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CANADA - VANCOUVER/
NORTH VANCOUVER CITY

A preliminary report from
Community Voices,
Perspectives and Priorities

Report of

The Vancouver/North Vancouver Civic Panel

Prepared By

SPARC BC

S P A R C B C

A partner of

Inclusive Cities Canada: A Cross-Canada Civic Initiative

http://www.inclusivecities.ca

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Vancouver and North Vancouver <u>Preliminary</u> Community Findings

Introduction to the Preliminary Report

This document is not the full report of _Community Voices, Perspectives and Priorities.._ We regret that staffing issues meant we were unable to meet the deadline for publication of the full report. This report is preliminary only but is being released along with the other community reports in order that local recommendations can be shared. We have provided some contextual information to support this release of the summary of priorities for local action, the recommendations of the local Civic Panel. The final report will be released in Vancouver and North Vancouver City sometime in late April.

Questions concerning this Preliminary Report can be directed to Nancy Henderson, Executive Director of SPARC BC, at 604-718-7736, or to nhenderson@sparc.bc.ca.

Introducing Inclusive Cities Canada: A Cross-Canada Civic Initiative

Inclusive Cities Canada: A Cross-Canada Civic Initiative (ICC) is a collaborative venture of five social planning organizations across Canada and the social infrastructure sub-committee of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM). The aim of _ICC_ is to strengthen the capacity of cities to create and sustain inclusive communities for the mutual benefit of all people. Specifically, its goals are:

- To promote social inclusion as key to the development of a Canadian urban strategy
- To support civic capacity to build inclusive communities in which all people are able to participate as valued and contributing members
- To secure a stronger voice for civic communities in national social policy
- To ensure that community voices of diversity are recognized as core Canadian ones.

Inclusive Cities Canada is a unique partnership of community leaders and elected municipal politicians with a major focus on children, youth and families - particularly those from diverse and vulnerable populations. The social planning partners are:

- Social Planning and Research Council of BC (with a focus on Vancouver and North Vancouver)
- Edmonton Social Planning Council
- Community Development Halton (with a focus on Burlington)
- Community Social Planning Council of Toronto
- Human Development Council of Saint John (with a focus on the Greater Saint John Area)

The strategic direction for the cross-Canada work comes from a National Steering Committee with members drawn from the partners. (See Appendix A for a list of Steering Committee members.)

The federal government, through Social Development Canada, provides multi-year core funding. The Laidlaw Foundation, a private Canadian foundation based in Ontario, provided supplementary start-up funds.

The first phase of the initiative involved research, analysis and reporting. The National Steering Committee developed a common framework and methodology for the local research, including identifying the common dimensions of inclusion. Each city established a Civic Panel to provide leadership and direction to the initiative locally. All Civic Panels are co-chaired by a municipal politician, either a mayor or city councillor, and a community leader.

Social Inclusion and the Dimensions of an Inclusive City

Inclusive Cities Canada recognizes social inclusion as both a process and an outcome. As a process, social inclusion promotes the open, welcome and supported participation of all people in social planning and decision-making affecting their lives. It requires the active engagement of the community's full diversity in civic dialogue and public debate on policy issues.

As an outcome, an inclusive city is one that "provides opportunities for the optimal well-being and healthy development of all children, youth and adults". Practical expressions or ways of promoting inclusion are: universal access to meaningful opportunities in education, the arts, culture, and recreation; relevant health services, school curricula

adapted to specific needs and strengths, family support services and respite, safe streets and parks, and responsive governance on all levels.[1]

Inclusive Cities Canada builds on previous research and community development work undertaken by the Laidlaw Foundation and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, including a series of local soundings in 10 cities.[2]   Based on this research and a review of Canadian and international literature, ICC defined the following five dimensions of inclusion as central to building inclusive cities and communities:

1. *Diversity*

The adoption and implementation of policies, plans and concrete actions by key public institutions that provide valued recognition to individuals and groups and reflect and respond to the full diversity of the population.

2. *Human Development*
A focus on the development of talents, skills and capacities of everyone from early childhood through the transition years into and including adulthood.

3. *Civic Engagement*
Strategies and actions to promote participation of individuals and groups in the full range of civic and community life to enhance social interaction, harmonious neighbourhoods and active citizenship.

4. *Living Conditions*.
Provisions for personal and family security (food/nutrition, income and employment, housing, community safety) that minimize disparities in community living conditions within the population.

5. *Community Services*.
A well-coordinated system of public and community support services connected to strong networks of informal and personal support to address the diverse circumstances of vulnerable people.

