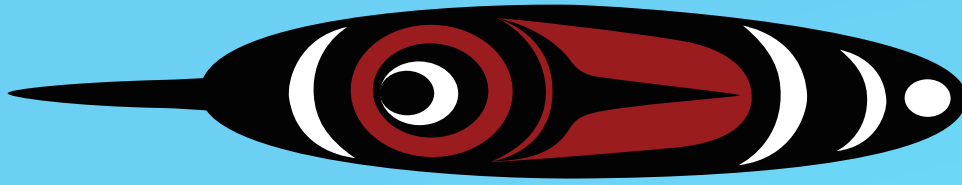


Reconciliation in Action:

Towards Building Healthy Communities



A Collective Impact Place-Based Strategy by **Our Place**



This booklet was created on behalf of [OUR PLACE](#) and [ABORIGINAL LIFE IN VANCOUVER ENHANCEMENT \(ALIVE\) SOCIETY](#)

By: [Salish Sea Productions](#)

Design and Graphics by: Bracken Hanuse Corlett and Amanda Strong.

The **Reconciliation in Action** booklet was developed in response to citizens inquiring about the **place-based model** and how it works in the inner city of Vancouver. Our Place dedicates this booklet to all our relations, community, and everyone else who is interested in joining, creating and envisioning healthier lives and communities in Vancouver, on unceded Salish territory.

Backgrounder: An in-depth Vancouver Sun series on the history of the DTES by Lori Culbert & Pete McMartin Summer 2014.

[Downtown Eastside: 260 agencies, housing sites crowd Downtown Eastside](#)

[Vancouver's Downtown Eastside is a ghetto made by outsiders](#)

[How are other Canadian cities dealing with homelessness?](#)

[The future of the Downtown Eastside: Should they stay or should they go?](#)

A new way of doing politics: Metro Vancouver Alliance (MVA).

“Almost 80% of Indigenous people live off reservation and the majority of us live in the urban context and that’s why MVA is so important for us in that it can enable us to be seen, be heard and be included; and that’s one of the things that’s missing in all levels of politics..” Scott Clark

[Watch the MVA video to learn more](#)



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Thank you



RECONCILIATION IN ACTION: WHERE CHANGE HAPPENS, 2014

On June 20th 2014, Our Place, with Vancouver's inner city residents and community partners, gathered to celebrate Reconciliation in Action – an annual community-powered celebration and conference held at Ray-Cam Co-Operative Centre, built upon the core principles of openness, mutual respect, inclusion, understanding and collaboration. In other words: Reconciliation in Action.

The intention of Reconciliation in Action is to shine a spotlight on the importance of PEOPLE, PLACE and POLICY in meaningful community engagement and development supporting grounded reconciliation. Our Place recognizes that reconciliation with the past and building a healthy, sustainable future for the community requires all parts of our community (Indigenous and non- Indigenous) to be involved. This is not a new process, in that, Indigenous people have been leading the way for reconciliation through transformative learning and positive change as we build more inclusive and reflective communities.

Wendy Grant John- Musqueam Councillor

“As we [the Musqueam community] struggled as a community... we tried many different models to ensure that we were being open, transparent and inclusive of each and every one of our 1200 band members... We came upon something called “comprehensive community planning”, and I’m here to tell you we have an entirely different result in our community. We had an approach driven by the community... I really compliment the people here for doing this because I think the success you are going to find at the end is immeasurable”

Watch Wendy Grant John's full presentation [here](#)

[Musqueam First Nation: A Comprehensive Sustainable Community Development Plan](#)

By placing reconciliation within the place-based frame, Reconciliation in Action celebrates and acknowledges that cooperation and solidarity among First Nations, Vancouver citizens, Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal service providers, local businesses, unions, artists, faith groups and all levels of government in a defined PLACE is key to achieving collective impact and creating positive and sustainable changes in our neighborhood. The paradigm shift we are building is founded on the basic understanding that “children and families grow up in communities not programs.”

The presence of over 40 community organizations at the Ray-Cam gymnasium showcased the Our Place Village, united and working together to be agents of positive change. While we often hear the cliché “It takes a village to raise a child”, Our Place demonstrated what that village looks like with inner city children and families. The event was well-attended by residents and community leaders (including politicians and other policymakers) and sent a message that the time is now to take up the challenge of re-aligning current social, economic, environmental policies, and programs to reflect the realities of the inner city residents.

