeted at potential male volunteers such as “needed ten good men”. They have also created advertisements such as “step up to the plate with a big brother / little brother” poster. Radio interviews have also been conducted with big brothers and little brothers. Posters have also been strategically placed in places where men spend time.

### *Lessons*

Many of the lessons that BBBS has acquired over the years has come from their experiences with other programs. With the seniors’ in-school mentoring program, they used the advice obtained from other BBBS organizations, such as the Central Vancouver Island BBBS organization, to enhance their original grant application. However, it is too early to assess other lessons from the seniors’ in-school mentoring program.

### *Place Integration*

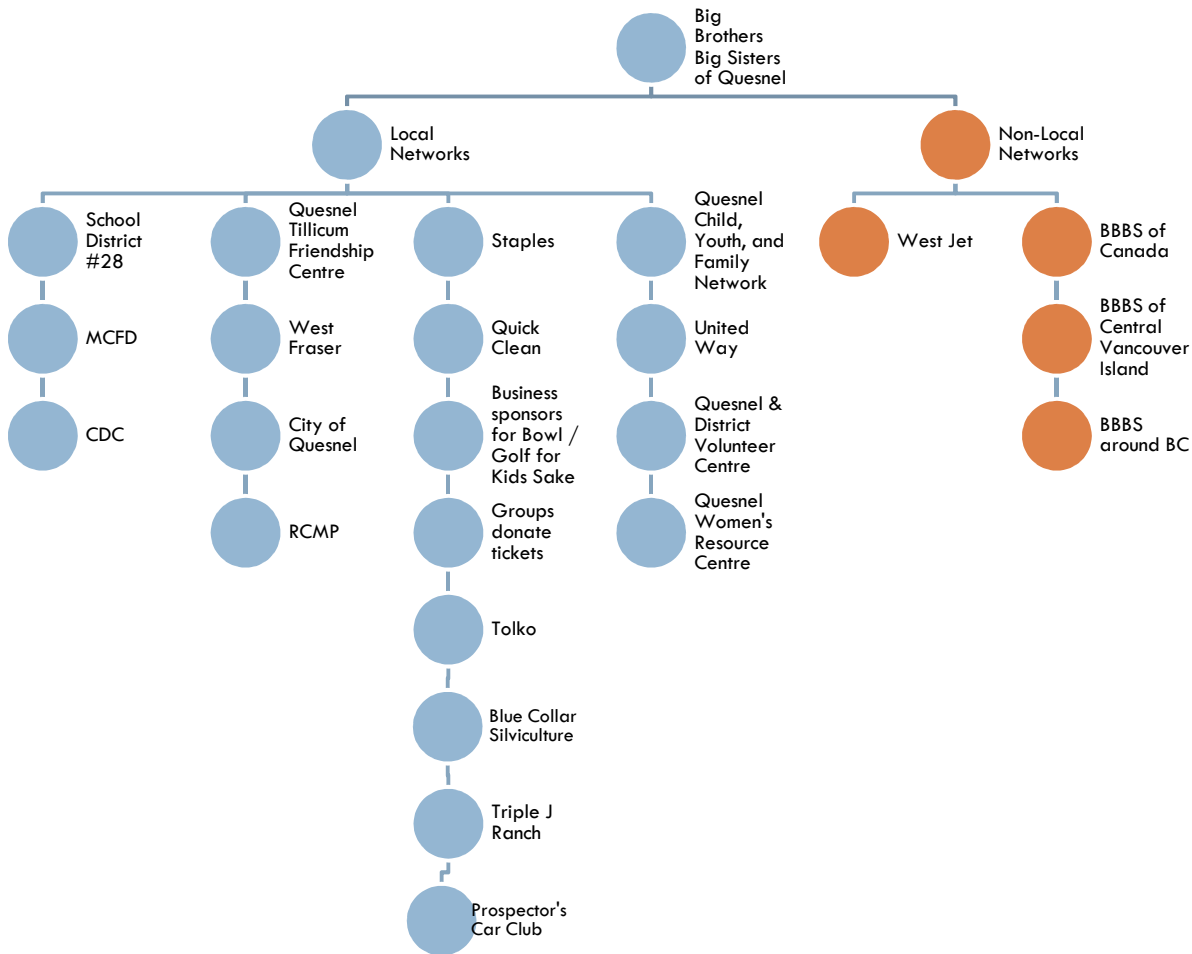
Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Quesnel has three staff, including an executive director, as well as a community team and school mentor coordinator. There are currently about 50-52 in-school teen mentors, 5 in-school adult mentors, and about 22 big brothers and big sisters. The activities of BBBS are also guided by 8 board members who come from a cross section of sectors in the community, such as the school district, the Ministry of Children and Family Development, the Quesnel Tillicum Native Friendship Centre, the City of Quesnel, RCMP, the Child Development Centre, and West Fraser.

Over the years, BBBS has developed a range of partnerships with groups both within and outside of the community, including:

- School District #28 (to support the placement of in-school mentors with selected students);
- Staples (donated office equipment and participation in the Stock the Lockers program to provide school supplies or gift certificates to low-income families);
- Sponsorship for the Bowl for Kids Sake;
- Sponsorship for the Golf for Kids Sake;
- Tickets for community events (i.e. tickets for children’s concerts / music concerts have been donated and distributed to volunteers);
- Donation of hockey tickets for volunteers;
- Quick Clean (coordinating the donation of winter coats for kids);
- Tolko / Blue Collar (donation of trees and equipment for BBBS kids to plant during a barbeque);
- Triple J Poker Ride (fundraiser held at the ranch);
- Prospector’s Car Club (fundraising dinner and show and shine event);
- BBBS Central Vancouver Island (sharing advice / expertise); and
- West Jet (donation of airline tickets to support fundraising initiatives).

Community relationships and networks have helped BBBS initiatives in a number of ways. Developing strong relationships with the Native Friendship Centre, for example, has helped to nurture broader community buy-in and support for BBBS programs. Over the last 20 years, there has been a higher proportion of Aboriginal youth participating in BBBS programs. Over the years, BBBS has also developed a respected reputation in the community. There are many agencies making referrals to BBBS. Board members also have a range of networks throughout the community and have taken an active role in fundraising initiatives.

Figure 1: Networks of Big Brothers Big Sisters



Broader networks outside of the community have also enhanced BBBS initiatives. BBBS of Quesnel has obtained advice concerning funding applications and has shared lessons about programs with other BBBS around the province. Furthermore, West Jet has been a corporate sponsor of BBBS at a national level by donating airline tickets to the national organization. Every BBBS agency in Canada receives tickets. These airline tickets are then raffled within the community.

Staff and volunteers obtain a lot of enjoyment from their involvement in BBBS programs. There is a lot of satisfaction to match kids in need with provided supports. The students participating in the mentoring programs look forward to their mentor visits each week. The

activities of the mentors and kids are also very visible in the community. This visibility has led to positive feedback from teachers, the school district, and other members of the community.

## DUNROVIN & HOSPICE PALLIATIVE CARE

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### **Origins**

Located in the downtown core of Quesnel, Dunrovin is a long-term care facility that was originally developed by volunteers with the Royal Canadian Legion.

#### *Early Stages of Development*

During the early stages of development at Dunrovin, the Legion took the lead with fundraising, acquiring architectural plans, and completing the construction of the facility. West Fraser also played a key role by providing wood for the project. There have been a number of expansions and additions to the facility over the years. The first expansion took place in the early 1980s. All planning for various expansion activities took place in the boardroom at Dunrovin.

#### *Implementation*

Volunteers were responsible for a range of operational tasks at Dunrovin, including:

- Board meetings to address the needs of residents,
- Negotiating union contracts for staff, and
- Buying books and other supplies for residents.

While the Legion operated the facility in the early years, facility operations were eventually assumed by the Northern Health Authority.

#### *Challenges*

During the early years of operation at Dunrovin, the key challenge concerned the need to negotiate a union contract for staff in Victoria. With attention to wages and a new pension, the union contract was successfully negotiated.

### **New Beginnings**

A key addition that was made to the Dunrovin facility was the hospice / palliative care unit. This helped to address a key infrastructure and service need in the community. Prior to the development of this facility, many people passed away in the acute care unit at the hospital.

#### *Early Stages of Development*

Ten years ago, Linda Ledoux, the Rotary Club President recommended that the club embark on a five year funding project to raise funding to develop a free-standing hospice facility. The goal was to raise \$20,000 per year for five years for a total contribution of \$100,000. In the early stages of development, two key concerns were raised. First, there were some concerns about committing future club presidents to the project. Since the Rotary has a mandate to serve a broad range of residents, there were also concerns about pursuing a project that

focused on the perceived needs of the elderly. After visiting and speaking with Donalda Kennedy, Executive Director of the Prince George Hospice to learn more about hospice / palliative care services, the Rotary decided to pursue this as a key project for the organization.

The formation of a strong palliative care association that was guided by a board of directors further motivated the Rotary Club to become involved. Two individuals with the Quesnel and District Palliative Care Association were particularly driven to advocate for end of life care in Quesnel, including Carol Weremy (retired RN) and Sally Service (past-president). Other key personnel included Ron Paull, Co-chair and Diana McColl, Executive Director. Michael McMillan played a key role on behalf of Northern Health.

There were several tasks completed during the early stages of planning and development, including:

- Conversations with Northern Health about the need for hospice / palliative care,
- Exploring the viability of a free-standing hospice facility,
- Exploring opportunities to connect a hospice facility with Northern Health's infrastructure and health care operations,
- Researching hospice operations in other communities,
- Fundraising (\$100,000 or 10% of total costs by Rotary),
- Negotiating an agreement with the City of Quesnel to obtain land,
- Hiring a clerk of the works to oversee the development of architectural plans and construction,
- Obtaining furniture (i.e. grandfather clock, electric fireplace, kitchen wares, household furniture, etc.) to ensure the interior of the facility resembled a home environment, and
- Promoting awareness of the hospice / palliative care project.

Planning activities were conducted in the hospital board room. After five years of fundraising, the hospice / palliative care unit was built and has been in operation for about four years.

The original vision of developing a free-standing hospice facility changed as a result of the planning process with Northern Health. Furthermore, while there was an original vision to acquire six to ten hospice beds, the final facility consisted of three beds with dedicated hospice / palliative care staff. Northern Health recommended creating space for three respite care beds that could be converted to hospice beds if demand increased in the future. In the end, the essential hospice infrastructure and services were put in place, but at a smaller scale and there is a general sense that they get more "bang for their buck" with hospice beds being part of Dunrovin.

### *Implementation*

Once the hospice / palliative care unit was completed, several agreements were put in place to support ongoing operations. For example, an agreement was negotiated between the Quesnel and District Hospice Palliative Care Association and Northern Health concerning staffing, the number of beds, and a communication protocol to address issues of privacy. An agreement was also negotiated between the Rotary Club and the hospice / palliative care association to recognize the Rotary's financial contribution. Carol Weremy, Sally Service, and Diane McColl



were instrumental in negotiating these agreements on behalf of the Quesnel and District Hospice Palliative Care Association. Once the hospice / palliative care unit was completed at Dunrovin, there was no longer a formal connection with the Rotary Club.

The Quesnel and District Hospice Palliative Care Association continues to engage in several tasks to deliver the hospice / palliative care programs, including:

- Developing a grief support group,
- Ongoing fundraising initiatives, and
- Investing funds in programs and day-to-day supplies needed for the hospice / palliative care unit.

### *Impact*

Long-term care and hospice / palliative care services at Dunrovin have addressed supports needed for an aging population in the community. In fact, it has become a key asset that is rarely available in small communities. It is not unusual for residents to approach people involved in the project to express their appreciation for their efforts. These initiatives, however, have also had a significant emotional impact on many members in the community. Stakeholders we spoke with discussed the passion, for example, that the former executive director, Diana McColl had for end-of-life care. She bequeathed her home to the hospice project and became a palliative patient herself before passing away from cancer. This commitment inspired others to join the Quesnel and District Hospice Palliative Care Association. Others who have been involved in the fundraising, construction, and operations of the project have also had family members become residents of the facility.

Quesnel has also benefitted from a vibrant hospice / palliative care association. The commitment and dedication that members have had towards the development and ongoing operations of the project is credited with ensuring that it continues to be staffed with professional palliative care practitioners in a secure, home environment. The Quesnel and District Hospice Palliative Care Association also benefitted from considerable in-house expertise. Carol Weremy, for example, is a retired registered nurse and past-president of the BC Palliative Care Association. As a result of Carol's training and experience with palliative care, they were able to make appropriate decisions throughout the design and construction process.

The project also received good media exposure due to the Rotary Club's involvement in fundraising over the five year period. This routine media exposure and visibility within the community helped to encourage other service clubs, residents, local government, families, and corporations to contribute to the hospice / palliative care unit.

### *Challenge*

Even though many stakeholders felt that the community fully embraced the project, there were still a number of challenges that needed to be addressed. A key challenge during the planning and construction of the hospice / palliative care facility concerned limited access to land. Northern Health attempted to purchase surrounding properties to support the addition of the hospice / palliative care unit. However, one property owner was requesting a higher price,

despite being offered moving expenses and above market value for the home. The problem was solved when the city closed the end of St. Laurent Avenue to provide the extra land needed for the facility. In exchange, Northern Health agreed to relocate some tennis courts to West Fraser Timber Park.

A second challenge concerned acquiring enough funding to support the construction of the hospice / palliative care unit. Addressing funding issues became easier as more people embraced the project in the community. Each year, the annual fundraiser became bigger. Even though the hospice unit has been completed, the fundraising continues and has been invested into delivering programs and obtaining more furniture and equipment to make the units more home-friendly. This has included attention to obtaining computer access, flat screen televisions, DVD players, comfortable furniture, a grandfather clock, fireplace, and local art.

There continue to be ongoing concerns about the financial impact that hospice / palliative care has on the patients and their families. Since hospice is part of a residential care facility, there is a per diem charge of \$30 per day. The Quesnel and District Hospice Palliative Care Association has been advocating that terminally ill hospice care patients should not be subject to the per diem charge.

It also took time to build trust and confidence amongst all of the partners. Given that so few hospice homes exist in small communities, Northern Health was not used to working with such a dedicated and committed hospice / palliative care association. Stakeholders felt that it took 2-3 years to build trust with Northern Health and to demonstrate that they were serious and committed to the project.

A final issue concerns donor recognition. While an agreement was negotiated to post a plaque recognizing the Rotary Club's contribution, the recognition has not been fulfilled. This is because the agreement conflicts with Northern Health policy that does not display corporate recognition in the Dunrovin facility.

### *Lessons*

Stakeholders identified a number of lessons they acquired throughout the process. These lessons included being aware of the pitfalls associated with various development options; streamlining working relationships with partners, such as Northern Health; and clearly promoting and demonstrating the need for the project to key partners, such as Northern Health, and throughout the community. However, stakeholders felt that they developed a good model to support the development of hospice / palliative care units that is supported by Northern Health and the Quesnel and District Palliative Care Association. They also have a separate grief support group.