These dimensions became the basis for the research questions that explored people's perceptions of their city's 'inclusivity'. Community focus groups, local soundings, feedback forums and electronic surveys

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[1] Adapted from the Canadian Institute of Child Health Communique (2002)
[2] The findings and recommendations are in Clutterbuck and Novick (2003).

were used in different ways by local ICC partners to examine the level of inclusion in key areas such as: public education, recreation, transportation, policing and justice, local government, early childhood development, and community safety.

A Tale of Two Cities

The cities of Vancouver and North Vancouver[3] are part of a larger urban agglomeration known as the Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD). The GVRD encompasses 21 municipalities, some 2800 square kilometres and is home to almost two million inhabitants.

When the Inclusive Cities Canada project first looked at studying one of BC's urban centres, it was faced with a challenge. It recognized that urban social issues of the sort that would be covered in the city did not stop at municipal boundaries. And with a major regional centre, the actual migration of issues across boundaries is an area of concern all in itself. For this reason, it was decided that it would be useful to study two neighbouring municipalities -- a different strategy than that employed in other Inclusive Cities study areas.

As the province's largest city, Vancouver seemed an obvious choice. Balancing Vancouver with a close neighbour was equally easy. In fact, it was only a matter of looking across the water. The two cities were chosen in particular because of the comparable factors of high population density and a high degree of cultural diversity. At the same time, an order of magnitude means that the present investigation can explore how inclusion and exclusion play out on municipalities that are very different in size. North Vancouver is just shy of 12 square kilometres and has a population of approximately 45,000 people. Vancouver is approximately 10 times as large in size (112 km^2) and has just over a half million people living within its borders.

Both Vancouver and North Vancouver are separate municipalities but have a long history of connections. Joined by water and bridges, people in Vancouver and North Vancouver migrate back and forth for jobs, services and recreation. The waterfront of one city forms part of the landscape of the other.

The two cities also share a number of critical connections in terms of social issues. Key issues for both include the following:

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[3] The City of North Vancouver (CNV) is a separate municipality from the larger District of North Vancouver (DNV). Both are part of the Greater Vancouver Regional District.

- Affordable housing and homelessness
- Poverty
- Childcare, Early Childhood Development and Related supports
- Diversity, Multi- and inter-cultural concerns

There are, of course, more points of connection than this. Research conducted for this study investigated 15 different areas of inclusion. For the sake of context it is useful to look at the four key issues in more detail. This will be included in the final report.

Research Process

Local Civic Panel

To facilitate the research process in the two cities, a local Civic Panel was created, comprised from men and women working in community service agencies, the non-profit sector and local government. Local panel members met on a regular basis to assist in the shaping of the project, provide direction for research activities and to assist in identifying any gaps and omissions on the part of the research team.

Panel Members are:

Mayor Barbara Sharp	City of North Vancouver (co-chair)
Nancy Henderson	Executive Director, SPARC BC (co-chair)
Councillor Ellen Woodsworth	City of Vancouver
Trustee Andrienne Montanie	Vancouver School Board
Bernie Whitford	Helping Spirit Lodge
Don Rutherford	Executive Director, North Shore Neighbourhood House
Brian O-Connor	Medical Health Officer, Vancouver Coastal Health Region
Karen O'Shannacy	Executive Director, Lookout Society
Daniel Hill	Director of Development, Native Education Centre
Dr. Mehran Korshidi	Iranian Senior Women's Centre
Dr. Leonie Sandercock	Professor, UBC School of Community and Regional Planning
Eyob Naizghi	Executive Director, MOSAIC

Focus Groups in Vancouver and North Vancouver

In keeping with the format employed in other project sites, a series of five focus groups were held in each municipality and a number of issues, areas and dimensions of social inclusion were explored in the process.

As with the other ICC cities, focus groups in Vancouver and North Vancouver each covered five themes of inclusion/exclusion:

1. Human Development
2. Civic Engagement
3. Diversity
4. Living Conditions
5. Community Services

Theme	Areas of Inquiry		
Human Development	Early Childhood Development	Publicly Funded Education	Recreation, Arts and Culture
Civic Engagement	Local Governance	Public Spaces	Community Capacities
Diversity	Local Governance	Publicly Funded Education	Policing / Justice System
Living Conditions	Income & Employment	Housing	Safety
Community Services	Health Care	Crisis Services	Transportation and Mobility

And each of these issues, in turn, contained discussion around three areas of inquiry. For each, participants discussed the strengths and weaknesses of the existing 'system', talked about areas of further research and follow-up, and suggested areas of possible and positive change.