Adriane Carr – City of Vancouver Councillor



Dr. Evan Adams

On Reconciliation: “Reconciliation for me is about ... equality or equity. We know in this country there are lots of us who have and lots of us who have not. We know there is a great inequality between those who are rich and those who are poor”.



Watch Dr. Evan Adam’s full presentation [here](#)



The Collective Impact Place-Based Strategy

PLACE-BASED THINKING

Place-based thinking is a holistic way of looking at how communities evolve. It acknowledges unique and complex local realities including:

- Community norms and values
- Policies that affect the community and its members
- Agencies providing services in that area
- The built environment or physical features of a community

A PLACE-BASED APPROACH

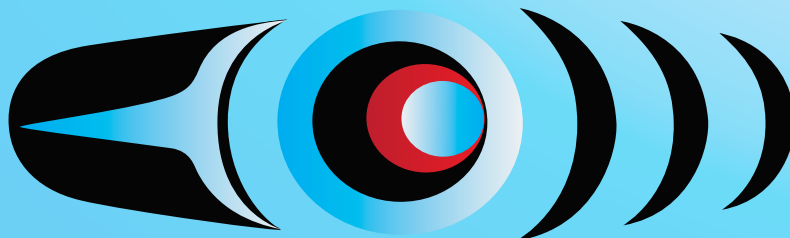
A place-based approach is an integrated strategy, designed to target and address complex issues arising in a particular community. It pays special attention to the physical, social, political, economic and service realities of a place and recognizes communities as an environment where the existing tangled web of services can be reorganized with its residents in a way that better meets their needs and aspirations towards empowerment and choice.

As a strategy, the place based approach aims to:

- Promote citizen engagement and create leaders within the community
- Mobilize and coordinate existing resources to respond to local needs
- Build new alliances across diverse sectors and strengthen existing community connections
- Use evidence-based outcomes for ongoing development of the strategy

REASONS FOR PLACE-BASED

The place-based approach builds capacity within communities to collectively identify, analyze and implement community programs and services which are consistently monitored and evaluated for their accountability to the defined principles and outcomes of the strategy. The place-based model draws on the social determinants of health and derives its ethos from a strengths-based empowerment model. It values and draws upon the diverse skills and gifts of each place or community and seeks to build leaders within the community, equipped to tackle issues impacting their community. As such, the place-based approach promotes people-centred, participatory service delivery that engages the community in life-enhancing practices. We seek to build a healthy community for all, one which provides meaningful choice and opportunities for all.



Mary Ellen Turpel Lafond- BC's Representative for Children and Youth

“Reconciliation is a big word: to me it happens in the family...”

“children and families need services in the communities they live in, from people they know.”

“This is a good community, there are amazing people in this community, even just in this room who inspire me so much. People here [at Ray-Cam] have done so much work, got a childcare going, made sure there were no barriers in that childcare. I know as representative how much they had to push to keep things going in a community where a lot of people said “no, no, no”. That’s incredible and shows that love and acceptance toward all children.”



Mary Ellen Turpel Lafond and Melanie Mark chatting with community members.

Watch Mary Ellen Turpel- Lafond 's full presentation [here](#)

TRADITIONAL VS PLACE-BASED APPROACHES

Traditional approaches tend to be modeled on a one-size fits all scale or target one specific issue while excluding other related issues. The tendency to approach service delivery as a series of top-down, competitive, siloed and segregated services is particularly problematic and this happens in all neighbourhoods. Communities are faced with a range of interconnected problems such as inadequate housing, poor health, low incomes, high unemployment, safety issues, poor educational outcomes and lack of access to sports, culture and recreational opportunities. As a result, the systems often fail because they are unable to offer the appropriate combination of programs and services which meet the needs of vulnerable children and families.

Place-based champion Mike Harcourt, former BC premier talks about the importance of the place-based approach. [Watch the video](#)

For more information about the [Healthy City Strategy](#)

PARTNERSHIPS AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Working in a publically funded community-centred context is effective in addressing the conditions under which challenges and problems occur as well as in dealing with the issues themselves. Place-based strategies which embrace partnerships, research and evaluation are able to support and engage communities more successfully. They respond to their needs in a holistic fashion through the creation of informed planning, action and evaluation.