### *Place Integration*

The Quesnel and District Hospice Palliative Care Association is supported by an executive director and board of directors. Over the years, there have been several partnerships formed

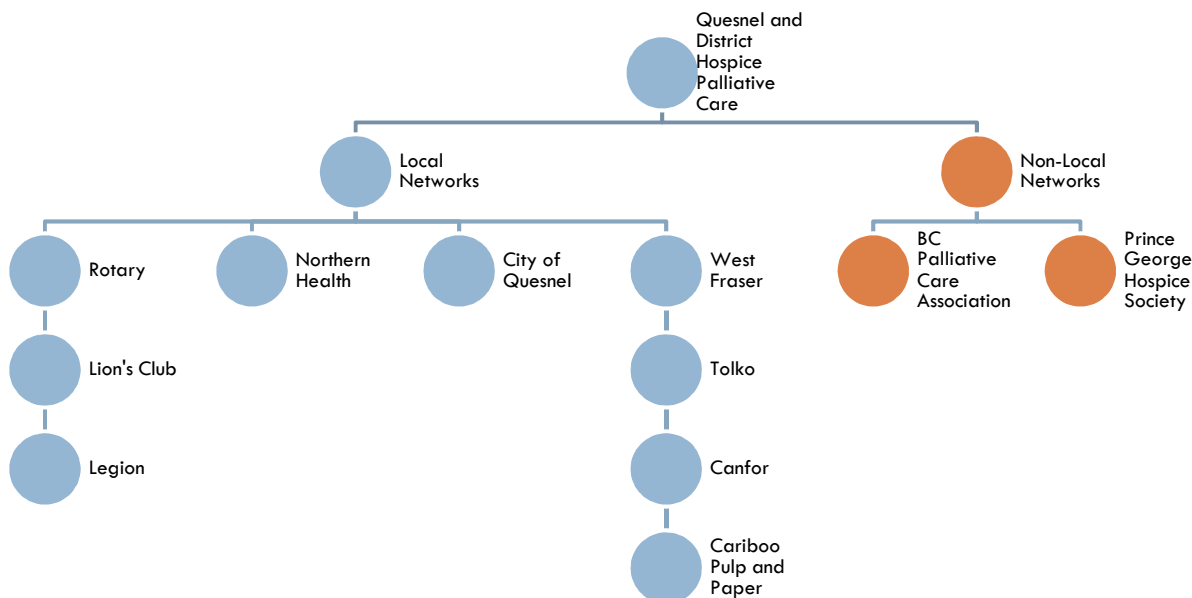
to support the development and operations of the hospice / palliative care unit. These partnerships include:

- West Fraser Mills (corporate donor),
- Tolko (corporate donor),
- Canfor (corporate donor),
- Cariboo Pulp and Paper (corporate donor),
- The Rotary Club (fundraising / donor),
- The Lion's club (fundraising / donor),
- Northern Health, and
- The City of Quesnel.

Many of the key people involved in the hospice / palliative care project had extensive community networks that they were able to draw upon to support the project. The relationship with Northern Health also helped to support the project; although, it took time to develop trust and confidence with Northern Health. By raising \$100,000, they were able to demonstrate that they were serious and committed to the project. They further strengthened their trust with Northern Health by working with the City of Quesnel to close St. Laurent Avenue in order to obtain the land needed to build the hospice / palliative care unit.

They were also able to develop a strong relationship with Prince George Hospice in order to obtain advice and a greater understanding of the hospice / palliative care concept. Carol Weremy's networks with the BC Palliative Care Association and experience with the health care system also helped to obtain the expertise needed to guide the project.

Figure 2: Networks of the Quesnel and District Hospice Palliative Care Association



Overall, stakeholders were very proud of their involvement in this initiative. For some, their dedication to the hospice / palliative care project led to several volunteer recognition awards

such as the Queen's Jubilee, lifetime achievement awards, and citizens of the year awards. Some have also received volunteer recognition awards from their perspective service clubs. Others are now benefitting from the services provided by the hospice / palliative care unit for their family members.

## FARMERS' MARKET

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### *Origins*

The Quesnel Farmer's Market was formed in the late 1980s to provide farmers with a venue to sell their crops. Prior to the development of the farmer's market, farmers would gift extra food from their farms or sell products, such as honey or vegetables, on the side of the road. The goal was to connect farmers and gardeners, assist them with the sale of their products, and develop a market that would function as a hub for the community.

### *Early Stages of Development*

In the early stages of development, five farming families formed a group of like-minded producers. Through the Department of Agriculture, the group was introduced to a man who was hired by the Government of Ontario to nurture the expansion of farmers' markets. Following this success, he was hired by the federal government to travel across Canada to communities, such as Quesnel, to share information about how to successfully develop a farmer's market. This allowed the Quesnel Farmer's Market to obtain information about the types of rules and regulations that they needed to have in place.

There were many farmers involved in the early stages of developing and implementing the farmer's market, including Rob Borsato, Cathie Allen, Shirley and Les Gardner, Murrey Boal, Janet Allen, Patty Dougherty, Bruce Brigdon, Laurey and Penny Currie, and Maggie and Paul Dumais.

Throughout the early stages of development, key tasks that were completed by volunteers involved:

- Forming a society called the Cariboo Agricultural Producers Association (also known as Harvest),
- Adopting appropriate rules and regulations,
- Obtaining grants (i.e. through CCBAC, Western Diversification),
- Finding appropriate locations for the market,
- Developing relationships with the municipal government,
- Obtaining assistance from local government staff to apply for funding, and
- Promoting the farmer's market.

Most planning activities took place during the winter months when farmers had more time. Meeting space at the recreation centre, as well as the local agricultural office, was used to support early planning activities. Early planning activities were also conducted through the Internet and annual general meetings. Brochures, banners, and signs were stored at volunteer's homes.

## *Implementation*

The Quesnel Farmer's Market began by promoting the market through the Bargain Hunter, radio, and newspaper. Flyers were also created to promote a tour of all of the farms in the area.

There were a range of ongoing tasks that were required to support the farmer's market, including:

- Advertising and promotion,
- Obtaining banners,
- Continuing to maintain their relationship with the City of Quesnel,
- Finding new locations for the market as needed,
- Developing new appropriate rules and regulations,
- Pursuing grants to support investments in infrastructure, storage space, a washing station, and other equipment,
- Ensuring the farmer's market is wheelchair accessible,
- Educating vendors on how to make their booths customer-friendly and accessible,
- Developing a stage and purchasing a PA system to support entertainment at the market,
- Providing an honorarium for performers (\$50 for a single performer, \$100 for two performers),
- Installing a mural,
- Ensuring hydro power was available,
- Developing a junior business program for young vendors to sell tea, coffee, and snacks,
- Completing an annual review of policies and regulations,
- Organizing an annual general meeting,
- Communicating emerging issues to all members by e-mail, and
- Expanding the number of market days each year.

Initially, the farmer's market was located in the downtown core on the property currently occupied by the seniors' centre. After the property was sold to develop the seniors' centre, the farmer's market moved. Over the years, the farmer's market has occupied many spaces around the community, including the laundry mat parking lot, the old college, space in front of the curling rink and the old library, and the Legion parking lot. While there have been many discussions over the years about locating the farmer's market at West Fraser Timber Park, West Quesnel Baker's Creek, Alex Fraser Park, or even Maple Park Mall, they have moved their operations to the current location at Helen Dixon after receiving an invitation from the school district. Many tasks are also completed as members interact on-line. This also allows the manager and the executive to share information to their broad membership efficiently.

There have been a number of changes to the programs and policies of the farmer's market over the years. For example, with no major fruit producers in the area, the farmer's market has allowed producers from the Okanagan to sell fruit at the market. This is an important exception as the key farmer's market policy is to provide a venue for local producers.

Due to increasing insurance rates, each member is required to be a member of the Harvest Association in order to be covered under their umbrella insurance policy. Annual membership

fees are ten dollars. The size of the booths and the booth rental rates have increased. It currently costs \$17 to rent a booth each Saturday.

Music has also played a more important role in the market. Looking forward, the farmer's market may explore opportunities for other community organizations to use the stage throughout the week. Due to health and safety concerns, the farmer's market no longer allows dogs. Furthermore, due to space constraints, vendors are no longer allowed to park their vehicle next to their booth.

### *Impact*

As the farmer's market developed slowly, the community impacts were more gradual. Over the years, there have been more people visiting the market. The farmer's market has become a social hub to nurture interaction amongst seniors, families, and youth. There are more people enjoying the entertainment.

Vendors have also noticed more repeat customers. Their business is also growing by how much each customer is purchasing at the market. There is a general sense that residents appreciate fresh local produce more. The market has also allowed farmers to test new products with limited risk. Other vendors have obtained new business opportunities as a result of their involvement with the farmer's market. For example, one vendor who sold bread has expanded and provides goods to other suppliers and wholesalers. The farmer's market has also provided an opportunity for some local business owners to renew their business. The bakery, for example, had experienced a decline in business. After participating in the farmer's market for four weeks, they were able to renew their customer base. The bakery has also become more engaged in the community by providing a lot of support for cancer. Some restaurants in town have also sold food at the farmer's market. Through their junior business program, the farmer's market has also provided opportunities for young entrepreneurs. Musicians who have played at the market have obtained jobs at other events around the community, such as playing for events organized by the Downtown Business Association.

The farmer's market has provided opportunities for other local organizations to promote community development initiatives. For example, the multi-centre committee occupied a table at the market to provide information and broaden their support for the new multi-centre complex. The farmer's market has also formed a partnership with other social service agencies to deliver the farmer's market coupon and nutrition program. The City of Quesnel also asked the farmer's market to hold a special market day during a visit by the judges for the Communities in Bloom competition. Quesnel would go on to win the Communities in Bloom award for towns with a population of approximately 10,000.

### *Challenges*

Throughout its development, the farmer's market has encountered various challenges. The first key challenge concerned obtaining a suitable location for the farmer's market. After the property of the first location was sold, other locations were found to be too isolated, small, dusty, or bumpy. Some locations consisted of gravel parking lots that were not accessible to people with baby carriages or wheelchairs.



While disagreements about the selected location have created division within the membership over the years, the current location has been well received due to its central downtown location. Furthermore, by moving to their new location, they were able to obtain funding to support infrastructure investments at the Helen Dixon location.

Another challenge was attracting and retaining enough farmers to support the market. Over the years, they have lost farmers due to health issues, while others have moved away from the region. The farmer's market has been working to recruit and mentor new farmers in the area. In addition to sponsoring workshops and sharing information, they have also been working with the school district to expand the agricultural program.

There have also been communication and operational challenges over the years. There were concerns expressed when the City tried to impose new recommendations that they felt were good for the market. There were also early concerns expressed with Northern Health regulations that required nutritional content to be clearly displayed on products at the farmer's market. The regulations required vendors to label products as low versus high risk. With limited funding, time, equipment, and expertise, many members of the farmer's market expressed concerns about the difficulty associated with measuring sugar, acidity, and other nutritional factors. Farmers would also need to assume additional costs to send samples to be tested in a lab in Prince Rupert. There is also a costly and lengthy process that must be followed in order to sell meat in the market. Meat can no longer be processed on the farm. Instead, the meat must be processed under the scrutiny of inspectors in Williams Lake or Prince George. The additional costs for gas and processing impede the ability of small producers to remain competitive. Due to information provided by the NHA staff member, there were also concerns that the farmer's market could be sued over any health incidents. However, it is the responsibility of each vendor to maintain all of their certifications and adhere to the regulations outlined by Northern Health. Unfortunately, the Northern Health staff representative did not work Saturdays, and so was unavailable to meet with members to discuss concerns. The NHA staff representative now attends the farmer's market every Saturday to enforce new regulations.

Insurance costs have also doubled over recent years. The Association of Farmers' Markets of BC is their main insurance provider. As a result, all vendors are required to be members of Harvest in order to be covered under their umbrella insurance policy. Their ten dollar membership fee covers half of the insurance costs.

In terms of human resources, there has been a lack of volunteers. Moving forward, the farmer's market may consider forming a "friends of the market" or a committee to support special events. In other cases, several people have offered to help with various things around the market. However, with limited knowledge, some volunteers can cause more problems that consume more time and impact the longevity of the equipment. Even though the Downtown Business Association would like the farmer's market to become active and engaged members, many farmers and members simply lack the time to be involved. Furthermore, there can be challenges responding to the different needs of various vendors. In response, the farmer's market has been flexible to interpret and apply regulations to address members' needs. The



board of directors also works closely with the farmer's market manager to troubleshoot any issues.

### *Lessons*

There have been a variety of lessons learned throughout the experiences of those involved with the farmer's market. To start, vendors have a better understanding of how much they need to grow in order to meet local demand and reduce waste. They have also learned more about the types of products that people want. While they originally thought that people wanted niche products, the key demand has been for produce such as carrots, potatoes, beets, onions, and other meats and produce. Over the years, the farmer's market has also tried to simplify and eliminate any unnecessary rules and regulations. While the farmer's market tries not to exclude anyone from participating in the farmer's market, an exception is the exclusion of out-of-town vendors who are selling something that is already being produced by a local vendor. At the same time, however, they have learned that inviting a larger producer can benefit other vendors as they can attract more customers to the market.

To further maintain the goals of the farmer's market, they have maintained the policy that vendors should bring homemade produce and products. They have also maintained the original purpose of the market, which is to provide a venue for local farmers and vendors to sell their products. They have also learned lessons from other farmer's markets, including the importance of allowing each vendor to set their own prices. As they respond to the needs of vendors, partners, and various government departments, they have also a better appreciation of the diplomacy that is involved to engage with various stakeholders.

The farmer's market also learned some important lessons from other community organizations that informed investments in their own infrastructure. For example, they felt that the stage of the Downtown Business Association was too small and too low to be viewed by various residents and visitors. Those lessons were applied when the farmer's market built their own stage.

### *Place Integration*

The activities of the farmer's market are supported by a general manager, as well as a board consisting of 8-9 members, including three elected directors (president, vice-president, and secretary). They have also benefitted from the financial / banking expertise of one of their members to support the management of their operations. While there is a vote at each annual general meeting to elect a new executive, there has been little turnover in key executive positions. Over the years, there has been some pressure to change the direction of the farmers' market towards a flea / craft market; however, by ensuring that most of the board members are farmers, they have been able to maintain the original purpose and goals of the organization.

The farmer's market has formed many partnerships over the years, including:

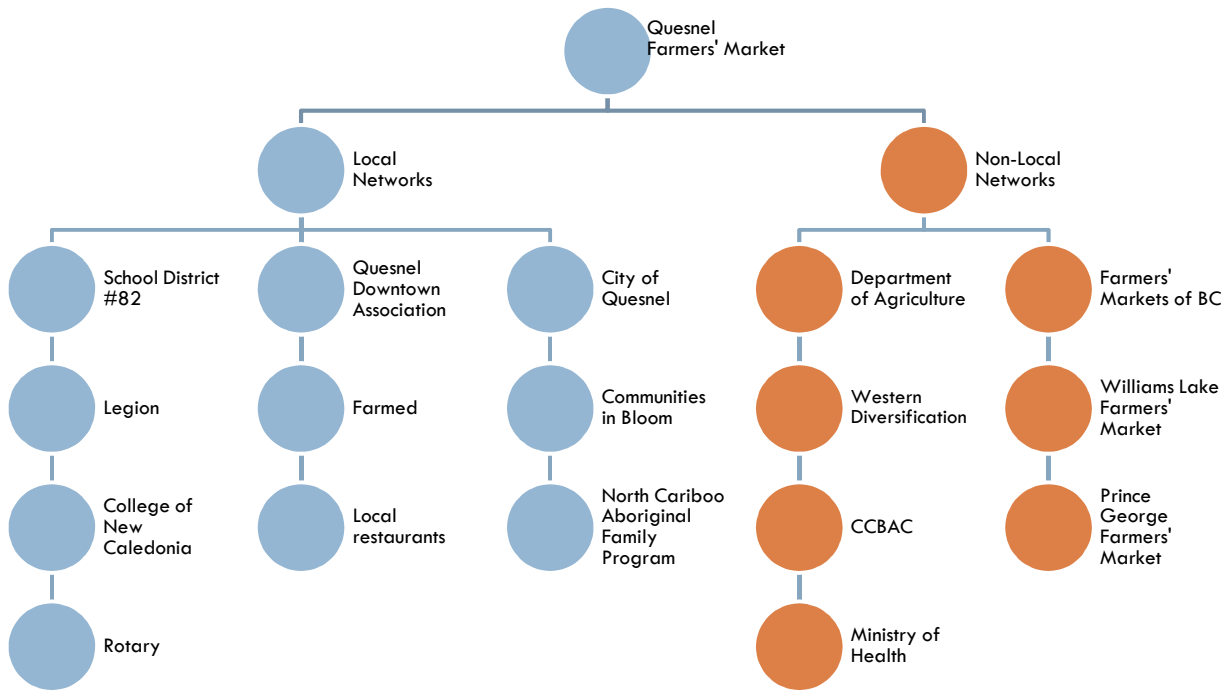
- The City of Quesnel (support with location, applying for grants),
- The Legion (location),
- Rotary (funding),

- Quesnel Downtown Association,
- Local restaurants / businesses,
- Communities in Bloom,
- Farmed (agricultural group),
- North Cariboo Aboriginal Family Program (coupon and nutrition program),
- School District #82 / Helen Dixon (location),
- The College of New Caledonia (location),
- Western Diversification (funding),
- CCBAC (funding),
- Department of Agriculture,
- BC Ministry of Health (coupon program)
- Farmers' Markets of BC (insurance).