To supplement the findings produced in these sessions, a series of local soundings were held with community groups. As well, a short survey was designed to capture additional data. In all, 66 people participated in the focus groups, an additional eight organizations held local soundings and 95 surveys were completed – ensuring over two hundred participants took part in the study. To complement this, an additional body of literature and interview work was undertaken as a means to explore some of the themes that emerged in the consultation work. Finally, interim reports and presentations were made to participants at various stages along the way. Feedback derived from these sessions was in turn used to modify the direction and presentation of the present report.

The summary results of each are briefly outlined here:

Focus Group Themes

Early Childhood Development: Existing pre-school and childcare programs are seen as good – for those who have the possibility of accessing them. The problem is access – demand for services (especially licensed services) is high, and a shortage of spaces has been identified as a significant area of concern. This, in combination with cuts to subsidies, is seen as a major impediment for marginalized and disadvantaged communities. Lack of childcare services impacts on both single and dual parent families alike, affecting their ability to access services as well as the city at large.

Publicly Funded Education: Participants felt that schools had the capacity to do a good job, but were being compromised by the interconnected problem(s) of provincial funding cuts and the resulting reduction in programs (particularly for special needs students). To offset these shortages, school boards are increasingly looking to user fees and sponsorships as a solution. In the first instance, even when provisions are made for low-income families, user fees are seen as a barrier that prevents all children from accessing services in an equal and equitable fashion. Issues of stigma and shame are powerful drivers of behaviour, and systems that now rely on families to ask for waivers or subsidies mean that the conditions of social exclusion end up being reinforced by people's personal dignity. In the second instance, school boards across the country are under pressure to look for corporate sponsorships to offset the costs of classroom services. Participants in the two focus groups expressed some concern about this – and suggested that public education facilities should not be forced to become a new terrain for advertising, nor should they be put in a position where sponsorship dollars dictate what goes on in schools.

> *"We are in the shadow of what has happened in Ontario… cutbacks in the late 1990s and early 2000s cut the heart out of schools across that province"*
>
> *- Vancouver participant*

Recreation, Arts and Culture: It was noted that both Vancouver and North Vancouver have some excellent programs in RAC areas. Participants identified the community driven identification of many initiatives as being important and desirable. Government support for

these is seen as essential, but often lacking. In this respect, municipalities are seen as doing an acceptable job, while provincial and federal levels of government are seen as 'missing at the table.' Respondents suggested that better inter-municipal cooperation might be a possible means of solving some of the shortfall problems. Finally, as with ECD, a key concern with RAC relates to the issue of accessibility – both in terms of geographic accessibility (the same quality and quantity of opportunities is not equally available throughout the cities), and economic accessibility (user fees are a growing impediment).

Local Governance: - governments in Vancouver and North Vancouver are undertaking a number of inclusion-related initiatives – with policies, manuals and other projects. However, it is not clear how well these initiatives are working in terms of fostering civic engagement. Particular populations – youth, immigrant communities, seniors – are seen as having limited access to local government. Public consultation, similarly, was criticized for being too formulaic – often involving "the usual suspects" and not doing much to consider alternative ways to engage the public.

> *"Many things that are really impacting people's lives are happening at the local level - local governments are trying to respond despite not having the mandate."*
>
> *- North Vancouver Participant*

Public Spaces: - Neighbourhood houses, libraries, parks and other public spaces were seen as tremendous assets in both cities. Participants were emphatic that these need to be looked after. On a positive note, the various skate parks that have been developed in both municipalities are seen as being a particularly good initiative for creating a space for youth – they are used year 'round and attract a substantial number of users. On the other hand, participants noted that there was often limited after-hours space available for communities to use – and that certain areas of the two cities have fewer public spaces available for people in marginalized communities to make use of. Schools were one example of "community hubs" that are present in each neighbourhood. And yet, after school is out each day, many of these facilities lay dormant during evenings and weekends.

