



Chair Report, AGM, Thursday November 16, 2017

The Board is currently engaged in a task of preparing a support statement for the organization, stressing first the *why* we exist,

“The Nelson Social Planning Action Network (SPAN) starts from the premise that Nelson can become a caring, inclusive, dignified and socially just community. We believe this safe and healthy Nelson will be a place where everyone has an equal voice in defining problems and offering solutions to improve the quality of life.”

In working towards this vision—the *how* and the *what*—it is my observation that SPAN is the ‘little organization that could’... accomplishing so much with relatively few resources.

This report will cover SPAN’s activities and accomplishments from last October to, basically, yesterday, Nov. 15, 20167:

SPAN (General)

May 1 reverse Federal all-candidates forum

Successful with 40 individuals participating. Served an important purpose as only two forums in Nelson.

Fall 2018 will see municipal elections, so we will look at doing a forum. I believe we should do a relatively straight forward evaluation of the format before conducting a future forum.

Dialogue with business community

Discussion in response to a full-page letter in paper about issues on Baker St., generated because some local businesses felt business was down from last year and the businesses are very worried about the impact of the transient population over the summer.

After hearing from one business owner at a SPAN meeting, the SPAN board met with two Chamber reps to discuss ta broader cross-sectoral meeting.

- **June 13 – “Street Life on Baker” forum with business community, local government, social services** (40 in attendance) – facilitated by Mike Stolte.

- **July 17 – “Street Life on Baker” forum with people from the Street Culture** (18 participants) – facilitated by Lynda Dechief.
- As an action step at this forum, the Mayor committed to arranging for a **Mayor’s forum with Director of MHSU for Interior region.**

Present were two members from business community, NPD, social services, City and IHA. While a number of needs were put forward to help solve the issues in addition to more MHSU services (e.g. supported housing, supported employment, different approaches with transient population, more sharing of key info between IH and police, etc.), IHA responded that there are similar requests from many communities and that no immediate changes to local services were imminent.

Mayor identified that the one thing she would commit to was to take the matter to UBCM in the fall.

NELSON AT ITS BEST

Hosted a federal consultation on poverty in the spring. Turnout of 30 people. Some people from the **Lived Experience Project** helped facilitate the discussions.

Sub-Projects

Child and family poverty action group

The Child and Family Poverty Action Group spent the better part of this year identifying those who want to work on the issue and join the action group, learning from each other about Nelson’s services to families, barriers to service, and sharing experiences with addressing poverty through the various service approaches. In September 2017, the group held a strategic planning day that will now guide their actions for the coming year, including doing a mapping project to help parents navigate services.

Lived Experience Project

(grant from CBT) – Val Warmington and Aaron Ander have been working with groups of moms, dads, seniors, youth living in poverty to empower their voices, increase social inclusion, etc. Project is going well and over 30 people are involved. Benefits : not only are we accessing the voices and perspectives of a key demographic in Nelson, the project is also helping to create and maintain an ongoing support network for people living with poverty.

One participant is attending the Tamarck conference calls, and we are still working towards having at least one Lived Experience members join the NAIB steering committee, as well as one joining the Child and family poverty action group.

Sustainable Livelihoods group

Osprey 150 Grant '**150 Voices**' Project ...with support from NAEDP, KCDS, Hume Hotel

Coordinated and conducted in masterfully by consultant, Anna Purcell!

- ***Exceptional Business as Usual luncheon:*** Nov. 15th @ Hume for 60 people. Quite a few business people attended, but unfortunately not many of the Chamber / Baker Street business people that generated and supported the open letter earlier this year.
 - a brief Skype chat with two businessmen + staff person from St. John, New Brunswick, who are part of a phenomenally effective poverty-reduction initiative BCAPI - Business Council Against Poverty Initiative, led by the business community there.
 - A panel discussion of 8 local employers, representing small retail, food and beverage, accommodation and building sectors, sharing their tips and insights for improving employee retention, moral, and productivity

BCAPI definitely threw down the gauntlet to Nelson business to not wait but to get involved now addressing poverty here. A couple of local business owners also expressed out loud about a follow-up role.

We have not had much success bringing the Chamber of Commerce leaders to the table. But we had some serious and influential people at this table.

Whether or not anything tangible in terms of next steps arises spontaneously from business owners themselves, our next step should be to find a way to connect with the attendees to see if there is will to do some kind of business-led initiative here in Nelson. Anna will send out a survey to participants to get this going.

It could also be opportune for NAIB to recruit one or two of these business people on NAIB steering committee.

- **Arts and Poverty Event:** Acquiring stories from those with lived experience (what is your experience with poverty and then what has helped). Boxes will be placed in several locations for input, as well as an online survey. The answers will be given to some Artists who will respond in whatever medium they choose. The resulting art and stories will be displayed in early December.

VOLUNTEER HUB FEASIBILITY STUDY

Received grants from Osprey Foundation and Rural Dividend Fund to conduct this study, conducted by consultant (and SPAN member) Marje Lesko.

Extensive community dialogues and surveys done over the summer discovered / confirmed a broad consensus on the need, use and willingness to help financially support a volunteer hub for Nelson via an online model

Moving forward, we need to:

- 1) confirm Potential **Partnerships** / Identify **Umbrella Organization**
- 2) secure **ongoing, operational funding**

- 3) secure one-off **start up funding**
- 4) Conduct and assess **Pilot**

LOOKING AHEAD to 2018

An ongoing issue that needs to be front and centre for the Board and the organization as a whole—while juggling the important ongoing projects—is a lack of ongoing, sustained funding ...highlighted in our 2017-19 Strategic Plan :

“...which has meant that projects are often planned with short-term goals and limited outcomes while waiting for the next grant application or funding cycle.”

This needs to become an absolute priority in the next 12 months.

IN CLOSING ...

The first year of my tenure as Span Board Chair has been an honour, a somewhat steep and humbling learning curve, and a fantastic voyage into the heart of this community. For all of that, I want to express my immense gratitude to both my fellow Board members and to the many and varying voices that come to the SPAN table on a regular basis. Collectively, your knowledge, passion and wisdom are inspiring and essential.