Through their partnerships and relationships with community groups, the farmer's market has been able to find locations to support the market over the years. Advice has also been obtained from local government staff in order to apply for funding. In order to nurture the development of the farming community, the farmer's market has worked with the school district to expand and maintain their agricultural program. Social supports have been expanded in the community as a result of the partnership between the North Cariboo Aboriginal Family Program and the farmers' market to deliver the coupon and nutrition program. They have also worked with local restaurants and businesses to showcase their products and renew their client base.

Through their relationships with agencies and organizations in other communities, the farmer's market obtained advice about appropriate regulations and funding needed to form and support the operations of the market. This support was more readily available in the early stages of development when the Department of Agriculture operated district extension offices. By interacting with members of nearby farmer's markets in Williams Lake and Prince George, they have also obtained advice that has informed their policies and operations. They have also been able to work with the Farmers' Markets of BC to obtain affordable insurance coverage for its members. They have also been able to successfully apply for grants, including \$150,000 in federal / provincial government grants that targeted communities impacted by mill closures and the Mountain Pine Beetle Epidemic. Northern Health regulations, however, have created additional pressures for vendors that have limited financial resources to invest in equipment and testing to respond to new nutrition labeling requirements.

Figure 3: Networks of the Quesnel Farmers' Market



Through their involvement in the farmer's market over the years, many members have become attached to the customers and other vendors. Their continued engagement and investment of long hours is also strongly influenced by their invested interest in the success of the market. For many, the farmer's market provides a large portion of their income.

## QUESNEL INDOOR SPORTS CENTRE

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### *Origins*

Many parents have become involved with the Quesnel Youth Soccer Association to provide recreational opportunities for their children. In Quesnel, there was an interest to expand these opportunities throughout the year by creating facilities to support a winter soccer league and to enhance the soccer skills program. In the past, youth would play soccer in local school gyms. With a designated year round facility, the goal was to raise the profile of soccer in the community, to improve the skill level of kids playing soccer, and to provide more opportunities for them to be involved in soccer events on a regional basis. The indoor soccer facility could also support other year round sporting activities and events. The Indoor Soccer Fields were completed in 2006.

### *Early Stages of Development*

The opportunity to develop the indoor soccer fields emerged under the leadership of Paulette Smith, former President of the QYSA and Roy Joseffe. Paulette's father was a MLA. While some local fundraising occurred for the \$3 million project, a significant part of their fundraising strategy for the indoor soccer fields was to acquire \$2 million from the provincial government as a legacy contribution to the former MLA. This would provide approximately two-thirds of the total funds needed for the project. The QYSA lobbied the local government for the additional \$1 million to complete the facility. BC Soccer also provided some support and guidance for the project.

During the early stages of development, key tasks included:

- Creating a business plan;
- Community fundraising initiatives;
- Pursuing local and provincial government funding; and
- The development of an agreement between the City of Quesnel and QYSA to outline tasks and responsibilities concerning the use, maintenance, and rental opportunities for the building.

At just under \$1 million, the local government's contribution only required the development of a five year borrowing plan. This financing arrangement is different from larger infrastructure investment projects (i.e. the multi-use centre). With higher costs, other projects often require a borrowing plan that extends beyond five years; thereby, requiring a municipal referendum. Early planning activities were conducted at QYSA's office facilities at Helen Dixon.

### *Implementation*

Typically, soccer fields are managed by local government recreation departments and used by community groups. Recreational facilities, however, can generate considerable costs for local governments. Once the indoor soccer facility was completed, the City of Quesnel leased the building to QYSA for 20 years. The facility was originally operated out of an office at the indoor

soccer facility with paid staff. Within a few years, however, the facility had more expenses than revenue. The QYSA board adjusted its operations by switching from paid staff to mostly volunteers in order to become financially sustainable. The transition from paid staff to mostly volunteers, however, has increased the breadth of responsibilities for volunteers.

Ongoing operations consist of a number of tasks that include:

- Producing newspaper and radio advertisements to promote the new facility,
- Hiring a program coordinator,
- Providing severances to former paid staff,
- Hiring a janitor,
- Hiring maintenance staff,
- Maintaining and operating the indoor turf field,
- Maintaining the building (replacing lights, paying utilities),
- Maintaining the outdoor field (mowing the lawn, irrigating the lawn),
- Pursuing funding and sponsorships (i.e. annual gaming grant, Rotary Club support, etc.),
- Obtaining a \$70,000 subsidy from the City of Quesnel to manage and operate the facility,
- Obtaining quotes for shrubs and signs,
- Processing registrations and registration fees,
- Processing facility rentals to other community groups,
- Making schedules,
- Recruiting volunteer coaches,
- Coaching soccer,
- Developing a skills program to raise the caliber of youth talent,
- Developing the rep soccer – Cariboo League (includes 100 Mile House, Williams Lake, Quesnel, and Prince George), and
- Providing presentations and reports to council.

The perceived purpose of the facility has also changed over time. The indoor soccer facility was originally envisioned as a regional development centre. As a result, it developed into a bigger, more expensive operation than it was able to support with generated revenue. At one point, the facility was equipped with paid coaches. The intention was to attract quality coaching staff in order to attract youth from around northern BC and promote the facility as a regional development centre for soccer.

The City of Quesnel has an agreement with the QYSA to allow other community groups to access the facility when it is not being used for soccer. As such, the indoor soccer facility has been used for cricket and a range of other sporting activities and events. It has also been used for birthday parties, private parties, and by walking groups. Under their operating agreement, QYSA retains any revenue generated from renting the facility. This provides an incentive for the organization to rent out and maximize the use of the indoor soccer facility.

### *Impact*

The Quesnel Indoor Sports Complex has had a positive impact on the community. With strong registration rates, the facility has been well utilized by the QYSA for tiny tots soccer, youth soccer, adult mixed soccer leagues, and seniors' soccer. It has also provided many sports and community organizations with a facility that can be utilized year round. The space has been used by cricket teams, lacrosse, baseball, the Special Olympics, home school groups, Correlieu Secondary School, Quesnel Secondary School, and various birthday parties. The walking track is also well used during the mornings from November to April by seniors and other residents in the community. As such, it has provided people with more opportunities to be active throughout the year. As QYSA operates the facility with a mixture of paid and voluntary resources, the City has also acquired savings in its municipal budget. The indoor sports complex has also attracted users from other places, such as soccer teams from Prince George. There have also been opportunities to put on soccer schools in the facility.

### *Challenges*

The Quesnel Indoor Sports Complex has addressed a number of important challenges in order to improve the viability of its operations. The facility was originally operated with mostly paid staff, including maintenance and customer service staff. This approach, however, proved to be too costly for the revenues generated by the facility. There was also a general sense that the original business plan may have been too optimistic. While new programs were developed to generate revenue, program operational costs deepened the organization's financial pressures. There were efforts to increase revenues through selling advertising space and building bricks for the facility. There were also efforts to explore the revenue potential for hosting concerts and other entertainment events; however, these events would consume additional resources for promotion and event staff. As a result, the QYSA board decided to move from a paid staff operation to a primarily volunteer operated facility. As the staff complement went from 5-6 employees to 1.5 employees, their staffing costs were reduced by almost 80% from \$250,000 to \$40,000 over a two year period. This meant that a number of duties formerly delivered through paid staff were now done by volunteers. Volunteers are also now responsible for organizing the Cariboo League. During this transition period, board members also assumed a lot of coaching duties, pursuing sponsorships, and recruiting volunteers. These changes resulted in a shift from a revenue-oriented approach to operations to a cost-oriented approach to operations.

Following this shift in human resources, it was difficult for the community to adjust their expectations as they expected the same services to be provided by volunteers. It has also been challenging to recruit volunteers to take on operational duties as people have come to expect that such tasks were done by paid personnel, even after many paid staff were laid off from the organization. More individuals, however, are becoming aware of the new role that volunteers have to support the facility's operations and are becoming more open to volunteering.

Given the expanded responsibilities assigned to volunteers, there have been emerging concerns about volunteer burnout. In recent years, there has also been a decline in volunteers. Local stakeholders offered two general explanations for the decline. First, with a

decline in the local youth population, there are fewer parents involved in youth activities such as soccer. Secondly, with many households consisting of two working parents, there is a general sense that parents would rather hire coaches than volunteer. As the QYSA's finances improved, a new coordinator was hired to reduce the workload of volunteers. The executive of the QYSA also changes frequently as new kids and parents become involved in soccer.

There have also been challenges with a decline in registration, last minute registration for programs, scheduling conflicts across different community groups, and limited use of the facility during summer / holiday months. In the early stages of development, there was an expectation that sporting organizations would want to operate their programs year round. However, some outdoor sporting groups preferred to operate programs within a short-specified season. Groups that wish to provide year round programs must also compete with winter sports such as hockey and skiing. Some groups were also not used to having to pay a fee to use a field. Rental rates were also considered to be too high for some organizations and school budgets.

### *Lessons*

Stakeholders involved in the Quesnel Indoor Sports Centre spoke about a number of lessons that they have learned throughout the process. The first set of lessons focused on financial management. In the early stages of development, the club was able to carefully manage construction costs of the main facility that they were able to acquire enough additional funds to complete a club house. A second key lesson is that while it is important to pursue revenue streams, it is equally important to monitoring ongoing costs to generate that revenue and related organizational activities. In terms of communication, there also needs to be broader awareness of the work that volunteers do within the community. This includes specific attention to improving the communication of the voluntary nature of their operations with a broader range of local leaders and city staff.

### *Place Integration*

The QYSA draws upon a range of human resources to support the operations of the Quesnel Indoor Sports Centre. This includes a ten member board of volunteers, as well as a five member executive that consists of a president, vice-president, treasurer, director of referees, and secretary. Paid staff support coordination, field maintenance, and janitorial duties.

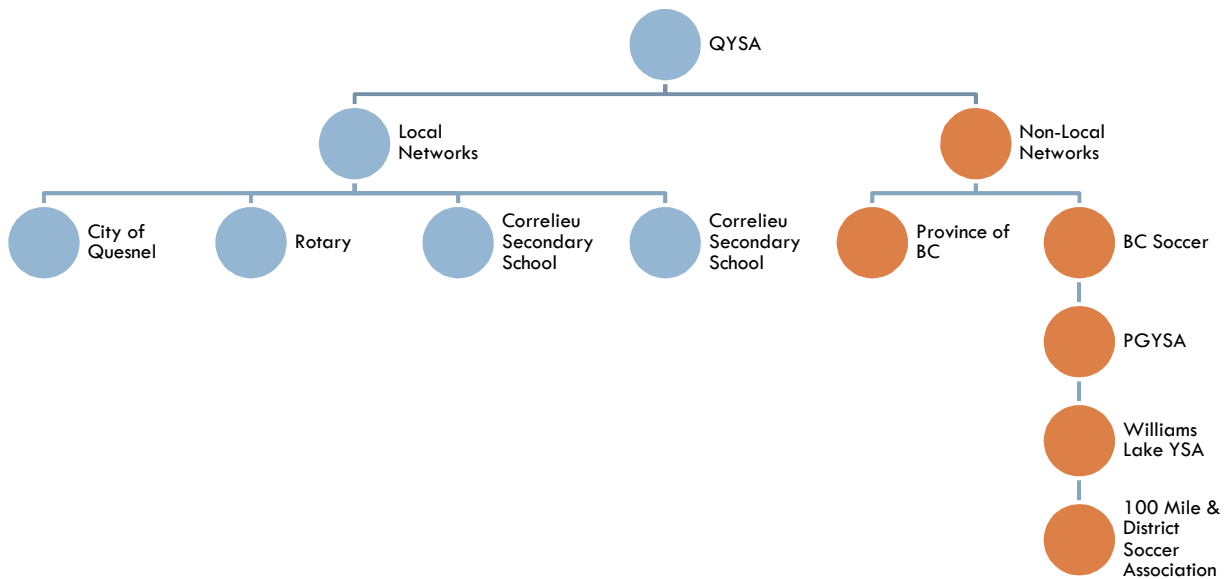
The QYSA was able to develop a range of partnerships to support the development of the facility and programs, including:

- The provincial government (funding),
- The local government (funding),
- Correlieu Secondary School,
- BC Soccer (funding),
- Rotary Club,
- Quesnel Community Foundation (funding), and
- Some corporate sponsors.



Relationships with community groups have supported the QYSA's initiatives in a number of ways. First, the new coordinator has been able to successfully develop a good rapport with a range of individuals and groups in the community. This good rapport has made communication and negotiation with a range of stakeholders easier. For example, while facility costs were high for school budgets, they were able to negotiate a more acceptable fee. Their interaction with other community groups to identify their needs has also improved operations. There was a general sense, however, that better coordination was needed to schedule activities across community groups. Scheduling conflicts between soccer programs and other youth activities, for example, have hindered participation. The QYSA has also benefitted from a mutually beneficial partnership with the City of Quesnel. While the City provides the QYSA with an annual subsidy to operate the facility, the voluntary nature of the QYSA's operations has also been credited with saving the City money in lieu of unionized staff costs to operate such a facility.

Figure 4: Networks of the Quesnel Youth Soccer Association



Relationships with groups outside of the community have also been supportive. The provincial government provided funding for the construction of the indoor sports centre, as well as gaming grants to support ongoing operations. QYSA's relationship with BC Soccer was also credited with obtaining support for the construction of the facility. QYSA has also developed relationships with soccer teams around the region to support the use of the facility. This includes soccer teams from Prince George who commute to use the facility for training and practices, as well as teams from 100 Mile House to Prince George who compete in the Cariboo League. Quesnel's central location within the League's territory has beneficial to reduce the commuting time for various teams in the region. However, it has been difficult to encourage teams in more distant locations to participate in the league. Teams within the Cariboo League have also lent players to other teams in the region for tournaments around the province in order to enhance their competitiveness with teams in larger centres. As the QYSA



has marketed the facility to be utilized by sporting groups around the region, they have been able to acquire more funding to support this broader mandate.

Volunteering for the QYSA to maintain the indoor sports centre has been rewarding for many involved; although, it can be time consuming and increase stress for those involved. At times, volunteers can experience frustration when they encounter others who do not understand or appreciate the work conducted by volunteers.

## QUESNEL LION'S HOUSING SOCIETY

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### *Origins*

For several years, the Lion's Club benefitted from a growing membership. With the size and depth of experience within their membership, the club decided to pursue a significant project for the community. A community needs survey conducted by the Lion's Club indicated a need for affordable seniors' housing in Quesnel. Within their background research, they found that many seniors' incomes were not able to keep pace with the cost of living. As some residents became older and experienced challenges maintaining their property, however, there were also older residents who were not able to afford a smaller condo.

### *Early Stages of Development*

To pursue the development of seniors' housing, the Lion's Club decided to form a housing society. To do this, the club needed to obtain permission from the Lion's International (located in Chicago) to use the Lion's name in the new housing society. This process took two months to complete. By forming a housing society, the goal is to encourage other community members and organizations to become involved in order to obtain a more balanced perspective for the design and management of the project. During the early stages of development, many members of the Lion's Club, such as Mitchell Vik, Ron Silver, and Peter Nielsen, have been involved with this project. Planning activities have taken place at the end of general Lion's Club meetings, which are held twice a month at the Billy Barker Hotel.