Community Capacities: Local organizations and community groups were cited for their excellent efforts at outreach and collaboration. Municipalities in Vancouver and North Vancouver were also praised for

their efforts to work with these groups. More collaboration needs to be done on all parts, and participants recognized that it was becoming increasingly difficult for organizations to create linkages because there was simply too little time and resources to do this. Volunteerism is extremely important in this environment, and yet it also needs to be better encouraged and better rewarded. One participant noted that "too much good work goes unrecognized"

> *"Youth engagement requires special skill sets … we need to break down the gap between 'grown-ups' and us - youth need it demonstrated that they can make a difference and their participation is genuinely valued."*
>
> *- North Vancouver Participant*

Diversity in Local Governance: Information and outreach to diverse cultures is something that participants felt city governments had been doing a better job of in recent years. Both elected officials and staff have undertaken a variety of initiatives to make diverse cultures feel welcome and included. That being said, there is more to be done in the area of ensuring that council and staff are reflective of the diversity in their own composition. Diversity, in its broadest sense, is not reflected 'around the table' – and municipal councils were criticized for a lack of gender parity, and a mostly homogeneous cultural and socio-economic background.

Policing & Justice System: - Policing services were seen as being good, with certain community policing programs and outreach efforts receiving particular notice during the focus groups. Diversity issues were considered an area where some progress has been made, but more needs to be done. The diversity of the force needs to be improved, and diversity and cultural sensitivity training is seen as a priority area to improve relations between the police and the different communities. Another area of concern was the police complaints process – which was seen as inadequate. The need for a civilian based process with greater transparency was seen as being particularly important.

Diversity in Publicly Funded Education: Publicly funded education is an asset in need of strengthening and nourishment. While individual schools, teachers, and principals were given praise for their efforts, there was a strong feeling among participants that the education system as a whole was not working – either with its approach to diversity, or in its larger fundamental role as teacher and tutor. Some of the problems identified were consistent under-funding, and an overly bureaucratic

structure. These problems, in turn, were seen as leading to a rigidity in the system and difficulty in meeting the needs of a range of marginalized and social-excluded populations - E.S.L. students, special needs, immigrant and aboriginal populations. Though not seen as being as problematic, adult education programs, credential-development and skills training were also identified as places where barriers exist.

> *"Our model for the public education system was borrowed from Europe 150 years ago… and it hasn't changed much since then…"*
>
> *- Vancouver Participant*
>
> *"Educational differences between people in North Vancouver and the Squamish First Nation? We live in the same house but we haven't been in the same room for some time."*
>
> *- North Vancouver Participant*

Income & Employment: Throughout all research-gathering stages, the connection between "having a good job" and "feeling included" was repeated on a regular basis. There is a strong recognition of the psychological and economic problems resulting from the barriers to the labour market that are faced by certain populations in Vancouver and North Vancouver. The growing divide between service entry--level wages and those higher up the scale is seen as being a cause for great concern – as lack of well-paying work exacerbates feelings of exclusion. Issues around a lack of sufficient skills training opportunities, coop positions and work-sharing options were also considered important. Perhaps most substantially, there was a great deal of discussion around the issue of credentialization. It was agreed that there is an insufficient means with which to validate the skills of foreign-trained workers so that they can access the labour force, creating substantial problems of exclusion for immigrants and recent arrivals.

> *"Perhaps we need a shift in values. We need living incomes and work hours but people need to change the values they place on material wealth"*
>
> *"We have a pool of well-educated immigrant peoples… we need to unify service and fast-track credential recognition"*

Housing: The availability of affordable housing and rental stock continues to be a substantial problem. Vancouver was noted for its proactive approach in requiring a percentage of social housing to be

built. Nevertheless, "the problems are huge" in terms of unmet need. In Vancouver, the tendency to "turn a blind eye" to illegal secondary suites is seen as a helping to relieve shortages of rental stock. In North Vancouver, the same problems led to the adoption of bylaws allowing such suites. The development of other forms of affordable housing continue to face challenges – NIMBYism around shelter beds and transitional housing (among other projects) create difficulties in moving affordable housing forward – particularly in a way that ensures that it is more equitably distributed throughout the cities versus being concentrated in a few neighbourhoods.

Community Safety: This was a topic that covered a wide range of topics, and discussion touched upon public transit, pedestrian areas, day/night spaces, lighting, vulnerable populations, disability access and other areas. Two key themes were (1) night-time safety – and the request-stop program for public transit was seen as a boon here, while a lack of sufficient street-lighting was seen as a liability; and (2) the stigmatization of certain areas and certain vulnerable populations (such as street-involved youth, sex-trade workers, etc.). Particularly with the latter theme there was a recognition that more needs to be done to deal with both stigmatization <u>and</u> actual safety concerns. Yet participants were less able to articulate opportunities for positive and possible change.