The continued focus on engaging community members in participatory and leadership roles also builds the capacity of communities to take responsibility and ownership for their own issues over time.



A Legacy of Empowered Parents in Strathcona: From the Militant Mothers of Raymur to the RayCam Powerful Parents:

In 1971, mothers living at Stamps Place Housing were worried about their children's safety crossing the railway tracks on their way to Seymour School. The Canadian Pacific Railway promised the mothers the train would not run during the times the kids went to and from school. In the end, the train company broke this promise!

In an incredible act of direct action, mothers and their children set up tents on the railway tracks effectively blocking rail traffic to the Port of Vancouver. A few mothers even risked arrest and went to jail for a short time and the story was covered in the Vancouver Sun. Finally, the mothers won their fight and an overpass was built so the kids could walk safely to school. It is thanks to the bravery of these mothers that we have the overpass.

[The courageous acts of the Raymur mothers continue to be celebrated in the city](#) by Alexander Varty on October 22nd for the Georgia Straight.

Today, parent leadership in the community remains strong and discriminatory policies and practises do not go unchallenged. For example, in early 2011 a group of mothers with young children, frustrated by the barriers that were limiting their access to the basic resources they needed to adequately provide for their families, began to meet at a trusted local community centre. Determined to have their voices heard and to bring about positive changes for themselves and families in similar situations, they enlisted the help of two community resource workers. With these necessary supports, they began brainstorming ways to champion the interests of inner city children and families. Out of this process, they developed the seed of an innovative peer support and mentorship program, "Powerful Parents". Supported by a successful grant application, they have now implemented a training program to improve their leadership and parenting skills.



Centre photo - City of Vancouver's Ali Grant, author of Healthy City for All

THE NEED FOR POLICY CHANGES

Place-based strategies offer comprehensive, holistic, and integrated solutions that can meet both individual and broader community needs. It is important to stress that working in a place-based way does not replace the need to change broader public policies and systems in order to address the roots of pervasive problems such as inequality. Social and economic exclusion are realities that

challenge all communities; the scope of place-based approaches require multiple levels of intervention. This is why we hope to share our research and findings with policy makers in creating change on all levels.

OUR PLACE: WHO WE ARE

OUR PLACE

We are a group of people who believe in the place-based model, a model that has worked well in places like Australia and the USA. We represent all sectors of the community: local government, private sector, health, public schools, artists, social justice advocates, faith groups, unions, foundations, and residents. What brings us together is a common goal of working together to create meaningful and informed choices with our community. We are building on the legacy of those who have paved the way before us to ensure our children and families take their rightful place in all aspects of our community.

OUR PLACE consists of an integrated network, as noted above, all committed to coordinating efforts through a place-based strategy. We are Elders, youth, single parents, students, immigrants, refugees, Indigenous/Non-Indigenous citizens who live, work and play in our community. OUR PLACE was created as a response to address issues being faced by inner city residents including pervasive social exclusion, impoverishment and poor health indicators.

OUR PLACE advocates the application of a place-based methodology to all areas of the community including Children & Youth, Families, Elders, Health, Social Justice and Economic Well-Being. Partners of OUR PLACE work collectively to establish goals, develop mechanisms to hear and act upon community feedback, collaborate on projects and coordinate existing resources to ensure that community-based services are connected, responsive, reflective and sustainable. Through this strategic approach we have a proactive approach to community development and seek what is needed to meet the strategy.

For more about Our Place watch [this video](#)

PRIMARY AGENCIES OF OUR PLACE:

[ALIVE](#)

[NICCSS](#)

[RayCam](#)



Centre left- Kellie Carroll coordinator of NICCSS



Initiatives under development that support the OUR PLACE Collective Impact Approach

[MoreSports](#) was developed in Vancouver's Eastside in response to the barriers of many local children to participate in after-school/weekend organized sport and recreation leagues, and skill development programs, due to issues such as financial constraints and language concerns. The strategy was designed with the understanding that it would need to build on existing strengths in communities, fostering social inclusion and developing the capacity to deliver a multitude of sport and skill development activities for local children and youth.