Throughout the early stages of planning and development, the Lion's Club has paid attention to key issues raised in the city's affordable housing strategy, including proximity to support services, the hospital, and shopping.

Overall, the Lion's Club has pursued a range of tasks to support the planning and development of their seniors' housing project, including:

- The completion of a community needs survey;
- Forming a housing society;
- Drafting a constitution and bylaws for the housing society;
- Conducting raffles by donation at the farmers' market;
- Ruffling a spending spree for Save on Foods;
- Organizing a pub night;
- Raising funds through a monthly garage sale;
- Raising funds by organizing a Mother's Day pancake breakfast;
- Broadening community awareness about the seniors' housing project through newspaper ads, radio stories, and displaying a sign on the property;
- Obtaining seed funding from BC Housing;
- Pursuing funding from CMHC to write a business / feasibility plan;
- Drafting a grant application for NDIT;
- Obtaining letters of support from council to support grant applications;

- Applying for gaming grants;
- Approaching different businesses and individuals to obtain unique expertise and capacities;
- Drawing upon the experience and expertise of Lion's Club members (i.e. government, banking, business, etc.);
- Developing architectural plans;
- Assessing design needs for different types of units (i.e. single vs. couple);
- Assessing needs for general storage and heated storage for scooters; and
- Attending monthly meetings of other housing groups.

In October 2012, one member took the initiative to identify and purchase two lots in the downtown core for the housing project (located at Reid Street and McNaughton). In response, the Lion's Club is currently raising funds to make payments on the lot. They have also been working with the credit union to negotiate an affordable mortgage and have the mortgage transferred to the housing society. Since the land is currently zoned for 17 units, the Lion's Club has also been working with the City to rezone the land to accommodate a higher density development of 38 units (3 floors). While the Lion's Club Housing Society has not officially created a waiting list, there have been several residents calling to be added to one. The club anticipates that the project could take 2-5 years to complete.

To date, stakeholders have identified a few changes that have influenced the direction of the project. Due to the limited availability of land, the building and the number of units has become smaller than originally envisioned. In addition to bachelor units, the housing society is also now considering an option to install larger units for couples. Furthermore, the Lion's Club made a strategic decision to exclude the word "seniors" from the name of the housing society in order to better position themselves to pursue other forms of social housing in the future.

### *Impact*

Although the Quesnel Lion's Housing Society is in the early stages of project development, they have benefitted from strong support and a growing profile within the community. When the club organizes a pancake breakfast attended by 150 people, for example, it allows the club to make an impression on those 150 people. As a result, the membership in the Lion's Club has experienced an increase over the past year. With many individuals already requesting to be put on a waiting list, the society strongly feels that the project will have a positive impact to address affordable housing gaps for seniors in Quesnel.

The society also feels that the project has already experienced a number of successes through their fundraising and their ability to leverage the experience that their club members have in business management, banking, and government to support the planning and development of the housing project thus far. They have also expanded their working relationships with many other community stakeholders. For example, they have obtained advice from the City on how to work with neighbours and develop a rezoning application. One of the winner of their Save on Foods shopping spree contacted the club and offered to donate all the funds raised from her Cinnamon Bun Project to the club this year.

## *Challenges*

Throughout the early stages of development, the Quesnel Lion's Housing Society has encountered a number of challenges that needed to be addressed. The first challenge was that they were not successful to obtain donated land for the project. In response, one of the club members purchased some lots in the downtown area that will be transferred to the society.

The club has also had varying levels of success with different fundraising approaches. Their TV bingo with Shaw Cable was not successful due to technical difficulties. As a result, they cancelled their bingo license and have been working to obtain gaming grants instead. Another challenge concerns the amount of financing required to support not only the construction, but various aspects of the planning process. For example, funding is needed to pay for consulting and land surveying fees in order to complete a business plan and assess the viability of the project before approaching major donors and government partners.

There have also been challenges managing club member expectations. The process for fundraising and completing various tasks to develop the seniors' housing project has taken longer than anticipated. Some club members do not understand that the planning and extend of fundraising that is required for a significant project. In response, they have been working to promote awareness about the process and full breadth of tasks that must be completed in order to obtain significant government contributions to support the project. As the society works through various tasks, they are trying to be as open and transparent as possible in order to enhance the members' understanding about the process.

The Lion's Club has been renting space for their meetings at the Billy Barker Hotel. However, the hotel is expected to close in January to complete a major expansion. The club is currently looking for an alternative meeting space. Additional challenges that still need to be addressed include a lack of volunteers, particularly younger volunteers.

## *Key Lessons*

Even though the Quesnel Lion's Housing Society is in the early stages of project development, they have already acquired some very important lessons moving forward. Perhaps their most important lesson concerned instilling patience and awareness about the complex process associated with social housing developments. Well planned projects take time. Furthermore, a proper business plan must be in place in order to demonstrate accountability and the viability of the project to major financial partners.

Members also felt that a certain level of tenacity is needed to push through long-term projects. As one member told us, "It's called the school of hard knocks". It is also important to take stock and fully leverage the networks and expertise of your members in order to reduce the need for investing limited resources in outside expertise and consulting.

It is also important to ensure that all members are monitoring emerging and timely opportunities like the Lion's did when they purchased the property in the downtown core. At the same time, however, investing in developing multiple partnerships was deemed to be

essential for moving significant projects like this forward. This includes attention to developing relationships with key financial partners.

### *Place Integration*

The Quesnel Lion's Housing Society's activities are supported by a six member board of directors and a complement of 30 members. The executive consists of a president, vice-president, treasurer, secretary, and two directors. Several partnerships have also been formed to support the project, including:

- the Lion's Club International (program to conduct community needs survey),
- the Quesnel Lion's Club,
- Community Futures (advice),
- BC Housing (\$10,000 for feasibility study, providing financing and management advice),
- the Credit Union (assistance with project financing),
- Cinnamon Bun Project (funding),
- Save on Foods (food donations for pancake breakfast, discount for shopping spree), and
- the City of Quesnel (letters of support, advice on rezoning application process).

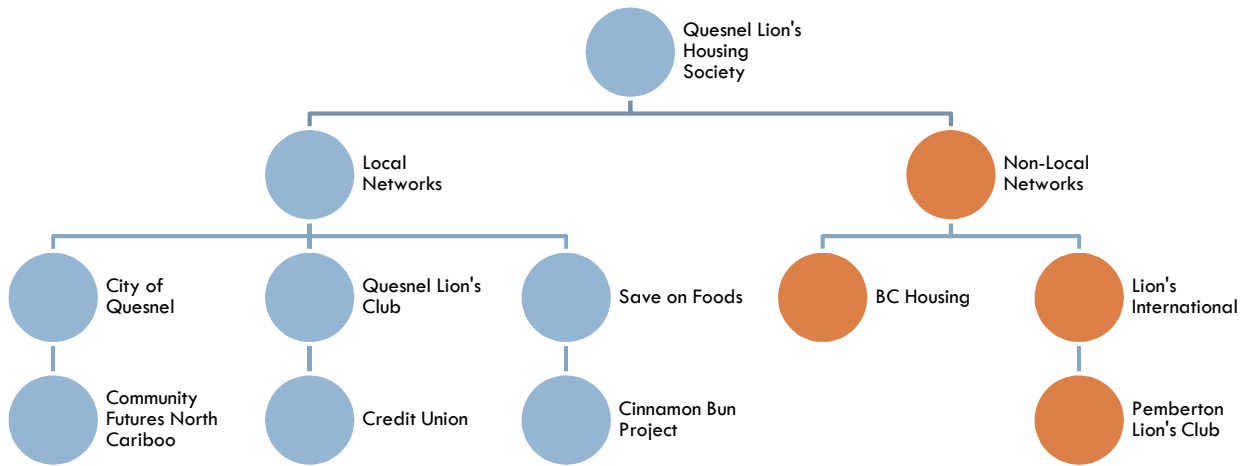
Throughout the planning process, their relationships with other community groups and stakeholders have helped the Quesnel Lion's Housing Society in a number of ways. They have received advice, for example, from the City of Quesnel about the rezoning application process, including how to keep the neighbourhood informed throughout the process. They have also received leads about, and letters of support for, potential funding opportunities from city staff and council. Some felt that this initiative has enhanced their existing relationships with other community groups and residents. Members have received offers from friends to assist with construction or provide access to equipment. People have donated items for their garage sales. Other service clubs have provided assistance with fundraising.

Since many Lion's members belong to other community groups, they have been able to draw upon a broader network for support. As noted earlier, the winner of the Save on Foods shopping spree also offered to donate all the funds raised from their Cinnamon Bun Project to the Quesnel Lion's Housing Society.

The society has also benefitted from the relationships and networks that they have been able to develop in other communities. For example, the Lion's International provided seed funding to complete a community needs survey. They also provided advice and examples of seniors' housing projects that could be used to guide the development of their project.

In addition to some seed funding to support a feasibility study, BC Housing has also provided advice and examples of successful seniors' housing development, such as those in Pemberton and Parksville. Club members have also visited seniors' housing facilities during trips to other communities in order to learn more about how they were designed and financed. In this case, the Lion's Club in Parksville has offered to provide any additional advice needed throughout the project.

Figure 5: Networks of the Quesnel Lion's Housing Society



Those who have been involved during the early stages of the seniors' housing project have had a positive experience. There is a general sense that a giving attitude through volunteering is contagious. For others, they have enjoyed the opportunity to remain busy and engaged in the community.

## NORTH CARIBOO MULTI-CENTRE

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### *Origins*

The Quesnel Multi-Centre Committee was formed to address aging infrastructure and infrastructure gaps in the community. In particular, two key infrastructure concerns have been identified, including concerns with the community theatre and the arenas. With a limited seat capacity, the community has not been able to attract certain entertainment acts. Some parents have had difficulty watching their children perform in various dance recitals or events due to the limited tickets available. Furthermore, the theatre is well used by schools throughout the City, and, as a result, it can be difficult for community groups to rent it when needed.

Concerns have also been expressed about aging arena facilities in the community. Neither of the arenas are regulation size, and, as a result, the community has not been able to host the provincial midget hockey tournament. The arenas are also not equipped with adequate change rooms to support the participation of more girls and women in winter sports such as hockey and ringette. Concerns have also been expressed about limited seating and accessibility in the arenas. For example, there are no automatic doors to the arena and wheelchair seating is located in an isolated part of the arena where there are no heaters. Due to the quality of the facilities, the community also lost their junior A hockey team, the Quesnel Millionaires. However, this is not just having an impact on sports and arts and cultural groups, but there is a general sense that hotels, restaurants, and other businesses are missing out on opportunities for growth.

### *Early Stages of Development*

In 2005, Quesnel Economic Development and the Quesnel Theatre Action Group worked together to complete a feasibility study for a new theatre. This was not the first time that a feasibility study had been completed for a new theatre. In 1989, a feasibility study found that a 400 seat theatre would cost \$1.5 million. At the time, it was considered to be too costly to go to referendum. With broad community interest to also develop a new arena, they decided to join forces to pursue a multi-centre. The results of a feasibility study were presented to a joint planning committee that consisted of the Cariboo Regional District, the mayor, and councilors. Based on the results of the study, the City of Quesnel and the Cariboo Regional District decided to hold a referendum in 2008 to borrow a contribution of \$15 million for the new facility. With 53% in favour, the referendum passed.

The early stages of development have also included a range of individuals and stakeholders, including the City of Quesnel, the Cariboo Regional District, Quesnel Live Arts Council, the Chamber of Commerce, Quesnel Community and Economic Development, the Quesnel Theatre Action Group, various people interested in hockey, and people from the broader community, such as Carol Fitkin, Bernice Heinzelman, and Colin Mackenzie. The City of Quesnel and the Quesnel Community and Economic Development Corporation pursued donations from industry and large businesses, while city staff have been responsible for

advertising. Volunteers on the Multi-Centre Task Force have been responsible for smaller scale fundraisers.

Key tasks that have been completed throughout the early stages of development include:

- Developing a broad network of contacts;
- Hiring a coordinator to support fundraising and to develop relationships with industry and business;
- Fundraising (i.e. silent auctions, lotteries, raffles, selling shopping bags, selling seats, selling parts of a mural, etc.);
- Pursuing provincial funding (\$4 million);
- Pursuing funding from the Northern Development Initiatives Trust (\$2 million);
- Broadening awareness about the project through booth displays at the farmers' market, the arena, and the swimming pool;
- Recruiting volunteers; and
- Phoning people to get out and vote in order for the referendum to pass.

While many of these early planning activities were organized at city hall, volunteers would also meet at the Arts Council office and in their homes. Materials were stored at the Quesnel Community and Economic Development Corporation. The Billy Barker Hotel also provided a room and some phones to use during the referendum.

Throughout the early stages of development, a number of compromises have been made in order to reduce the overall budget for the project. The number of seats for the theatre was reduced from more than 500 to 450. By comparison, the number of seats for the arena was reduced from 2,000 to 1,600 seats. As a result of these compromises, community stakeholders were able to reduce the total project costs to \$30 million. Changes in leadership have also influenced how activities implemented. Over time, the leadership on the fundraising committee has been more open and welcoming of a diversity of opinions.

### *Impact*

With the multi-centre project in the early stages of development, it is too soon to determine immediate or long-term impacts. However, the multi-centre project has received positive community support and has created opportunities to develop partnerships across different stakeholders and community organizations. If the multi-centre is developed, stakeholders anticipate that it could provide employment and economic development opportunities for those involved in the local trades industry. It could also nurture a more vibrant arts and cultural community and enhance the local quality of life.

There are concerns that the community will not be able to raise sufficient funds before the referendum deadline. No federal funding has been contributed to the project. At the same time, however, there were concerns that there was not enough wide-spread community ownership for the multi-centre project. If the multi-centre project does not move forward, some stakeholders feel that it will be more difficult to attract and retain professional and other residents in the community. It may also negatively impact the economic benefits accrued by hotels, restaurants, and other businesses in the community.



## *Challenges*

Community leaders, stakeholders, and volunteers have encountered a number of challenges throughout the development of the multi-centre project. There have been challenges generating enough public interest. As a result, the sense of ownership for the multi-centre project has not been widespread throughout the community. As some residents have already purchased a seat, they are not interested in buying raffle tickets or supporting other fundraising initiatives. There has been resistance to tax revenues being allocated to support the project. Some residents, for example, do not feel that they will use the arena, and, therefore, are not willing to support the project. There have also been challenges sustaining support and engagement from the hockey community. One possible explanation offered by some stakeholders is that some assumed that the project would happen anyways. There was a general sense that people did not understand the effort required to raise \$15 million.

The multi-centre task force has experienced challenges with volunteer burnout. There can also be volunteer frustration due to the pace of progress. At one point, the task force ceased to continue employing the coordinator. One member lobbied the City to assume a more prominent role in lobbying for corporate donations as this was a responsibility of volunteers in the early stages of fundraising. There can also be challenges associated with unclear roles and responsibilities for volunteers.

Despite all of the fundraising and contributions by local and provincial governments, the multi-centre project still needs \$5 million before moving forward. While the community applied to the Canada Build Fund Program, their application for the multi-centre was not successful. Volunteers learned early on that some fundraising initiatives were not an option for them as they had received government funding. For example, people noted that they were not able to do lottos. There have also been disincentives to donating for the multi-centre. For example, if someone donates and obtains a charitable tax receipt, they can no longer receive a refund if the project does not go ahead. However, if someone donates money and does not obtain a tax receipt, they are eligible for a refund.

While the main stakeholders were perceived to not always be present, there were also concerns about the limited involvement of other key community organizations. For example, concerns were expressed that no one from the spinal cord society was involved. People we spoke with felt that limited initiative had been taken to invite and include a broader range of interests and stakeholders in the community.