Healthcare: Inter-agency collaborations and amalgamations, and services to specific language and demographic groups were listed as key strengths (where available) and significant gaps (where they weren't available). Service shortfall to particular populations – immigrants, people with dual-diagnosis concerns, income-poor populations and people requiring home-care – were identified as needed areas for improvement. While participants were wary about adopting the language of "crisis" to describe health care services, there was general acknowledgement that wait times for services are becoming increasingly problematic – and will continue to do so as the population ages. In broader terms, participants suggested that a stronger push towards more prevention-based healthcare (versus the current primary care model) is needed.

Crisis Services: As with other areas, existing crisis services are seen as being of high quality - but concerns exist about their spatial concentration, and their overall ability to serve the number of people that need to access them. A lack of available and sustained resources and supports were cited in both Vancouver and North Vancouver.

Culturally-specific services are needed, as are improved services for women, youth and people with disabilities. There are continued gaps in shelters and safe houses, transition facilities, detox centres, and a range of other services that are essential for ensuring that people do not fall through the cracks in times of deepest need.

Transportation & Mobility: The discussion in this area focused mainly on public transit offerings, with some additional discussion on the need to promote bicycle usage and bike lanes. Buses were identified as being necessary to make each city as a whole inclusive and accessible, and yet participants noted the issues of difficulty that people can have in accessing needed services. There are some initiatives in place to mitigate economic barriers to public transportation, but these are nto well publicized and there not well utilized or easily accessible. Similarly, existing bus services are seen as being too limited and inconsistent for people with physical disabilities. HandiDart, which operates through Translink (the Greater Vancouver Transportation Authority,) was seen as insufficient to meet the needs of physically disabled individuals. Transportation shortfalls have, however, created some innovative practices in the two communities. In North Vancouver, one example that was mentioned in North Vancouver was an arrangement wherein some private car lots allow their transfer vehicles to be used to take seniors to local stores during slow periods.

Local Soundings

A series of eight local soundings were held throughout Vancouver and North Vancouver. The civic panel helped to identify a number of marginalized populations they felt should be involved in giving input to the process. The communities they particularly identified included:

- First Nations youth
- Street-involved youth
- Chinese
- Iranian / Persian Community
- Visible minorities

Throughout the summer a significant effort was made to get in touch with groups and agencies that represented these and other identified communities. In total, some 34 organizations were contacted.

Local Soundings were designed to gather input around four key questions:

- Have you ever felt left out, or excluded? If so, what are the causes or sources of this feeling?
- What would give you a sense of belonging?
- What kinds of actions or changes are needed
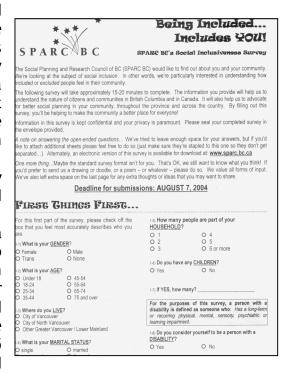- Who should be responsible for these changes?

One of the considerable challenges that emerged during this process came with the fact that the months between July and September were commonly "off periods" for these groups. Many went on a seasonal hiatus and did not meet during this period. As a result, a number of group representatives expressed interest in the process but said that they were unable to arrange a "local sounding" owing to the absence of staff, volunteers and program participants, clients or group members.

That being said, the eight soundings that were held were quite successful. Participants told of a number of stories of exclusion that they had experienced, as well as some of the initiatives that supported their empowerment within the larger community. (Findings from the local soundings were combined with those from the surveys and are included below).

"Being Included" Survey

Partly in an effort to reach community members who weren't able to participate in a local sounding and partly to make the social inclusion research more inclusive of other voices in the community, the BC research team decided to expand the scope of the project to include a short survey. The survey was modelled after the line of inquiry used in the local soundings, with a few additional questions added. It was distributed to a number of the organizations that had been contacted for the local soundings, as well as a variety of community meeting spaces, neighbourhood houses and gathering points. Respondents were provided a number of means through which to provide input – and were given space to comment, or opportunities to draw pictures and submit their answers through more creative means. A total of 95 surveys were completed and returned.

The following sections give a brief snapshot and sampling of the variety of responses. Combined, they give a sense of the breadth of answers, as well as the often-contradictory ways that different people understand concepts of inclusion, community and the role of different actors in the urban setting.