The model is simple: go where children are, provide structures and programming that fit with what children and families actually want, and build on what already exists. The approach taken is unique in two regards:

- First, barriers to participation are not only removed but are rendered invisible. All participants access activities and programs through a common, indistinguishable, pay-what-you-can entry process
- Second, programs and activities are built on and integrated within existing community and school structures and systems, thus maximizing participation and minimizing costs while effectively reflecting neighbourhood capacities and priorities

[Youth Engaged Learn Lead \(YELL\)](#) The other key participants in the MoreSports system are the several hundred youth each year who register to receive training through YELL coordinated system of training that uses existing community resources to develop youth volunteers, coaches and leaders.

YELL serves multiple purposes:

- Engages community youth who are marginalized
- Provides these youth with volunteer opportunities, which are mandatory for secondary school graduation
- Builds community capacity by training individuals FROM the community FOR the community

YELL also developed a community stream engaging and training youth leaders who face systemic barriers to actively engage sports or recreation activities; focusing on these youth we are able to work with other programs and services and streamline them to become leaders and role models for other children in our community.

reBOOT a social enterprise recycling and refurbishing donated computers, and making them available to all residents at low cost.

[The Graduation Strategy](#) which aims to see all local children and youth graduate and move into gainful employment.

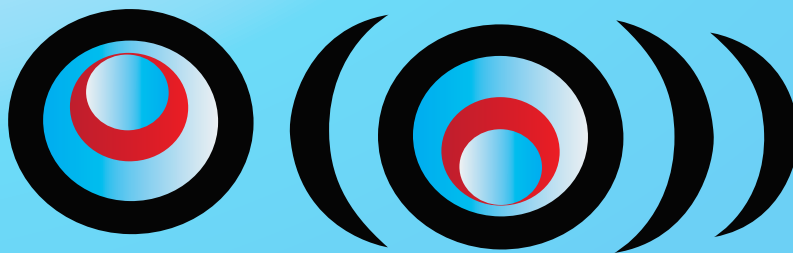
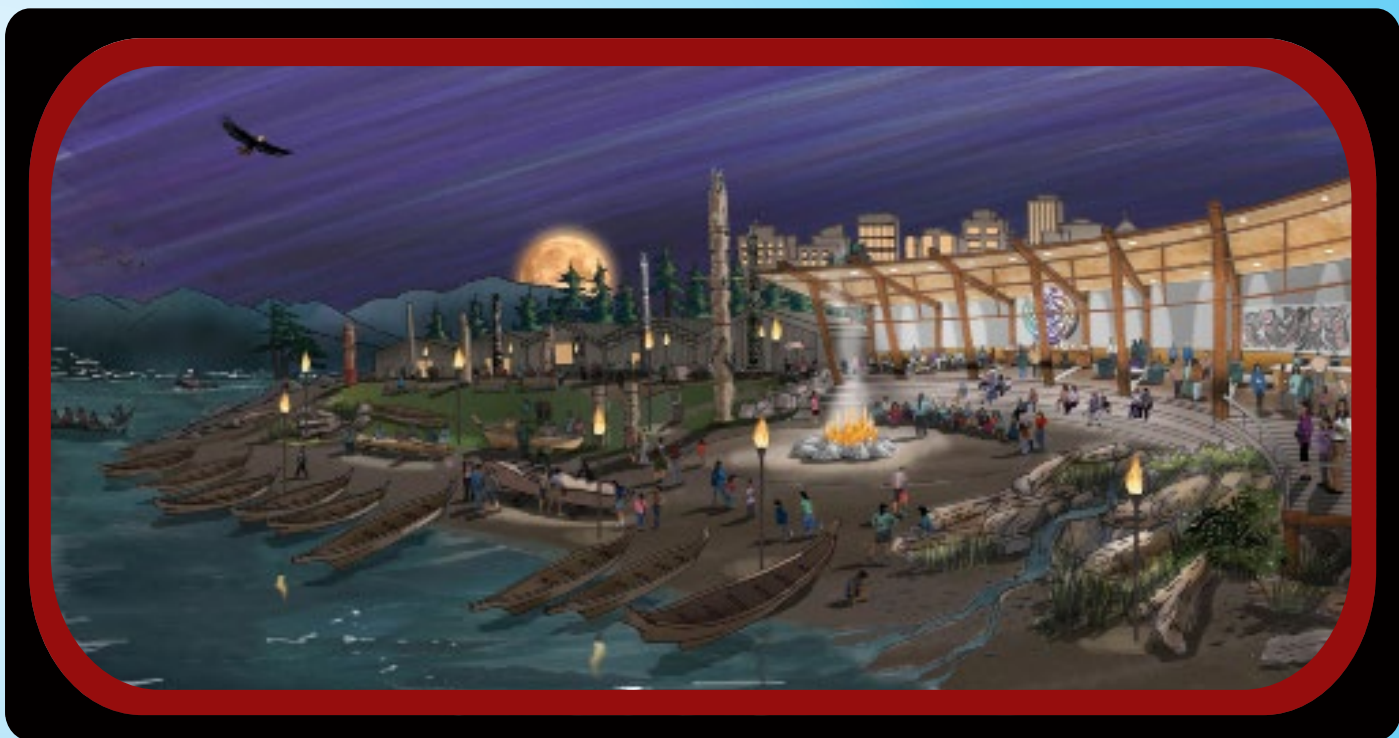
Our Place Our Children, a model that places children at the centre of child protection and family issues. Here is a [short video](#) made with one of the youth.