## *Lessons*

Over the past few years, local leaders, stakeholders, and volunteers have learned a number of lessons as they worked to gather support and funding for the multi-centre project. In terms of human resources, it is important to invest in volunteer renewal and encourage new people to become engaged in the initiative. At the same time, however, it is important to have a strong core of individuals willing to invest their time to maintain momentum and move the initiative forward. Having a larger group overall will allow the workload to be more broadly distributed in

order to alleviate volunteer burnout. A larger group will also bring a diversity of perspectives and networks to support the project's work.

There were also several lessons learned to enhance the operations of large-scale projects. Time should be invested in the early stages of the project to clearly define the roles and responsibilities of volunteers and partners. Key stakeholders need to be visible and engaged as this can influence the success of fundraising activities and can also play a role to foster community ownership with the project. People also spoke about the importance of communication in order to ensure that everyone has the same understanding and information.

### *Place Integration*

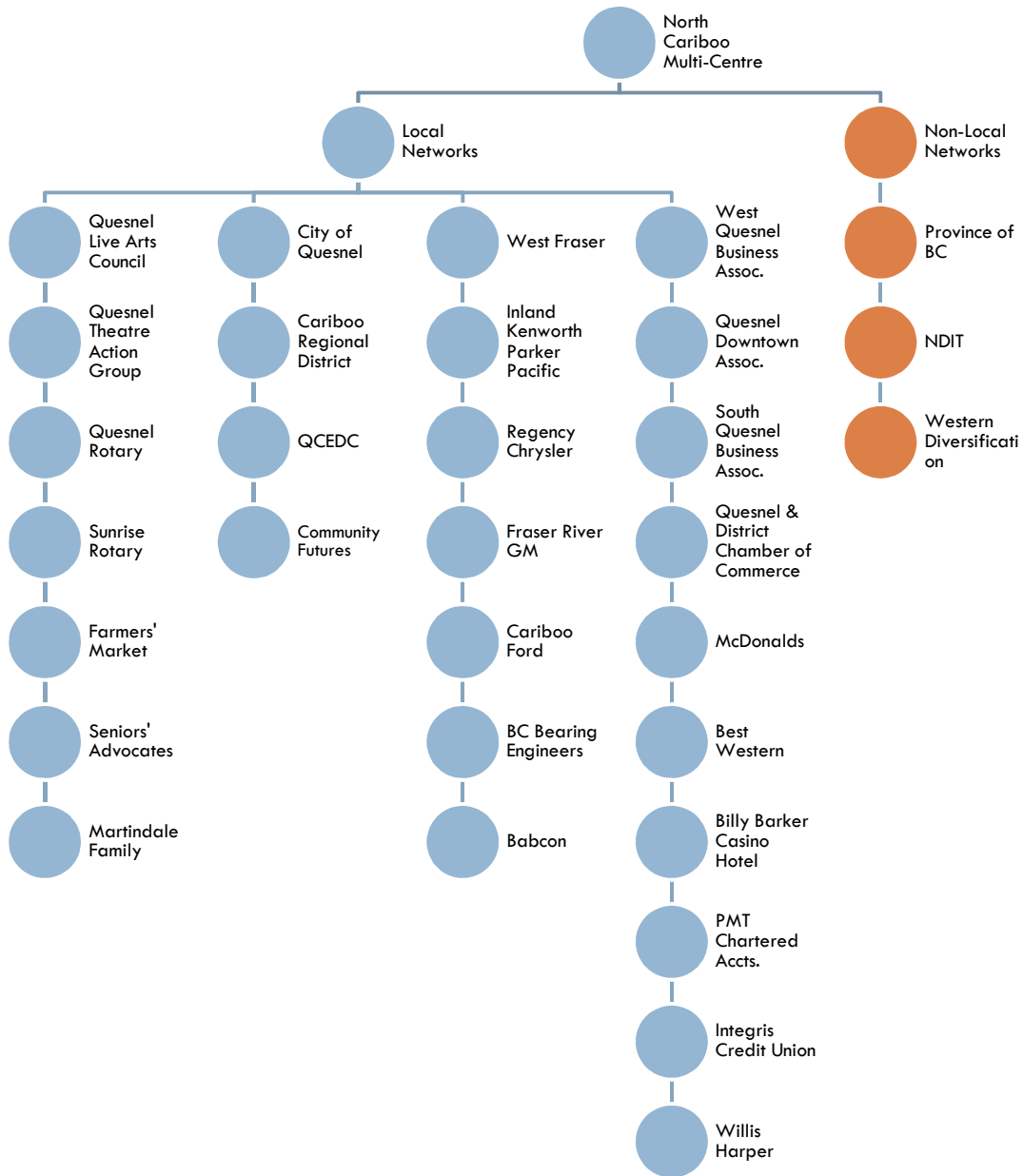
The North Cariboo Multi-Centre was supported by the efforts of the Multi-Centre Fundraising Committee. The committee consisted of 14 members from various sectors of the community, such as the arts community, the regional district, the City, economic development, and industry. In addition to approximately five volunteers, their activities are also supported by staff at the City of Quesnel and the Cariboo Regional District.

The committee formed numerous partnerships throughout their fundraising and referendum campaigns, including:

- The Quesnel Farmers' Market (donated items for the mural, booth to share information);
- City Hall (funding and staff support);
- Quesnel Community and Economic Development Corporation (funding, staff support, and research);
- Cariboo Regional District (funding and staff support);
- West Fraser (\$1 million);
- Northern Development Initiatives Trust (\$2 million in funding);
- The Province of BC (\$4 million in funding);
- Western Diversification (\$150,000 for planning and design);
- Seniors' Advocates (public challenge that they would donate \$200 for the first 8 multi-centre seats they sold);
- Quesnel Live Arts Council (meeting space, volunteers, fundraising);
- Quesnel Theatre Action Group (volunteers, fundraising);
- Inland Kenworth Parker Pacific and Friends (donated \$27,500);
- McDonalds (\$10,000);
- Regency Chrysler (\$30,000);
- Best Western Tower Inn (\$5,000);
- West Quesnel Business Association (\$10,000);
- Fraser River GM (\$5,000);
- Cariboo Ford (\$5,000);
- Quesnel Downtown Association (\$25,000);
- South Quesnel Business Association (\$40,000);
- Martindale Family (\$5,000);
- Quesnel Rotary Club (\$10,000);
- Billy Barker Casino Hotel (\$25,000);
- PMT Chartered Accountants (\$5,000);

- BC Bearing Engineers (\$5,000);
- Integris Credit Union (\$50,000);
- Willis Harper (\$12,500);
- Community Futures (\$10,000);
- Sunrise Rotary (\$10,000);
- Quesnel & District Chamber of Commerce Business Excellence Awards (\$1,250); and
- Babcon (funding).

Figure 6: Networks of the North Cariboo Multi-Centre Fundraising Task Force



The relationships with various community groups have helped to broaden community support for the North Cariboo Multi-Centre. In some cases, groups, such as the seniors' advocates, have challenged others to match their donation or have offered to donate additional funds based on community contributions. The initiative has also brought people together.

While the project has benefitted from key contributions from the provincial government and the Northern Development Initiatives Trust, some feel that the key missing piece is a contribution from the federal government. While there was a federal stimulus package that communities could apply for, the local government used this program to address land stability issues and install proper drainage systems on the Westside of Quesnel rather than apply for funds for the multi-centre.

People have remained involved and committed to the multi-centre project for a variety of reasons. For some, they have a sense of responsibility to develop the facility as a key asset for their children. Others are very proud to be associated with the project. While their involvement can be time consuming, a larger concern has been the uncertain future of the project.

## QUESNEL AFFORDABLE HOUSING ACTION GROUP

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### *Origins*

In recent years, Quesnel has been experiencing demographic and economic changes. The population has been aging-in-place, and the community has experienced socio-economic pressures from industrial and economic restructuring. These changes have produced a range of complex care and housing needs. A lack of affordable housing has made it difficult for service agencies to work with clients who are transitioning out of homeless shelters, to work with women who have complex and entrenched needs, and to support the rehabilitation of clients with addiction issues. There are also concerns about the condition and safety of more affordable housing units. Another key housing gap identified concerned the lack of affordable housing for an increasing number of single individuals in the community. One stakeholder noted, for example, that most of the 64 social housing units are designated as 2-3 bedroom family units. Furthermore, while there are rental subsidies for seniors and families, these types of supports are not available for other vulnerable, single residents. With only two units in the community, there is also a lack of housing for people with physical disabilities. Many of the existing private housing stock consist of stairs and are not accessible for an aging population. With more baby boomers approaching retirement, there is a growing interest to support secondary suites to provide families with the option to have their parents stay with them in their home.

Municipalities are also assuming more responsibilities that have been downloaded from senior levels of government. While municipalities have been largely responsible for physical infrastructure needs in the past, they are now pursuing a wider range of community development issues that impact the local quality of life. For local stakeholders, an important component to the local quality of life concerns housing.

### *Early Stages of Development*

The Quesnel Affordable Housing Action Committee was formed four years ago to respond to housing pressures in the community. The roots of the committee, however, was formed when Season's House, the local homeless shelter, produced a video about affordable housing and shared it with the City of Quesnel, community organizations, and neighbourhood associations in order to raise public awareness about emergency housing needs in the community. At the same time, the City of Quesnel worked with the Whistler Centre for Sustainability to complete an Integrated Community Sustainability Plan. A key priority that emerged from this plan was to address housing infrastructure issues in the community. The goal of the Quesnel Affordable Housing Action Committee has been to develop social housing that can address the needs of a range of residents (i.e. people with disabilities, seniors, low-income, students, people with developmental disabilities, people with addictions, etc.). An early task for the committee was to complete a housing needs assessment. This study found that more than 900 units are needed in Quesnel.

There have been a range of groups and individuals involved with the committee, including representatives of agencies who work with people who need housing, as well as housing groups themselves. These include the Season's House, the Amata Transition House, the City of Quesnel (Tanya Turner and Jillian Stockburger), a representative from the MLA office, Heather Peters (UNBC Social Work), Jennifer Boudreau, Jean Birch and Maureen Trotter (Women's Resource Centre), the Lion's Club (Mitchell Vik), Dave Sutton, and Rudy Jagdush. Private sector interests have also become involved. Roy and Mark Josephy and Phil Christy have offered to donate five acres of land to support a social housing development. Meeting locations are rotated around participating agencies, such as city hall, Season's House, the Ministry of Child and Family Development, and the Dakelh and Quesnel Community Housing Society. Housing forums have also been hosted at the UNBC campus. To support general housing development, the committee has advocated for a number of changes to building standards, bylaws, and policies. The committee is recommending, for example, that new social housing developments be easily maintained, energy efficient, and accessible (i.e. built to the LEEDS standard).

Other key tasks that have been completed by the committee include:

- Identifying potential social housing projects (i.e. motels for sale, speaking to land owners, developers, school district personnel, and city staff);
- Obtaining funding to complete a housing needs assessment;
- Attending housing strategy meetings;
- Organizing public forums to assess social housing needs and broaden public awareness of social housing issues;
- Supporting Season House to deliver the Ready, Set, Build workshop with the BC Non-profit Housing Association;
- Completing a secondary suite survey;
- Completing an affordable housing strategy (2012);
- Having council adopt the affordable housing strategy;
- Spot rezoning for secondary suites;
- Developing a new bylaw for secondary suites;
- Providing letters of support for various social housing projects; and
- Exploring researching potential funding sources and processes.

Over the past few years, a few different groups in the community have started to explore different social housing projects. The Lion's Club, for example, has purchased land in the downtown core to support an independent living seniors' housing project. One of the key issues identified for the City of Quesnel has been the use of old school properties that are located in underutilized sites in the community. For example, the Cariboo Field on the Westside is the site of a high school that burned down in the 1970s. The property has not been utilized over the past 30 years. More recently, however, there have also been early discussions about the potential to use Quesnel Junior Secondary for a social housing project. The property consists of 64 city lots; although the QJS property is still owned by the province. There is a sense that it is more likely the land will be sold to a private developer than donated to the City. If it becomes possible for the school district to sell the land to a developer, the City may require the developer to designate a small percentage of units (i.e. 5%) as affordable housing units. Those units would then be administered by the private sector.

A third potential non-profit-private sector project could be developed just outside of city limits south of Quesnel. Private developers have offered to donate five acres of land on Copper Ridge Road<sup>1</sup>. This would provide space for 36 ground level duplex and four-plex social housing units, as well as space for a small park and community garden. Community stakeholders are currently exploring options to incorporate market housing in order to avoid ghettoizing the development and to be more eligible for funding opportunities. Community organizations are also working together to explore the logistics for administration and delivering supports to clients living in the facility. There is the potential for units to be designated to specific organizations that would provide support from their agencies to the client. A representative from Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation has also been invited to provide advice and guidance about the potential of the property and whether the project could be eligible for government funding. A presentation about the potential housing project has been made to the joint planning commission of the City of Quesnel and the Cariboo Regional District.

With many projects in the early stage of development, their overall direction is yet to be determined. The overall direction of social housing developments may vary depending on which service agency takes a lead role to operate and manage the units. There are a number of organizations that may have important advantages or experiences to assume this lead role. For example, organizations such as the Lion's Club and the Quesnel Shelter and Support Society already have charitable status. Other groups, such as the Dakelh and Quesnel Community Housing Society have experience administrating large multi-unit housing projects.

### *Impact*

With many housing projects in the early stage of development, it has been too soon to determine long-term impacts. However, the initiatives that have been undertaken to date have broadened public awareness about the need for social housing. It has also encouraged people to consider and plan for their parents housing needs as they age. As such, the activities of the Quesnel Affordable Housing Action Group have helped to nurture community support. Stakeholders and volunteers have also noticed new people becoming involved in different housing initiatives, which have helped them to obtain new ideas, new energy, and new networks.

### *Challenges*

Although many housing initiatives are in their early stages of development, local stakeholders and volunteers have encountered five key challenges. First, there has been a resistance to change. While there have been efforts to develop a municipal bylaw to support secondary suites throughout the community, some neighbourhoods do not support secondary suites in their area. This stems from a concern that secondary suites would reduce property values, reduce the availability of parking, and lead to an increase of social issues in their neighbourhood. In response, the Affordable Housing Action Committee has put together

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<sup>1</sup>There is a 2 year timeframe on the offer. If the property is not used within this 2 year period, the developers will sell the property.



presentations to address concerns raised about secondary suites and other social housing options. There is also a general sense that many illegal secondary suites exist throughout the community. By implementing a new bylaw for secondary suites, the City would be able to collect more tax revenue to support community development initiatives. The City has also been working to more broadly communicate the results of the housing needs assessment and a resolved commitment to housing as a key priority for the City.

A second key challenge has been the limited availability of suitable land for social housing projects. While there are properties, such as Copper Ridge, available outside of city limits, there are no services to those properties. As a result, additional costs to extend services to those properties would have to be considered. Some have approached the City to explore the possibilities of extending the municipal boundaries. The developer, however, did not wish to have the land within the city boundaries. There was also a sense that the city would be reluctant to address service issues to the Copper Ridge property given that there are existing properties within city limits that do not have city water. There are also time constraints on the land that is available to be donated to a social housing project. If the land is not used within 18 months to 2 years, the offer may be revoked.

There are also funding challenges. While it used to be possible to obtain 100% funding for a housing project, this is no longer possible. Stakeholders have found that while small grants for feasibility studies are available, there are few funding programs to support the actual project. Communities and organizations are increasingly required to match any contributions that are provided by government or industry. At the same time, there are calls for a greater proportion of income tax revenues to be shared with municipalities in order to support social housing projects. Given the Copper Ridge property's location outside of city limits, however, the City would not be able to make a financial contribution to the project. Furthermore, high mortgage rates can impact the viability of social housing projects.