What does inclusion mean to you?
- *Everyone participating equally*
- *My input counts and I am not just a number!*
- *Inclusion is the possibility of meaningful participation…not coerced participation*
- *It means sucking up to the ones in charge*
- *Jail, food lines police brutality*

Do you feel valued and recognized by your community?
- *I feel valued in the communities I choose to locate myself*
- *The people downtown call me Mom*
- *My work creates a status for me*
- *There is no community here*

- *I don't belong*

Do you feel a sense of belonging in the larger community?
- *Here is where I live and I live here*
- *This is my home... the city itself*
- *Security camera and security beatings - how can I have my home?*
- *What do you mean by "the larger community?"*
- *Only at tax time*

Have you ever felt left out, separated from or not part of the community?
- *As a brand new immigrant... I sometimes felt lonely and cut off*
- *As an ESL person I sometimes felt frustrated and humiliated*
- *Often as a gay man I feel my experiences are external to the rest of the community*
- *When I cleaned up and went to a NA meeting...because I was on meth I was not welcome*

Do you know of other people who may have felt separated or excluded in the community? (77, 13, 10)
- *The poor! And the government doesn't care*
- *My younger adopted Metis sister*
- *My children, when at school*
- *My husband, when unemployed*
- *(people experiencing) the language barrier*

If you have felt left out, what are the causes or sources of these experiences? In other words, why do you feel left out?
- *Because I have a disease*
- *My sexuality*
- *Because I am native*
- *My age (I am an older single mom)*
- *Attitudes*
- *Lack of opportunities*
- *No work*

What would give you a sense of belonging and recognition?
- *Real paying jobs*
- *To be allowed to volunteer even if I'm homeless*
- *Better education...about First Nations, different cultures, gender*
- *Better recognition of my abilities, not disabilities*
- *Tackle the growing gap between rich and poor*

What sorts of Actions or changes are needed to ensure you feel a sense of inclusion in the community?

- *More doctors and social workers*
- *More education of the police*
- *More jobs*
- *More housing*
- *More disability programs*
- *More childcare spaces*
- *More funding*

Who should be responsible for making these changes?

- *Government can't legislate community but it can enact policies to facilitate a more equitable society*
- *I don't have a lot of trust in government*
- *Local organizations, family, peers, police, education institutions, employers, unions, religious organizations…*
- *Everyone!!!*

Conclusion

Moving from specific dimensions of inclusion and outward to the more general ideas contained in the survey, it is possible to identify a number of general themes. These include the notion of accessibility (in both a physical and economic sense), the idea of public participation, the role of work (volunteer and paid) as a factor in shaping our sense of belonging and, connected to this, the ever present tension between individual and collective identity within community services.

There are, of course, numerous other themes and key ideas that emerged in this stage of the research. The next chapter to come will seek to highlight some of these in a way that draws attention not only to areas of shortfall, but to areas of success as well. People everywhere are working hard to overcome the barriers that come with social exclusion, and it is important to ensure that some sense of balance is present. The barriers can be big at times. So too are efforts to overcome them.

In each community are examples of active practices and processes that work to achieve a greater sense of inclusion of the community diversity. Some of these will be detailed as examples in the final report.

PART D: Key Recommendations

Engaging Exclusion: Becoming Inclusive

After the main data gathering was complete, findings were compiled into a preliminary report. From each focus group, individual survey, and community feedback sessions were collected recommendations for positive and possible change, to enhance the scope of inclusion. Civic panel members discussed a number of options for presenting recommendations.

Social inclusion issues are multi-dimensional. Poverty, for example, connects with food security and with affordable housing, and so on. As a result, identifying core areas for organization presented a challenge. Identity itself is multi-dimensional as we identify ourselves by our gender, our culture, our economic status, our race, and so on. These planes of identity and issues of exclusion also intersect with each other.

While recommendations for positive and possible change were often directed to specific levels of government or local institutions, the civic panel was mindful that the separation of recommendations by jurisdiction would create a false impression that action was only appropriate at the identified level. There was recognition that social issues usually require coordinated action at many government and institutional levels in order for there to be effective change achieved. There are, certainly, different jurisdictional responsibilities and levels of intervention possible, but there is also scope for new forms of co-operative process, recognizing the common interests in effectively addressing social issues. For example, actions around affordable housing are open to different levels of government, as well as community organizations, and has been demonstrated to work best when supported by a cooperative working process.

Process as Principal

The Civic Panel has determined that their recommendations should reflect more of a fundamental shift in approach to the issue of inclusion: that the paradigm of inclusion be that of process, as opposed to service delivery. Their consensus is that engagement is more a builder of inclusive community than service delivery can be, so that processes that eliminate barriers to engagement, and good practices around inclusive engagement are more critical to highlight as recommendations, than focusing on service delivery deficits.