[Responsible Indigenous Strategy for Empowerment \(RISE\)](http://www.alivesociety.ca/alive-projects/12-alive-and-partners-launch-the-gen7-aboriginal-youth-role-model-program), a newly created strategy building on existing child and youth leadership development work with Aboriginal youth (Gen7 Aboriginal Youth Role Model Program <http://www.alivesociety.ca/alive-projects/12-alive-and-partners-launch-the-gen7-aboriginal-youth-role-model-program>). Aboriginal youth are trained as leaders and mentors and work to support the inclusion of Aboriginal children and families in local Parks Board community centres

The Inner City Economic Strategy (ICES) provides opportunities for local individuals to successfully enter or re-enter the work force.

[Watch](#) Bob Ransford from Wall Development discussing community economic development

The DTES Local Area Plan which was passed by the City of Vancouver supports the creation of the Salish Sea Civilization, a place to learn and share as part of the reconciliation process.



Responsive Intersectoral-Interdisciplinary, Child-Community, Health, Education and Research ([RICHER](#)), a social paediatrics partnership initiative, designed to foster timely access to healthcare for a community of inner city children who have disproportionately high rates of developmental vulnerability. The initiative has effectively adapted health services delivery to provide care in ways that are accessible and responsive to the needs of the community.

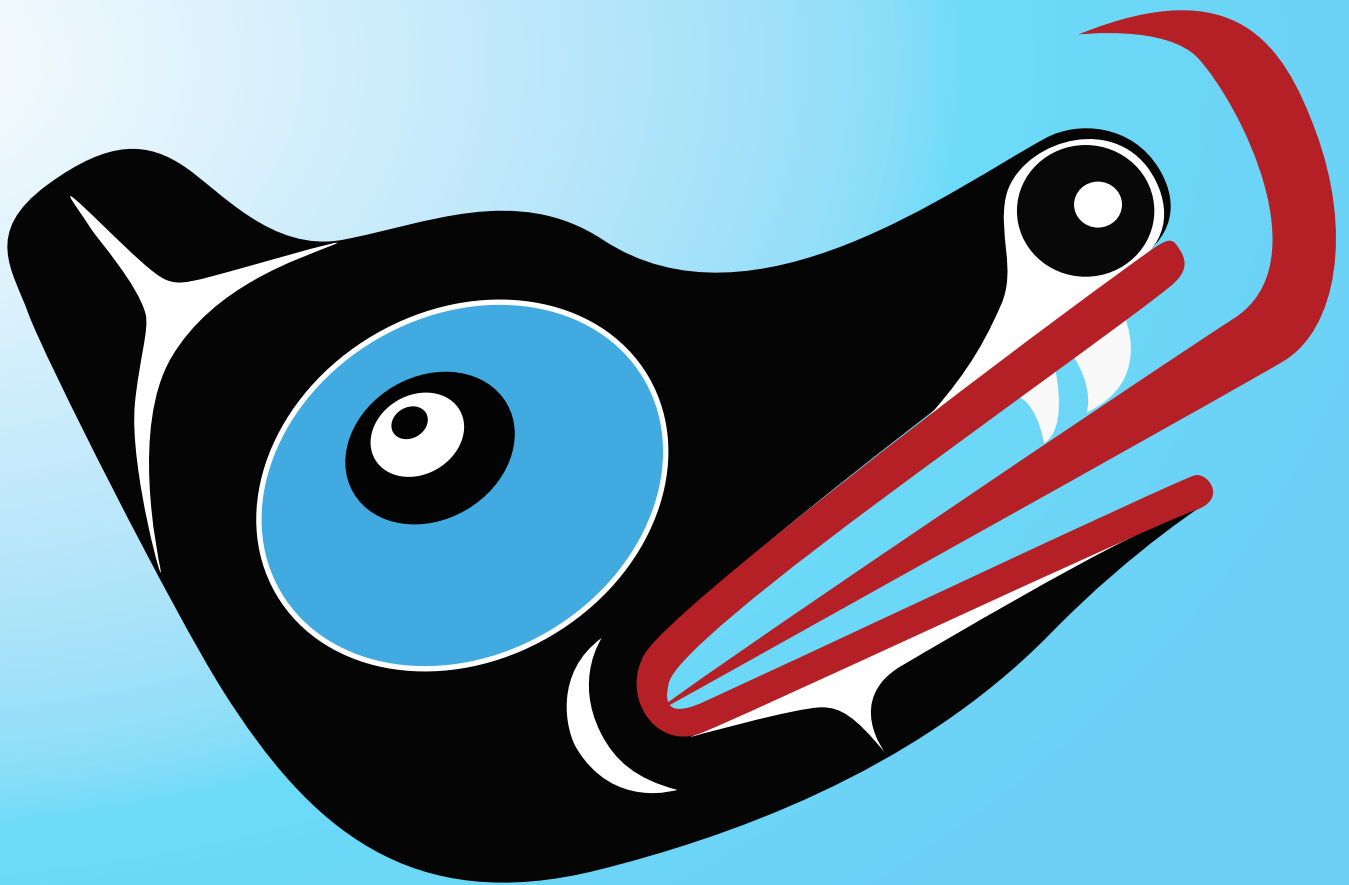
[Dr Zhung Vo from BC Children's Hospital on the importance of place-based strategies](#)