If the Copper Ridge project moves forward, there may also be logistical challenges. While there is a regional district office in Quesnel, the project team would need to interact with the regional district's water works office, which is a component of the environment department located in Williams Lake. Thus far, there have been very few human resource challenges associated with the Affordable Housing Action Committee. While there has been some personality conflicts and turnover, the core group of people has been involved for a long period of time.

### *Lessons*

Stakeholders we spoke with offered some key lessons they learned through their experiences on the committee. The first key lesson is to have a broad and clear communications strategy that leaves no room for misinterpretation. Second, sometimes operations can become too structured and formal. While there can be a role for structure to ensure tasks continue to be completed, adopting formal operational structures can lead to a power imbalance and more limited engagement in the initiative.



### *Place Integration*

The Quesnel Affordable Housing Action Committee consists of 15-20 representatives from a range of interests and service sectors in the community. This includes the City of Quesnel, a representative from the MLA office, the Lion's Club, the Rotary, the United Church, Community Living, the Women's Resource Centre, Quesnel Shelter and Support Society, Mental Health and Addictions, the Amata Transition House, the Dakelh and Quesnel Community Housing Society, the Quesnel Tillicum Native Friendship Centre, UNBC, the Nazko Band, BC Housing, Northern Health, the Quesnel Community and Economic Development Corporation, Community Futures, and private housing developers.

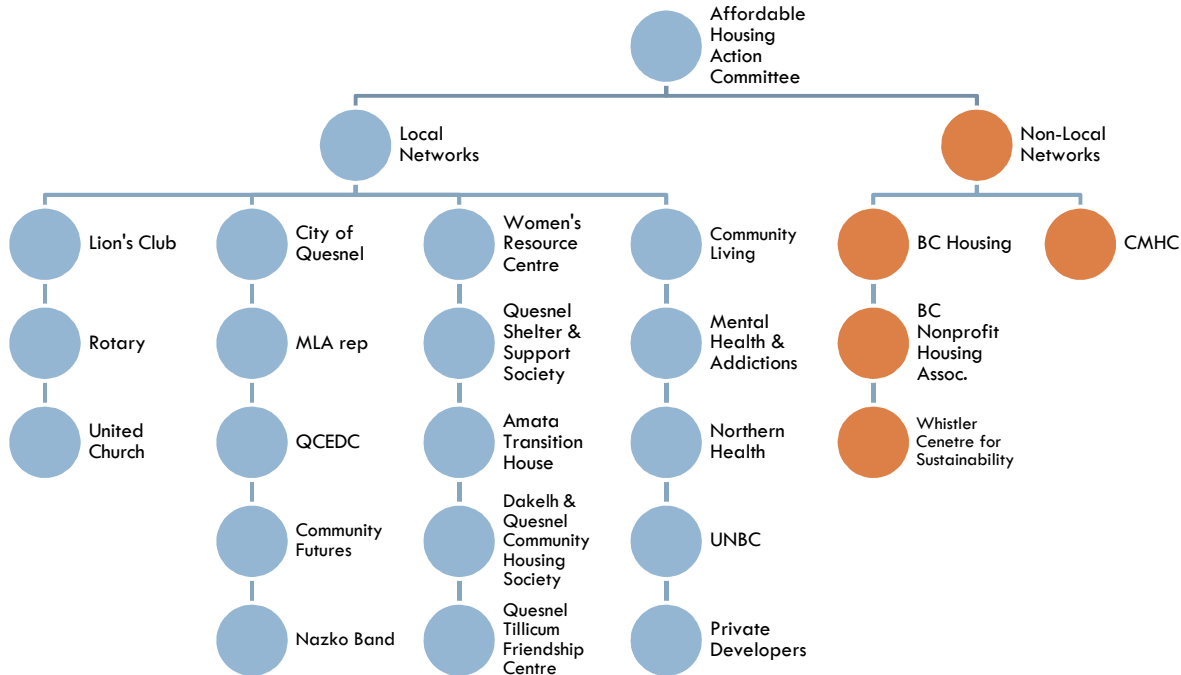
Given the early stages of development for many projects, partnerships are just beginning to form between the committee and various groups inside and outside of the community. The Affordable Housing Action Committee, for example, has initiated discussions with the Northern Development Initiatives Trust to explore the potential for them to fund a common room for a social housing project. However, groups who have been involved in the committee have worked together to put on housing workshops. In the case of the Ready, Set, Build workshop, Season's House invited the BC Nonprofit Housing Association to participate and engage with community groups. They have also been working with existing committee members who have begun to pursue housing projects outside of the committee's work (i.e. Lion's Housing Society).

After operating for a long period of time, the Quesnel Affordable Housing Action Committee has benefited from limited turnover and long-standing relationships. As one stakeholder explained, "We all went to the same high school. It helps with long-term relationships". Relationships across community groups have also played an important role to demonstrate the priority of housing in the community. Those networks have also helped to connect groups with a wider range of expertise and resources to support new housing projects. There are also established personal and professional connections between members of the Affordable Housing Action Committee and developers and representatives in the construction industry. It has been through those connections that the committee was able to identify potential properties for social housing projects outside of city limits. There are also several committee members who sit on other committees (i.e. Mental Health Advisory Committee), which helps to share and distribute information about housing issues to a wider range of stakeholders in the community. Furthermore, having city representation on the committee has helped to keep city staff and council informed about ongoing initiatives, as well as to provide the committee with expertise about municipal policies and operations. For local leaders, being involved has helped them to obtain a better understanding of housing issues, as well as how resources can be strategically invested to address those needs.

Through BC Housing, the Non-Profit Housing Association of BC, and the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, the Quesnel Affordable Housing Action Committee has also been able to obtain advice and guidance from groups outside of the community in order to move housing projects forward. At the same time, however, it has been more difficult to obtain funding from senior government programs. Concerns were also expressed about the limited understanding that provincial leaders have about housing issues in the community. While some provincial leaders may perceive that there is lots of housing in Quesnel, community stakeholders have pointed out that it is not affordable housing. There is a need to better

educate senior government leaders about the multiple and complex housing issues in the community.

Figure 7: Networks of the Quesnel Affordable Housing Action Committee



City staff and committee representatives have also used their networks in other places to learn more about best practices for developing social housing in smaller communities. They have also received guidance and financial support from the Whistler Centre for Sustainability to support their ICSP process. Looking forward, local stakeholders may need to work with regional district staff in Williams Lake in order to assess physical infrastructure needs for potential housing properties outside of city limits.

Although time consuming, stakeholders involved in the Quesnel Affordable Housing Action Committee found the experience to be rewarding. Some have been lived in social housing in the past and become involved due to a desire to give back.

## QUESNEL & DISTRICT SENIORS' SOCIETY

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### *Origins*

As the seniors' population grows in Quesnel, there is a need to provide more social opportunities in the community. Two members of the Quesnel & District Seniors' Society, Ray Simmonds and his wife, attended a pancake breakfast in Houston, BC. Based on their positive experience, they approached the board of directors to gain support to host a pancake breakfast in Quesnel in order to provide an opportunity for seniors to socialize with their family and friends. An additional goal of the pancake breakfast was to raise funds for the seniors' centre. The society had just lost its gaming grant, which provided the centre with \$20,000 to assist with electricity and heating costs.

The pancake breakfast builds upon other social events that were delivered through the seniors' centre. For example, the centre hosted a Strawberry Tea once a year. The event, however, required a significant amount of volunteer resources for an event attended by a group of about 20 people. Attendance at the Strawberry Tea tapered off as more people began to attend the pancake breakfast. As many of the people who attended the Strawberry Tea attended the pancake breakfast, the Strawberry Tea was discontinued.

### *Implementation*

The seniors' centre began hosting the pancake breakfast about 3-4 years ago. In the beginning, the seniors' centre recruited five volunteers, including three members of the executive, to deliver the pancake breakfast. The pancake breakfast, however, did not require a significant amount of planning. The seniors' centre already had a state of the art kitchen, including plates and cutlery, in place. As such, key tasks involved purchasing eggs, pancake mix, syrup, and sausages. Once the event is finished, the volunteers clean up the venue. The seniors' centre purchased a new sign for their building, which helps to promote the pancake breakfast. As the volunteers delivered each pancake breakfast, they acquired new lessons that were applied to the next breakfast.

The overall purpose of the pancake breakfast has remained the same over time with the continued goal to provide a social venue for seniors and their families, as well as to raise funds for the seniors' centre. The society has a policy, however, that rentals have priority over any other programs or events as they provide a source of revenue. As the pancake breakfast has become more popular, it now generates more revenue than rentals.

### *Impact*

The seniors' pancake breakfast has grown to become a popular event amongst seniors and other residents in the community. While the first pancake breakfast was attended by about 26 people, it has since grown to attract between more than 200 people. The event has enabled seniors to reconnect with each other. There is a general sense that the seniors' centre's membership has grown as a result of the pancake breakfast. Through the pancake breakfast,

the society has been able to raise almost \$50,000 for infrastructure and programs at the seniors' centre.

The pancake breakfast has also lead to a number of new opportunities for the seniors' centre. For example, the Quesnel and District Seniors' Society was contacted by a school in Vancouver to provide breakfast and packed lunches for 50 youth travelling to Barkerville. The following year, another school approached the seniors' centre to provide breakfast and packed lunches for the same trip. The seniors' centre has also provided catering for the Old Timer's Hockey Club, various hockey teams, and the Rodeo Club. The pancake breakfast has also provided new opportunities for other community groups. For example, the Lion's Club has been able to raise money for their seniors' housing project through ticket draws they've had at the pancake breakfast.

### *Challenges*

The Quesnel and District Seniors' Society has experienced financial challenges since it began the pancake breakfast events. The cost of some supplies, such as eggs, has increased over time. While the seniors' centre used to obtain a gaming grant to offset their heating, electricity, and janitorial costs, they no longer obtain this grant. They have encountered additional challenges pursuing supports from grocery chains, such as Safeway and Extra Foods. Safeway, for example, requires groups to submit a proposal outlining specific needs at least three months prior to the event. The society currently receives a 10% discount (on regular and sale items) from Save on Foods that allows them to purchase goods for the pancake breakfast or general supplies (i.e. coffee, sugar, cream, etc.) for the seniors' centre. The seniors' centre has also experienced challenges with limited attendance due to holidays and cold weather.

### *Lessons*

Since the society began the pancake breakfast, they have acquired and applied several lessons. The first key lesson concerns the timing of their events. They no longer hold a pancake breakfast over the May long weekend as many people are away. With many people on summer holidays during July and August, the society postpones their pancake breakfasts over the summer months until after the September long weekend. They also do not host a pancake breakfast at Christmas. They also avoid cooking bacon or using deep fryers as this would increase their insurance rates.

### *Place Integration*

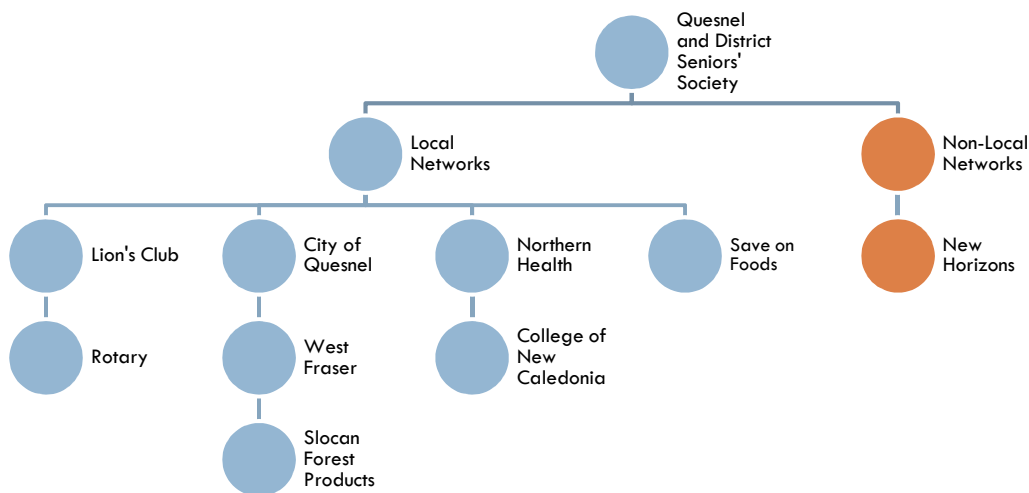
The pancake breakfast that is hosted by the Quesnel and District Seniors' Society is supported by five volunteers; although, they have recruited an additional five alternate volunteers who provide support when needed. These volunteers have simply enjoyed the experience of hosting the pancake breakfasts. The seniors' centre has approximately 450 members. To date, there have been no changes in leadership with the pancake breakfast. The future leadership and direction of the event, however, is uncertain.

Over the years, the society has benefitted from a range of donations, assistance, and partnerships, including:

- City of Quesnel (grant in lieu of taxes),
- New Horizons (grant to support computer training program),
- Rotary (\$12,000 for PA system),
- Lion’s Club (volunteer support for pancake breakfast),
- Save on Foods (discount),
- College of New Caledonia (assistance with grant applications),
- Northern Health (foot clinic),
- Slocan Forest Products (funding),
- West Fraser (donation of supplies), and
- Various organizations and businesses (plaque campaign).

The society has been able to draw upon its connections with other groups in the community to support the pancake breakfast and other activities at the seniors’ centre. For example, the Rotary Club donated \$12,000 for an upgrade to their PA system. The discount they receive from Save on Foods also assists them to reduce costs for the pancake breakfast. Some members of the Lion’s Club are also members of the seniors’ centre. Each year, the Lion’s Club brings the Citizen of the Year to the pancake breakfast in order to do their ticket draws. Some members of the Lion’s Club also provide help at the pancake breakfasts. Since they began hosting their pancake breakfasts, they have been asked to provide breakfasts for a range of community groups and events, such as the Rodeo Club, the Old Timers Hockey Club, and various hockey teams.

Figure 8: Networks of the Quesnel and District Seniors’ Society



Community relationships have also supported other aspects of the seniors’ centre’s operations. The society has embarked on a successful fundraising campaign by selling plaques to potential donors. Some businesses have donated up to \$10,000 for a plaque. This has provided the society with funds to support renovations at the seniors’ centre. West Fraser has also donated supplies to build their storage facilities. The building was also constructed with supplies donated from the various mills around the community.

Their pancake breakfast not only attracts people from around Quesnel, but people also come from Kersley. As the seniors' centre's reputation for catering and hosting pancake breakfasts grows, new opportunities have emerged to provide meals for Vancouver school students going to Barkerville. The loss of their provincial gaming grant, however, has been a concern and will require them to engage in more fundraising activities moving forward.

## QUESNEL & DISTRICT VOLUNTEER CENTRE

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### **Origins**

#### *Early Stages of Development*

In the 1990s, the North Cariboo Volunteer Centre began when the staff at the Community Skills Centre submitted an application for a volunteer centre to Heritage Canada. The volunteer centre operated at the skills centre for two years. During this time, the development of the volunteer centre benefitted from skilled personnel who were able to write successful funding proposals and develop relationships to connect volunteers with community organizations.

#### *Key Challenges*

The North Cariboo Volunteer Centre experienced two key challenges, including financial barriers and limited community exposure. To start, with staff turnover, new personnel were not as strong to write successful grants and take care of business operations. The original volunteer centre was also not successful to obtain government funding. In the 1990s, volunteer centres were not registered charities, which affected their ability to get grants. Many volunteer centres today are now registered charities. The first volunteer centre closed when the core grant ended and the Community Skills Centre was closed. Second, most of the information about the original volunteer centre was concentrated in the office, but there was limited exposure about the centre through the media and throughout the community.

#### *Key Lessons*

Based on the experiences of the original volunteer centre, some key lessons that have been highlighted include:

- Enhancing the logistical capacity of the organization; and
- Increasing the public awareness about, and visibility of, the volunteer centre in the community.