We have worked to try and identify various features involved with fostering inclusiveness -- meaning creating ways to change the existing conditions faced by the socially excluded – and have developed these as the "steps" to an inclusive city. The recommendations therefore distill the many ideas and recommendations developed in the research phase down to a manageable number of key processes that help to foster social inclusion.   Each step is built around a key idea and outlines recommendations for actions.

Identities of exclusion

In the early phases of developing recommendations, there was concern the work was incomplete in that not all socially excluded communities or all aspects of social exclusion were reflected. There are various plans of identity on which exclusion can occur. Where identity is specified in a particular recommendation, it is only because it was specifically described as a particular problem in the research phase and does not exclude the potential for other aspects of identity to also be a source of exclusion. It's also necessary to note that not all identities do experience social inclusion, or experience less than others.

A note about scale

Recommendations have not been addressed to any particular level of government or to community responsibility because of the emphasis on process and to recognize that any recommendation might involve a number of different actions by different institutions and levels of government. If a particular recommendation is expressed as specific to one institution or level of government, there should also be read the explicit assumption that there are likely other institutions or levels of government or even approaches to achieving the recommendation that should be read in. An emphasis on process includes a creative approach to problem solving, which may mean methods and collaborations that act outside the usual forms of jurisdiction to which we currently refer.

Recommendations are thus applicable across a range of jurisdictions and while the specific recommendation can change when read against each, there is always an ability to engage in the process.

For these reasons, the following recommendations on process are made. Each step of process also includes some example recommendations developed in the research process around key themes.

Nine Steps to a More Inclusive City

The following outline of recommendations looks at ways in which North Vancouver City and Vancouver can work to foster more inclusive communities:

1. **Maintain public spaces and publicly funded programs and ensure that they are available to everyone**
   Key idea: accessibility of programs and spaces

   a) Schools are "hubs" of the community – create a plan that will allow them to function as more welcoming places for the community-at-large (i.e. during after hours periods allow them to be used as meeting spaces)

   b) Ensure that those most vulnerable to the impact of funding cuts are not denied access to recreation, arts and culture programs or other services and that user fees are not a barrier to participation

   c) Ensure that public spaces remain "public" and that advertising and other forms of "corporatization" are kept out of these spaces wherever possible

   d) Ensure that public spaces are welcoming places for all ages, genders and cultures; review that recreation, arts and cultural opportunities are reflective of this need.

   e) Ensure that public spaces and opportunities are created that reflect the cultures present in a given area

2. **Foster awareness of, respect for, and engagement with diverse populations and multiple communities**
   Key Idea: People of different backgrounds should have the same opportunities

   a) Develop a 'population matrix' to ensure that local government consults with a representative range of peoples (age, gender, disabilities, ethnicity and income) on all activities requiring public input.

   b) Ensure that public processes, such as consultations or public meetings, are in places, at times and dates, follow formats, and have appropriate supports for a diversity of participants.

   c) Encourage the creation and development of peer-support programs that foster an awareness and celebration of difference

d) Ensure that there is a sufficient degree of multilingual services available that detail civic and community facilities, services and opportunities for engagement,

e) Encourage local employers to be representative of the diversity of the local community, especially government and institutions. Encourage model policies and ongoing improvement of representation of diversity.

f) Encourage cross-cultural diversity events and create opportunities for greater experiences and understanding of different cultures and backgrounds.

g) Provide funding and encouragement for the development of community leadership initiatives that promote diverse participation. Diverse leadership will assist decision-making reflective of the whole community.

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3. Ensure an adequate and sustainable quality of life
Key Idea: A healthy environment is important at all levels

a) Continue to develop and implement strategies to deal with homelessuum and work to establish a continuum of housing and support – via municipal homelessness plans and in collaboration with other municipalities, regional partners, and upper tiers of government

b) Ensure adequate health and safety services are available for the community at large and, in particular, for at-risk populations (including the homeless, street-involved youth, sex-trade workers, refugees, and other marginalized groups)

c) In collaboration with community agencies, develop a policy on food security that works to counter the effects of poverty, promote healthy eating, and provide space for people to obtain and prepare healthy food via food-banks, community kitchens and community gardens

d) Strengthen municipal involvement and advocacy within all areas of environmental protection and sustainability

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4. Ensure the presence of the conditions for meaningful access to the economy
Key idea: Employment assists accessibility and participation

a) Develop a program that looks at employment issues in a comprehensive fashion – use municipal clout to encourage local businesses to create apprenticeship and job-training programs, ascertain ways to support local employment agencies and advocate for more collaboration between different levels of government in this area

b) Support and facilitate job-sharing initiatives so that more people can work; advocate for job-sharing initiatives in collaboration with other tiers of government, unions, and members of the business community

c) Collaborate with upper levels of government to create a system of credentialization that will allow foreign-trained workers to access the labour market in a way that makes the best use of their skills

d) Further develop ways to ensure that people are able to volunteer in a meaningful way and in a capacity that makes good use of their skills; foster the development of volunteer coordination programs as well as opportunities for volunteer-recognition. The linkages of volunteerism to labour market skill development should be acknowledged and respected.