[The Vancouver Rent Bank \(VRB\)](#) a response to the ongoing impoverishment faced by many in our community. As a result, families find themselves in stressful situations where they are unable to pay rent, often having to choose between food, rent, bills or face eviction. The VRB enables qualified people a choice which they had not had before and often creates a cushion between the landlord and tenant, thus reducing the level of threat between becoming homeless and in too many cases having Ministry of Child and Families Development (MCFD) threaten to take their children into care. The initiative was immensely successful, despite the modest financial contribution that initially sustained the program. Responding to this success, the Streethome Foundation, Vancouver Foundation, City of Vancouver, and Vancity Credit Union partnered with the community under the umbrella of the Network of Inner City Community Services (NICCSS) to make the program available city-wide.

Inner City Digital Access Committee Based on the collective interest of making free/low cost internet available to residents of the inner city, a number of organizations have joined together to form a place-based community Wi-Fi partnership. While there are many programs and organizations offering Wi-Fi service, computer access and training in public spaces, the 'piecemeal' approach has not made a significant impact in creating equity for the many low-income residents, nor has it been effective in closing the digital divide. Vancouver's most vulnerable populations, be it immigrants, refugees, low income families and urban Aboriginal residents in the city are the target beneficiaries of several Digital Home Access Projects that will be initiated through the Community Wi-Fi Committee. Bridging the digital divide by providing accessible broadband internet has the potential to transform this area through improved academic results at schools, increased access to opportunities including scholarships, training, employment and community economic development advanced by a more informed and empowered population.