### **New Beginnings**

The Quesnel Community and Economic Development Centre (QCEDC) is now working to develop a new volunteer centre in the community again. The initiative to develop a new volunteer centre emerged as part of the Our Quesnel process. It is now part of the strategic plan for the City of Quesnel and for the QCEDC.

Efforts to re-develop a volunteer centre emerged to assist and strengthen the capacity of organizations that were struggling to recruit and retain volunteers. Some of these groups included emergency services, such as the volunteer fire department, community policing, and Search and Rescue. The absence of volunteers with the fire department has the potential to

cost the City money in the long-term. The new Better at Home initiative is also looking for volunteers. Overall, the goal is to have a more vibrant volunteer program in Quesnel.

The new volunteer centre hopes to offer a number of services and programs. They will work to place volunteers. They will also work to develop the general capacity of non-profit organizations through workshops that are specific to their volunteer programs and management structure. Workshops may also be delivered about topics such as board development, grant writing, and budgeting.

### *Early Stages of Development*

The volunteer centre is in the very early stages of planning and development. Key people who are involved include Amy Reid and April Goffic with the QCEDC.

All the original paperwork for the original volunteer centre was provided to the QCEDC. This included annual reports, files for volunteers and organizations, brochures, and surveys.

Key tasks that have completed include:

- Research about services and supports provided by volunteer centres;
- Consultations with community groups (through conversations and a survey distributed at the end of 2012);
- Development of a Facebook page to promote the volunteer centre;
- Consultations with Ed Coleman at the school district to use / expand upon their existing volunteer database that contains information about volunteer positions in the community, as well as students' volunteer experience;
- Completion of a business plan; and
- Completion of a presentation for council.

### *Impact*

The community survey generated a lot of interest from non-profit groups in the community. Over 90% of respondents want to use the volunteer centre as a mechanism to recruit volunteers, especially younger volunteers. Many community groups also expressed an interest in workshops.

### *Challenges*

In its early stages of development, the volunteer centre has experienced few challenges. As the new volunteer centre continues to develop, it looks to learn from information provided from the files of the original centre. Much of this information, however, is paper-based and not available in digital format.

The community survey was distributed just before Christmas of 2012. As a result, it was challenging to obtain completed surveys due to the Christmas break. Many staff in non-profit groups are also busy as they operate with limited human resources. While reminders were sent out to potential participants, it was generally felt that such emails could be easily missed as people catch up on work after the Christmas break.



### *Key Lessons*

Drawing upon the experiences of the original volunteer centre, they will be looking to recruit staff who have good grant writing skills, as well as good social and human resource management skills to in order obtain the best matches for volunteers and non-profits.

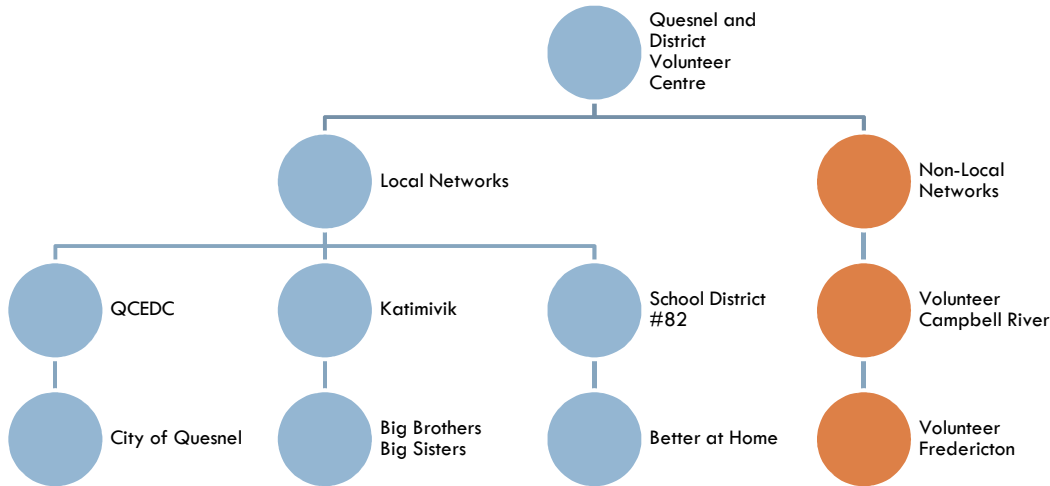
### *Place Integration*

Although the new volunteer centre is in its early stages of development, many networks and relationships have become important assets. Currently, the assistant economic development officer is the key staff person who is spearheading the development of the volunteer centre. The QCEDC is also planning to work with a sub-set of their board on the volunteer centre. The QCEDC's board currently has 14 members, including:

- Greg Andrews, Owner of Greg Andrews Insurance Services;
- Tony Bensted, RPF, MBA, P.Eng., and businessman;
- Bruce Broughton, Co-owner of Willis Harper;
- Jorge Busca, Manager of Wal-Mart;
- Heloise Dixon-Warren, Cariboo Regional District Area "B" Director, Owner of Moose Meadows Farm;
- Jim Gorsline, RPF, former VP Weldwood BC Operations;
- Doug Larsen, Regional Director of the College of New Caledonia;
- Fran Macpherson, Owner of Accurate Mining Services Ltd.;
- Darlene Osborne, retired publisher of the Quesnel Cariboo Observer and past-president of the Quesnel & District Chamber of Commerce;
- Carol Pitkin, Co-owner of The Outlaw, Carver's Clothing Company, Super Suds Laundromat, and Vice Chair of the Quesnel Downtown Association;
- Gary Plamondon, Owner of Quesnel Vending;
- Len Sinclair, Owner of CVS Mining Ltd.;
- Mary Sjostrom, Mayor, City of Quesnel; and
- Roland Traber, Owner of Fox Dairy Farm.

The assistant economic development officer was previously employed as a coordinator for the Katimivik program that provided volunteers to many organizations in Quesnel (i.e. Big Brothers and Big Sisters). These connections became a valuable asset to obtain participation in the centre's community survey and to develop working relationships for the new volunteer centre. Information about the operations of the original volunteer centre was obtained through Big Brothers and Big Sisters. The QCEDC has also consulted with local councilors at city hall to obtain feedback about the volunteer centre's business plan. As noted earlier, the QCEDC has also initiated discussions with the school district in order to explore options to access and build upon their existing volunteer database.

Figure 9: Networks of the Quesnel and District Volunteer Centre



The volunteer centre has also been working to develop constructive relationships with volunteer centres in other places. For example, there have been discussions with Volunteer Fredericton, a new grassroots volunteer centre, as well as Volunteer Campbell River, which has been in operation since the 1980s. The goal was to obtain information and advice about developing a volunteer centre. One limitation is that many of the lessons learned from developing a volunteer centre in the 1980s would not be applicable to the current political, economic, and social landscape today.

*Next Steps*

The QCEDC hopes to approach the City of Quesnel for some initial funding in order to hire a dedicated full-time employee for the new volunteer centre. They want to acquire registered charity status in order to be eligible for grants. Once some initial financial and human resources are in place, there will be broader promotion throughout the community. With Better at Home, there may be opportunities to develop a strategic partnership with the volunteer centre.

## SENIORS' ADVOCATES

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### *Origins*

In 2001, the provincial government disbanded the seniors' advisory councils in the province. These councils had provided an important source of information for seniors. At the same time, Susan McNeill and Ruth Scoullar set up a table at Walmart to promote a volunteer grandparents program. During that time, they were approached by many seniors for support. There were requests for information, assistance to work through processes to access services, and also a need for transportation. While there is a local transit service in Quesnel, there is no service provided during the evenings or throughout the weekend. This can limit seniors' ability to access services, attend events, or visit with friends and family. In response, they decided to initiate a seniors' advocacy service to provide referrals during that same year. The purpose of their program was to provide an opportunity for seniors to help other seniors.

### *Early Stages of Development*

While Susan and Ruth were the two key individuals to start the seniors' advocacy service, there have been others involved. Approximately 22 volunteers were trained in the beginning, and they also had 5 volunteer drivers. Annie Gallant, editor with the Quesnel Observer, also played an important role to promote the seniors' advocates.

Some key tasks that were conducted during the early stages of development include:

- Conducting a survey to obtain input about seniors' needs and a preferred location for operations,
- Recruiting and training volunteers,
- Fundraising,
- Obtaining and managing office space,
- Obtaining office equipment (i.e. computer, printer, laptop, and projector for presentations),
- Developing relationships with service groups, and
- Promoting the seniors' advocates through the Quesnel Observer and word of mouth.

Ruth and Susan initially worked out of their homes; but as the volume of calls increased, they rented an office space in the downtown core. In the early stages of development, they were also able to set up a table in the lobby at the seniors' centre one day a week free of charge. E-mails were also exchanged to troubleshoot any issues or inquiries.

### *Implementation*

Ruth and Susan continue to play a key role with the ongoing operations of the seniors' advocates program. While they have trained a number of volunteers over the years, there have generally been a core group of six volunteers. Their office is located on Reid Street in the downtown core.

As they implemented the seniors' advocates program, key tasks involved:

- Recruiting and training volunteers,
- Fundraising (i.e. fall musical event),
- Providing seniors with assistance to fill out forms,
- Providing assistance to use a computer,
- Responding to seniors' questions,
- Providing referrals to appropriate agencies to respond to seniors' needs that could not be addressed through the seniors' advocates,
- Delivering presentations to other community organizations about the supports offered by the seniors' advocates,
- Coordinating sign-up sheets for rides at the senior's centre and the Golden Centre,
- Providing courtesy transportation,
- Providing outreach supports (i.e. for people with limited mobility),
- Delivering the Touchscreen Computer Access Program,
- Processing disabled parking permits (as an extension of SPARC BC),
- Hosting a Canada Day Tea for the seniors, and
- Promoting available supports through stories in the Quesnel Observer, small ads in the newspaper's community calendar, and word of mouth.

The overall purpose of the supports provided through the seniors' advocates has experienced some changes over the years. While their original focus was to provide supports to older residents, they have broadened their scope to provide supports to any individual in the community. They provide assistance to connect residents with a range of supports (i.e. housing, medical, and transportation). Overall, this has helped to broaden their expertise and capacity. A second key change that has influenced their operations is that more information is available on-line. With a limited volunteer base, they have reduced their hours of operation. The seniors' advocates' office is now open on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 11 am to 1 pm. The reduced time commitment has made it easier to recruit volunteers.

### *Impact*

The seniors' advocacy service has had a positive impact throughout the community. It has been credited with filling a service gap not provided by other organizations by efficiently connecting seniors and other residents with needed medical, transportation, and community supports. Service providers, such as doctors and social service agencies, have also been increasingly sending their clients to the seniors' advocates for assistance. It has also alleviated the anxiety for family members by knowing that their older parents have a place where they can obtain help. The office has also received more requests for assistance from seniors in Prince George.

Several factors have influenced the success of the seniors' advocates. The seniors' advocates have become more effective as they have learned more about different processes and services. They have established long-term working relationships with many community organizations, service clubs, and local government. The seniors' advocates have also become more well-known throughout the community. Other key factors include background in paralegal training, expertise to navigate various websites, and collective decision-making.

## *Challenges*

Throughout the development and implementation of their services, the seniors' advocates have encountered a number of challenges. As they have worked to connect seniors with needed supports, they have found that there is a lack of networking and coordination across community organizations. This has resulted in a duplication of supports. While there have been meetings to support coordination, more work needs to be done to strategically work through how best to address the needs of the community. There can also be confusion between the supports provided by local seniors' advocates and the supports provided through the provincial seniors' advocacy office.

While the seniors' advocates have been advocating for local DriveAble assessments, the community lacks the transportation infrastructure required to support the test. A community must have intersections that cross four lanes in order to have the test delivered locally. As a result, some residents (i.e. those with cognitive impairments) must travel to Prince George or Williams Lake to take their test. The seniors' advocates have also been working with local government staff to address concerns with people parking in handicapped spaces.

Conflicts between community groups have also impacted how the seniors' advocates have operated. Due to a conflict between the two seniors' centres in the community, for example, the seniors' advocates moved their operations to a neutral facility in the downtown core. There is also a lack of social infrastructure to support the operations of non-profit groups. Key issues have included high rental costs, cold spaces, small spaces, and no access to washrooms. As a result, the seniors' advocates have moved into an office located within Century 21 at a cost of \$100 per month.

With a lack of government funding, more time must be spent on fundraising. While there may be opportunities to pursue joint fundraising initiatives, there may be reluctance amongst community organizations to split the profits as a result of the increased competition and difficulty to obtain funding. In response, most of the funding for the seniors' advocates services is raised by providing disabled parking permits for \$20 each.

There have also been human resource challenges, such as a lack of volunteers, limited confidence to volunteer, and limited availability due to competing job commitments. For example, some seniors do not volunteer due to fears that they cannot complete certain tasks. They may not realize the skills that they have to offer or that training is also provided. Seniors may also disengage from the community after losing a spouse or partner. In response, the seniors' advocates have reduced their hours of operations from four hours to two hours and only operate on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Through these changes, there have been more seniors express an interest to volunteer. While some residents have expressed concerns about the limited hours of operation, the volunteers feel that they have been able to address many requests within these hours. Furthermore, volunteers have expanded their outreach supports in order to address needs outside of office hours.

## *Lessons*

As the seniors' advocates move forward, they have acquired a number of lessons that are beneficial to inform not only their own operations, but also the quality of supports provided by other groups. When working with seniors, it is important to invest time to listen to the clients. While it may seem that seniors have minor problems, those problems can seem insurmountable. Many seniors have no family in the community. They also face challenges navigating and understanding different processes to access supports. As a result, it is also important to invest time and resources to become familiar with, and navigate, on-line information about available supports, processes, and regulations. It is also important to acknowledge that it may not be possible to fix every problem for everyone. This is important as this can be an important source of frustration and impede the retention of volunteers. There is also a general sense that the community could benefit from a volunteer and community services coordinator in order to enhance communication and coordination, as well as reduce the duplication of services.

## *Place Integration*

The seniors' advocates' office is operated by approximately 22 volunteers; although, most of the operations are driven by a core group of six volunteers. Volunteers come from a range of backgrounds (i.e. retired teachers, government agents, etc.). These diverse background provide the office with a range of expertise that can be used to address seniors' needs.

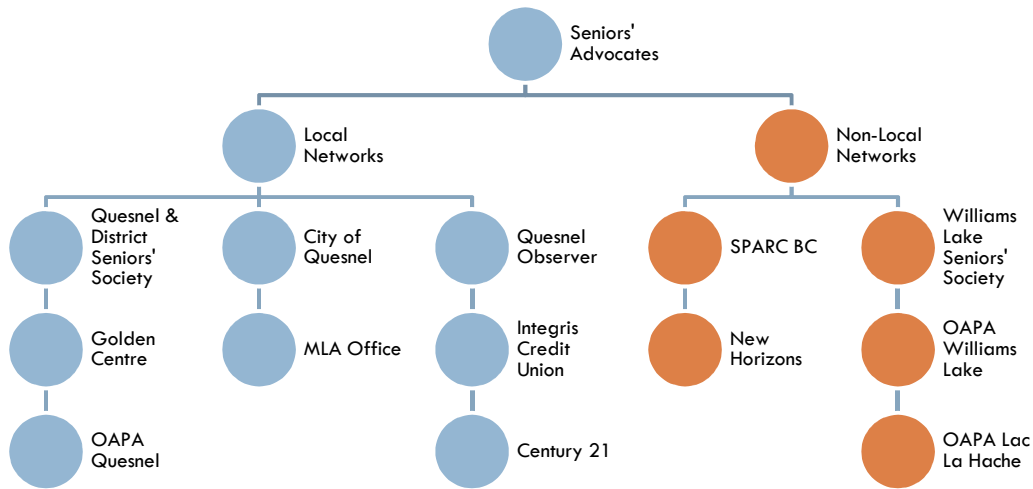
There is no board of directors. Instead, decisions are made collectively by volunteers. The Touchscreen Computer Awareness Program is operated in a separate office next to the seniors' advocates; although, it is delivered by four volunteers from the seniors' advocates. If needed, those volunteers accompany seniors to take their driving test in Prince George.