e) Advocate for a national minimum wage that allows (a) people to be paid enough money to cover the cost of living and (b) for such a wage to change with annual increases in inflation

5. Support groups and organizations that work at the community level

Key Idea: Community groups play a vital role in fostering inclusion

a) Encourage collaborations among community institutions and associations; creating networks and partnerships that will leverage the benefits of collaboration, such as reduced competition, more effective use of resources, and elimination of duplication.

b) Review gaps and needs as they pertain to all crisis services and ensure that municipal funding is channelled to fill these gaps and support those most in need

c) Strengthen the coordination of information and referral services for community organizations; fund the creation of a 211 crisis and community services number or another one-stop information referral service

d) Support community groups by helping them to lobby the federal and provincial governments to change the existing laws around advocacy work and ensure smaller groups and organizations are given the tools to increase their capacity to voice their opinion and provide input.

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6. Help people to acquire the knowledge they need for personal growth, higher learning, employment, advancement and self-development

Key Idea: Knowledge is a form of empowerment and builds local and individual capacity

a) Ensure that funding is allocated to allow for adequate, good-quality and culturally sensitive licensed child-care supports as well as Early Childhood Development programs in each neighbourhood

b) Strengthen the capacity for ESL training for children and youth so as to meet the needs of the greater number of school-age residents that are now enrolled (or waiting to be enrolled) in these programs

c) Increase adult ESL learning opportunities and ensure that the level of funding for these programs is sufficient to take participants to a job-ready level of language proficiency.

d) Reduce the number and amount of user-fees in publicly-funded education facilities and ensure that students across the city – regardless of background or ability - have access to high-quality opportunities for learning and self-development

e) Establish a model student-teacher ratio for publicly-funded education facilities; continue to advocate for sufficient funding not only to meet

this target but also to ensure that teachers have the support system they need to do their job well

f) Encourage alternate educational opportunities for individuals with disabilities

7. **Ensure that people are able to feel comfortable in their communities and can access appropriate support networks so that they are able to feel that they can 'fit in'**
   Key Idea: People need to feel included – creating material opportunities is not enough

   a) Develop a means to communicate inclusiveness through a variety of channels, by creating conditions for dialogue between different community members, and by tackling the divisiveness and stigma that comes from not knowing about others. (e.g. tackle media stereotypes)

   b) Encourage dialogue of all sorts – from counselling opportunities, to talking circles, to help-lines.

   c) Ensure that the type of material supports that contribute to a vibrant and safe community are available – good gathering areas, good lighting, child, youth and senior-friendly spaces

8. **Ensure that the various 'things' that support inclusion are well-distributed (both spatially and socio-culturally) and accessible**
   Key Idea: The drivers of inclusion should not be concentrated in an unequal fashion.

   a) Audit civic and community services available for different populations in different areas of the city, determine gaps, encourage social planning to attend to these gaps

   b) Where it's not possible to provide services and sites in a given neighbourhood ensure that sufficient transportation exists that allow people of all abilities (including people with physical disabilities) to access these sites and services

   c) Review ways to ensure that the city as a whole is easily accessible to all and that public transit is affordable, timely and reliable.

9. Encourage an ever-increasing level of citizen engagement within all areas of social and civic life

Key Idea: Developing inclusion means fostering participation

a) Encourage local government participation in the development of a "Civic" education curriculum at the high school level

b) Encourage civic education offered to new comers in the community in multiple languages, respectful of gender, race and cultural differences, to encourage and support civic participation.

c) Recognize that the format utilized for committee meetings and discussions is often difficult to understand and access, and structure meetings in such a way as to be as inclusive as possible.

d) In collaboration with youth organizations, develop a plan to create child and youth councils to encourage the involvement of people under-25 in civic and community activities

PART E: Next Steps

For the Vancouver and North Vancouver City Inclusive Cities Canada Civic Panel, the next step is to oversee completion of the Community Voices report and its distribution through the communities. This will occur in late April, 2005.

After that, members of the Panel will participate in the next national steps and will also work to build the local alliances necessary to promote the need for strong social infrastructure to promote social inclusion.