

## **Chair's Report 2020**

We have just completed what was very likely, to say the least, the most unusual 12-month period in the life of Nelson at its Best (and SPAN).

The first part of the 2019-20 fiscal year, that is, November to mid-March, was pretty normal.

We finalized our 2019-22 Strategic Plan, clarifying some important language around Goals, Priorities and Objectives—and critically, adding Role, Timeline and Outcome monitoring features.

In November, we conducted our first-ever 'Council-dating' (or One-Year Anniversary Council check-in) event, an experiment that was successful enough to commit to a Two-Year Anniversary event.

We completed successful work on the three-pronged *End Poverty Initiative* 'Voices of Change' project.

We planned and designed a questionnaire and a surveying process to get a current read on what the community sees as priorities to make Nelson a stronger, healthier community.

Then ...there was Covid-19!

Fortunately, the programming for all aspects of the 'Voices of Change' project was successfully completed prior to March, except for reporting and communication tasks. We had also already aligned with City to apply for funding from UBCM's *Poverty Reduction Planning & Action* program to create a Nelson poverty reduction plan. But other projects were affected.

**The following is a list of our activities and accomplishments for 2020.**

### **End Poverty Initiative --Voices for Change**

- Two of the projects, the Literacy/Youth Skills Builder and Community Cafes, were completed last fall and covered in last year's report.
- We had done some preliminary work on the third project, the **Benefits Incubator**. But early in the year, we had to switch coordinators. Then later we had to face the reality that we didn't have the expertise to effectively work with business community
- After discussions with the Advisory Team and KCDS, it was determined that the best course of action to ensure some success for the pilot was for KCDS, who had solid business contacts and experience, to take it over
- Project findings: participants overwhelmingly agree that the pilot contributed positively to their sense of value as employees, and while there was consensus that the benefits offered some economic relief, the greater impacts were found to be in the realm of workplace relationships and culture.
- During the summer we hired Marjie Lesko to write the final summary report and to do some communications in the community: a Thank you ad, a press release and an impact information graphic

- All three pilots realized some significant success, with the Financial Literacy/ Youth Skills Builder being perhaps the most measurably impactful
- Upon reflection and discussion of the overall *Voices for Change* pilot projects, we concluded that all of these projects have strong future potential ...but with an appropriate community partner. We also recognized that while doing future pilots in our role as a community catalyser remains an option in helping to bring about social change, in the future at the project proposal stage we need to consider partnering with organizations and bodies that have a demonstrated expertise and experience in a particular realm, such as we eventually did with the Benefits Incubator + KCDS

### **Nelson Poverty Reduction Plan**

- Successful in acquiring UBCM funding (approx.\$24,000) with City to do a Nelson Poverty Reduction Plan + carried over some surplus funds from *Voices for Change*
- Hired Marjie Lesko as Project Manager
- Established a core leadership team consisting of a talented, connected and influential people from a variety of backgrounds
- Have begun regular coaching sessions with Tamarack Institute
- This will be Nelson at its Best's main project for the year 2020-21.

**Community Survey 2020** Developed and launched a Community Survey 2020, digitally and in-person, exactly at the beginning of Covid-19 lockdown. As the path and ending of Covid-19 remains very uncertain, we have decided to indefinitely postpone this project.

**Council-dating 2020** We have decided to go ahead with this project, very likely online, but push it back to early 2021. We'll talk about this during our upcoming meeting. Due to the pandemic, and with the sudden provincial election announcement, we are not doing an election forum.

### **Climate action lab**

- With IH and community champions, Nelson at its Best helped shape and conduct this City community action social innovation lab April-June
- NEST Lab question: How might we harness Nelson's collective resources and creativity to create a prosperous, resilient, and low-carbon future for all?
- A social innovation lab is an ongoing platform for collaborative innovation towards a shared intention. Often called 'a social lab', it is a community engagement and problem solving approach that draws on the strengths, empathy, creativity, and wisdom of a collective to explore new ways of making progress on a complex challenge. Social lab processes are rooted in the trust that community members can and will effectively engage on important complex issues to develop new solutions that align with their shared values and interests.
- Despite the inability to do an in-person social innovation lab, which traditionally depends on people mingling and sharing, the lab made some progress in helping people to identify and take action around a 'prototype' project
- The Four Prototypes that emerged from these two sessions were:
  - **Nelson Neighbours**: Convene neighbourhood level groups that focus on connecting community members and empowering them to develop and implement collaborative, hyper-local climate actions.

- **Increasing Uptake for Building Retrofit Programs:** Determine how civil society can best contribute to increasing the uptake of provincial and municipal energy efficiency programs in order to reduce the use of natural gas and ensure a more equitable distribution of program opportunities and benefits
- **Climate Change & Creative Sector Exchange Program:** Team members explored ideas on how to engage citizens on both the issue of climate change as well as options for responding to it in a more creative, interesting and participatory way through the arts.
- **Backyard Garden Share:** Team members explored how to support an emerging initiative to increase local food production, strengthen local economies, and build community by matching underutilized productive land in the form of backyard gardens with those who can use it.
- Have funds for a Phase 2 Jan-June 2021...planning and design currently underway
- Will be doing some communications and recruitment in Nelson later this fall

### **Inclusion and diversity**

- Met with some key community leaders to assess the need for some community discussion / initiatives around diversity, equity and inclusion—and to gauge what was already happening
- Joined an evolving ad hoc collective discussing these issues, which was in line with our decision-making tool for considering new initiatives i.e. joining already existing venture and contributing collectively, rather than starting a parallel initiative
- Intercultural Kootenays, under the umbrella of NDAC, applied for and has been designated a Community Spoke in the provincial Anti-Racism Hub of Resiliency BC Anti-Racism Network (Ministry of Citizen Services)
- These 40 Spokes are tasked with representing communities and working with local members; and identifying local priorities and moving projects forward
- The lead community organizations come from a variety of focus areas: multicultural, refugee and immigrant, community and family services, peace and restorative justice, First Nations, literacy, and social planning
- IK will offer anti-discrimination support; develop and offer Intercultural and Inclusion assessment, training and workshops; and foster communication and coordination among other local groups sharing IK's mission
- Have hired a contracted consultant and are currently developing a work plan
- Resiliency BC has given us extra funding to expand our work regionally, Castlegar and/or Trail

### **Strengthening organization**

- Seeking new Board members and active members
- Poverty Reduction Plan will also contribute to this by expanding network
- Just started hosting a Kootenay Coop Radio program to have deep dialogues around the aspiration of 'Nelson at its best' – Every second Friday 11am-noon, starting October 24

In closing, I want to express my heartfelt thanks to many people:

- the other Board members Cheryl Dowden, Helen Lutz, Phyllis Nash and Rona Park — and again in particular Rona, who has filled so many key roles over the years in keeping things moving forward—and has generously decided to stay on with us even as she explores retirement;

- the 'regulars', members who have been such a big part of Nelson at its Best this last couple of years : Anni Holtby, Kady Hunter, Kim Bator, Marjie Lesko, Nelson Ames, Tracey Therrien;
- the manager and all the coordinators who worked with us on the 'Voices for Change' project: Laura Lundie , Kelsey Baerg , Carina Costom, Anna Purcell and Marjie Lesko
- to Marjie, again, for serving in other key contracted roles this year - Nelson at its Best Coordinator, and now as Manager of our Nelson Poverty Reduction Plan project.
- To Viv Smith who is leaving us as our trusted bookkeeper

Respectfully submitted, George Chandler, Board Chair