Some key partnerships that have helped to deliver the supports provided by the seniors' advocates include:

- The Quesnel Observer (promoting programs / events),
- New Horizons (grant),
- Integris Credit Union (computer equipment),
- City of Quesnel (free photocopying),
- MLA office (free photocopying), and
- The Quesnel and District Seniors' Society (table / space during early development).

Volunteers with the seniors' advocates have been able to use their relationships and connections with both seniors' centres, as well as with the local seniors' housing facilities, to promote their programs. There have been circumstances, however, where the relationships between community groups have hindered some of the advocacy initiatives. Conflict between the two seniors' centres prompted the seniors' advocates to pursue a neutral location. Both seniors' centres are now working to bridge their relationship. They have also used their relationships with community groups to connect with a broader range of resources and address equipment needs.

Figure 10: Networks of the Seniors' Advocates



Volunteers with the seniors' advocates have also been able to draw upon their networks in other communities for information and support. For example, through their interaction with members of the Williams Lake Seniors' Society and various Old Age Pensioners' Organizations in the region, volunteers have been able to share information and compare experiences with accessing health care supports in different health regions.

Volunteers have enjoyed their experiences volunteering with the seniors' advocates. Some have been able to draw upon their experience working with seniors in their professional careers. Others enjoy the diversity and unexpected experiences that come from different requests each day.



## VOICE FOR NORTH CARIBOO SENIORS

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### *Origins*

The Voice for North Cariboo Seniors was formed in February 2012. It serves a region from Lac La Hache to Hixon. The organization emerged to respond to concerns about seniors' poverty and seniors' supports in the community, such as health care (hospital and outpatient supports), housing (housing condition and waiting lists), home care, and transportation (evening / weekend supports). While Quesnel has seniors' advocates, limited hours of operation has impeded some seniors' access to supports. At the same time, there were concerns about families burning out from working full-time, taking care of children, and providing care for elderly parents. As a result, seniors have been sent to care facilities in other communities that they are not familiar with, have limited support networks, and in which it is difficult for family members to make frequent visits.

In response, an advertisement was posted in the local newspaper to form an advocacy group. There were about 25 people at the initial meeting at Robin's Donuts. At this meeting, seniors shared their stories of their experiences and concerns with seniors' supports in the community. Overall, the goal of the Voice for North Cariboo Seniors is to improve how the health care system, transportation, and other community services respond to the needs of older residents in the community. The group is also advocating for more hospital beds, as well as the ability to complete Drive Able testing in Quesnel.

### *Early Stages of Development*

The Voice for North Cariboo Seniors has been in operation for a short period of time. Key people who have been involved include Peter Nielsen, Mrs. Nielsen, Pete Watkins, Bob Simpson, and various members of the Lion's Club. While initial meetings took place at Robin's Donuts and the seniors' centre, the Voice for North Cariboo Seniors moved their meetings to the Legion where they are able to access space at no charge.

Key tasks that were completed in the early stages of development include:

- Promoting issues in the Quesnel Observer, the Bargain Hunter, and Coffee Break;
- Providing interviews for Quesnel Today, Rush Radio, and CBC;
- Advertising meetings by putting up posters on bulletin boards around town, as well as at the Legion and Robin's Donuts; and
- Obtaining advice from Bob Simpson about how to develop and submit petitions to appropriate offices in Victoria.

### *Implementation*

The activities of the Voice for North Cariboo Seniors have focused on both advocacy and responding to the needs of seniors. Since the early stages of development, the membership has increased to 150 people. There are no fees to belong to the organization. On average, there are 50 people who attend the meetings that are held every 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of each month at



the Legion. They have a four member executive consisting of Peter Nielsen (President), Mitch Vik (1<sup>st</sup> Vice-President), Ron Paull (2<sup>nd</sup> Vice-President), and Norma Malic (Secretary). Mrs. Nielsen, Pete Watkins, and various members of the Lion's Club continue to provide support for activities in the organization.

The group has been active in a number of ways to respond to the needs of seniors, including:

- Assisting seniors who have been released from the hospital;
- Providing assistance for seniors with limited pension resources;
- Obtaining donations from businesses, residents, and community organizations;
- Working with the Lion's Club to organize food drives for seniors;
- Shopping for seniors to assist them to get key items such as medicine, depends diapers, etc.;
- Building ramps for seniors' homes;
- Changes in city bus policies that limited the number bags seniors could transport from the grocery store to their homes;
- Organizing protests at city hall and Northern Health; and
- Conducting interviews with CBC.

While the direction or leadership of the organization has not changed since it started, changes in the leadership of other organizations have impacted the Voice for North Cariboo Seniors. For example, the Salvation Army used to provide a van to transport goods to seniors. With a change in leadership at the Salvation Army, there has been an interruption in the types of in-kind support provided by this organization.

### *Impact*

The Voice for North Cariboo Seniors has been able to raise awareness about seniors' issues in the community. This has included attention to long waiting lists to access housing and care supports, inadequate care, inappropriate living conditions, and seniors' poverty. The organization has also provided a venue for seniors to express their concerns or talk about their experiences in the community. They have also been able to confirm the bus policy for seniors who wish to carry multiple bags home from the grocery store. However, the organization has not been successful to expand the number of care beds in the hospital or in Dunrovin. Over the long-term, they hope to play a larger role to monitor the accountability of resources that Northern Health allocates to seniors' needs in the community. There have been concerns expressed about the allocation of funding to office renovations, signage, and the expansion of parking versus the expansion of infrastructure and supports to address seniors' needs.

### *Challenges*

Since the Voice for North Cariboo Seniors has formed, there have been a number of challenges that have shaped the operations and activities of the organization. The first challenge they encountered concerned obtaining access to an affordable *meeting space* that could accommodate their expanding membership. In the early stages of planning, the Voice for North Cariboo Seniors were able to hold one free meeting at the local seniors' centre. However, they were informed that it would cost \$1 per person to rent space for subsequent

meetings at the seniors' centre. As a result, they moved their meetings to the Legion who provided free access to space for their meetings.

The *turnover in leadership* with other community partners also impacted the availability of donations and in-kind supports to the Voice for North Cariboo Seniors. In the early stages, the organization formed a partnership with the Salvation Army who provided food donations and a van to transport goods to seniors' homes. The leader of the Salvation Army moved out of the community. Since then, there has been an interruption in the supports that were once provided by the organization. While the Voice for North Cariboo Seniors has received support from a range of businesses and organizations, there have also been *challenges obtaining financial support* from other community organizations.

Seniors in the community have experienced challenges with *unclear policies* to access services. For example, some seniors felt that they were only allowed to carry one bag on local transit buses. Many seniors rely on the local transit to transport their groceries home. The Voice for North Cariboo Seniors responded by meeting with city officials to clarify the policy and to ensure that seniors would be able transport multiple bags home. There continue to be challenges, however, with seniors accessing transportation supports in the evening and throughout the weekend in order to attend events, visit family and friends, or access services. This is both due to the loss of one taxi service, as well as due to the limited hours of operation for local transit.

Local seniors also faced *challenges completing* their Drive Able testing in Quesnel. The testing is not available in Quesnel due to the small population and the lack of complex traffic patterns to support testing. Instead, seniors from Quesnel must commute to Williams Lake or Prince George to take their tests. This is particularly difficult for seniors to do during poor winter driving conditions. They must also endure additional costs since they are required to have another person with them in case they fail their test. In some cases, seniors noted that they received no help to complete computerized tests in distant centres. They also experienced difficulty completing driving tests in cities with unfamiliar traffic patterns.

The Voice for North Cariboo Seniors experienced *challenges to connect seniors with supports*. For example, they have had difficulty connecting local seniors with the bathing program offered through Dunrovin. The Voice for North Cariboo Seniors has also been concerned with patients who have been discharged with limited supports available to enable them to live independently at home.

Furthermore, the Voice for North Cariboo Seniors has experienced challenges maintaining *local media support* to promote issues raised at rallies. There have also been challenges communicating and working with Northern Health and the local government.

### *Key Lessons*

Drawing upon their experiences, the Voice for North Cariboo Seniors has acquired a number of lessons moving forward. This included the need for a more vocal approach to raise the profile of key issues and pressures facing seniors in Quesnel. They will also broaden their

communication networks and tools by using Twitter, as well as by engaging with CBC, CTV, and provincial newspapers.

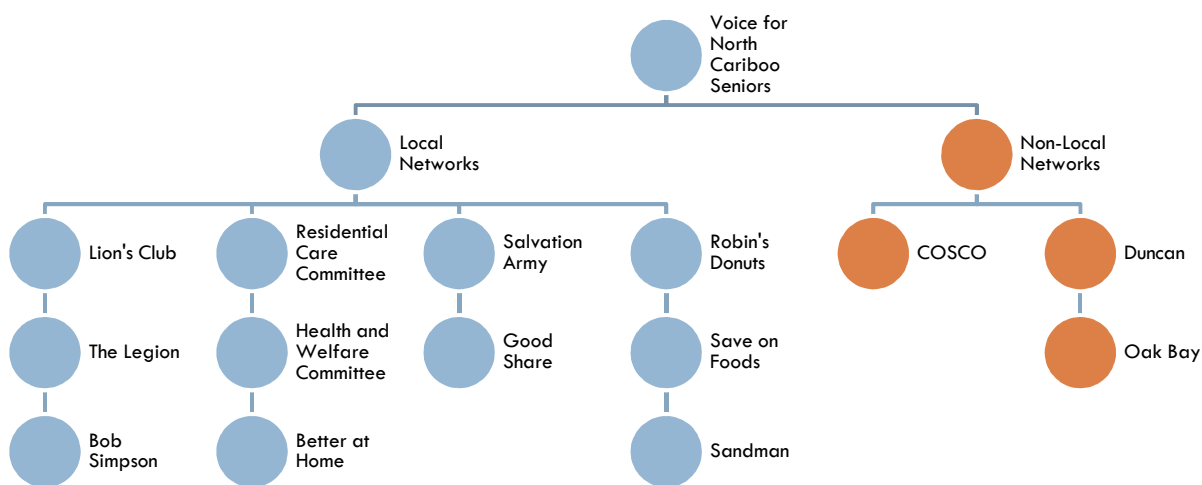
*Place Integration*

Currently, the organization consists of a four member executive with more than 150 members. Although the Voice for North Cariboo Seniors has only been operating for a short period of time, many networks and relationships have become important assets to support VNCS's activities. Local partnerships have included:

- Lion's Club (food drive, delivery of goods, building ramps),
- Legion (donated space for meetings),
- Good Share (donation of baskets),
- Residential Care Committee (donating funds to build ramps),
- Salvation Army (donation of food, delivery of goods),
- Sandman (\$200 donation),
- Save on Foods (donation of gift certificates and provides a discount on goods), and
- Donations from families and private individuals.

A number of these partnerships have been possible due to connections with people who are members of multiple organizations. For example, several VNCS members are also members of the Lion's Club. Those connections have made it easy to obtain volunteer and financial support to build ramps for seniors, conduct food drives, and delivery goods to seniors' homes. VNCS also developed a positive working relationship with MLA Bob Simpson to obtain advice about raising the profile of key issues facing seniors in Victoria. Poor relations with Northern Health's local staff and some city hall officials, however, have hindered efforts to nurture change. Due to their activism, VNCS has not been welcome at Dunrovin or Northern Health meetings.

Figure 11: Networks of the Voice for North Cariboo Seniors



Initially, the Voice for North Cariboo Seniors had been communicating with similar groups in other communities, such as Duncan and Oak Bay. The Voice for North Cariboo Seniors hopes to expand its networks with similar groups in other communities by using Twitter. In the early stages of development, the VNCS also had a membership with the Council of Senior Citizens of BC (COSCO). However, after receiving little information, advice, or support, they decided not to renew their membership.

For those who have been involved in the VNCS, they have been able to improve their public speaking skills for conducting interviews or speaking to community groups and residents. At the same time, however, the problems that they encounter through their volunteer activities has impacted their stress and sleep patterns.

## CONCLUSION

The purpose of this report is to highlight the themes, issues, experiences, and constructive lessons that emerged from key informant interviews in Quesnel in order to explore how the voluntary sector is responding to the needs of older residents and broader community development issues in aging resource communities. Understanding the pressures and opportunities across various community groups can form the basis for a more comprehensive approach to planning programs, policies, and infrastructure investments.

Our work has identified several positive things that have been done in Quesnel to respond to the pressures facing community groups and residents, such as:

- Delivering information and orientation sessions for volunteers;
- Enhancing the visibility of voluntary initiatives through print and radio media, as well as through informal networks;
- Investing in workshops and presentations to broaden community awareness of voluntary initiatives;
- Investing time to build trust with local and non-local partners;
- Investing in research to understand community needs;
- Investing in strategies to support planning and enhance the quality of investments in the community; and
- Leveraging networks to access a broader range of expertise, funding, meeting space, land, and equipment.

The breadth of voluntary initiatives demonstrates the importance of the voluntary sector in both responding to seniors' needs and community development initiatives. Although this work has focused on issues associated with voluntary and community development initiatives in Quesnel, there are a number of issues that fall outside of local jurisdiction. As such, some topics may simply become advocacy issues for the local stakeholders to raise with other levels of government, industry, and partners. Others are clearly available for local action. Below, we have highlighted some possible areas that community stakeholders can build upon to respond to the needs of volunteers in order to strengthen the resiliency and capacity of various facets of the community:

### *Capacity Building*

- Develop strategies to target a broader range of volunteers (i.e. youth, Aboriginal, men, and people with specific expertise);
- Provide opportunities for flexible, even short-term, voluntary engagement in order to provide residents with opportunities to test their interests and nurture longer-term commitments;
- Continue to invest and develop supports for a volunteer coordinator / centre to support volunteer recruitment and capacity development;
- Devote attention to succession planning and strengthen the capacity / leadership skills of voluntary organizations;

- Invest in financial and project management skills for non-profit groups;
- Invest in developing communication, conflict resolution, and problem-solving skills for volunteers;
- Host seminars to broaden an understanding of the benefits and issues associated with forming and managing societies and charities;
- Invest in building the capacity of voluntary board of directors; and
- Routinely review mandates, policies, and other operational tools to ensure they are current and appropriate to respond to emerging challenges and opportunities.

### *Research and Information*

- Monitor changing service and infrastructure needs;
- Invest in supports to monitor and understand changes to processes, regulations, and opportunities presented by government agencies, trusts, and industry; and
- Invest in databases of useful information and resources.

### *Relationships*

- Continue to invest in infrastructure and opportunities for social interaction in order to nurture and maintain networks at the local, regional, provincial, and national level.

### *Communication*

- Continue to invest in communication strategies to increase the visibility and profile of voluntary initiatives as a basis for volunteer recruitment and broadening community support;
- Invest in communication strategies and mechanisms early and throughout the process to demonstrate need, to build relationships, to manage expectations, and to develop a collective common understanding to inform ongoing activities; and
- Continue to ensure that information about local, regional, provincial, and federal supports is up-to-date and accessible in multiple formats for residents.

### *Coordination*

- Facilitate opportunities for pooling resources for information and development of strategies;
- Facilitate opportunities for sharing operating costs and developing smart infrastructure to support voluntary work;
- Develop clear roles and responsibilities for volunteers, partners, and stakeholders involved in voluntary initiatives; and
- Continue to facilitate collaboration / coordination across voluntary groups, committees, service providers, etc. in order to streamline supports, use resources wisely and efficiently, and reduce duplication.

This report has provided several insights into the role of the voluntary sector in responding to the needs of an aging population and supporting broader community development. With an

aging workforce and an aging population, community needs for services, supports, and care are evolving. Given the challenges associated with many voluntary groups, incentives for volunteering and support for voluntary sector capacity building are crucial to support its continued role in community development.