Ultimately, the goal of OUR PLACE is to inspire the community to work together, alongside strong local leadership, connecting to common interests in order to create local evidence-based solutions. The outcome is to develop a community-based, continuum of quality services, good-practice approaches and opportunities to assistance that are seamless and accessible; at the core of the Collective Impact Place-Based approach exists a prenatal to post-secondary strategy where the needs of all vulnerable children and families are met. Strategies are evaluated and accountable to the communities shared values and high standards, which improve the lives of all who live and work in the OUR PLACE neighbourhood.



Andrea Reimer, City Of Vancouver Councilor

“We’re finding new ways forward, and this is where the work of Our Place has come to be an inspiration for the work we need to do as a city”

“ At a city-wide level, this work will be done when every single Aboriginal child can walk into school on the first day and believe, and have their parents and community believe she has absolutely every opportunity and every right to achieve the possibility that every other child in that school does”

Watch Andrea Reimer’s full presentation [here](#)

Learn more about the following city of Vancouver initiatives mentioned by councillor Reimer in her address at Reconciliation in Action:

[City of Vancouver Motion creating Year of reconciliation and adopting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People](#)

[Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study—Vancouver by the Environics Institute](#)

[Framework for City of Reconciliation](#)

[Staff Presentation](#)

[Video of Presentation](#)

[DTES Local Area Plan](#)

[Healthy City Strategy](#)

[First Nations, Urban Aboriginal, Immigrant Dialogue Series](#)



OUR PLACE: HOW WE GOT HERE

SUCCEED IN STRATHCONA

In 2001, the University of British Columbia's Early Learning Partnership began researching into early childhood development throughout the province. By mid-decade, the data painted a stark picture of the realities faced by inner city children. By every measure calculated – Physical, Social, Emotional, Language, and Communication - 72% of Strathcona children were vulnerable in at least one of the measured areas. Statistics indicated they were not only the most vulnerable in the Metropolitan Vancouver, but also province-wide.

Local inner city children faced a daunting combination of complex problems. Lack of access to primary health care and food security, daily exposure to criminal activity, homelessness, drug abuse, domestic violence and social disorder. Conditions culminated into high push-out rates from schools, inability to achieve economic security in their later years, failure to meet crucial development milestones and achieve the success levels of their peers in other neighbourhoods. Saddening results, but not surprising considering the conditions.

Driven to see their children prevail, local families and workers set out developing a local, place-based strategy inspired by models like Harlem Children's Zone Project. [Harlem Children's Zone](#) was a multi-faceted initiative launched in New York City focusing on a 100-block area in Central Harlem. Its goal was to foster the healthy development of over 7,400 children, from infancy to adulthood, by weaving a tight social safety and education net. The Vancouver rendition, dubbed Succeed in Strathcona, set a goal of achieving educational success for all local children.

Ultimately, the achievements and legacy of Succeed in Strathcona enormously impacted the neighbourhood. The vast majority of Strathcona children are now being evaluated for physical and developmental challenges prior to entering the school system and earlier diagnosis has led to timely interventions and better outcomes. The latest research results have shown that there has been an increase of 25% in the Strathcona children's school readiness. Children and families now receive regular health care, many for the first time. Children are better supported to take advantage of early learning opportunities, while many parents have increased personal capacities, parenting skills, and in many cases have been moving into paid employment. Our Place seeks to build upon these successes.

[Vancouver School Board motion adopting the place based approach](#)



INTRODUCING A NEW PARADIGM: DISRUPTIVE INNOVATION

Resistance to new approaches is common, even if they are evidence-based. Notwithstanding good intentions, foundations and government (all levels including Land-Based First Nations), Indigenous/ Non Indigenous social and economic agencies – particularly those with regional or provincial focus - simply do not know the local residents or community groups in a neighbourhood. Thus, the development and delivery of their programs or services are generalized and often organized in a manner of convenience for their contract delivery system. While they may garner results, these programs often fail to achieve their full potential as other related-problems conflicts with their efficacy. Also, residents who could benefit from these programs remain excluded by criteria based on organizational perceptions, not resident realities. Long-term sustainability is rare, and it's worth re-emphasizing that children and family grow up in communities, not programs. Far too often when the program funding has ended, so does this “programmed community.”

Meaningful place-based responses require a new way of thinking and acting. It is not just a matter of being in a community or redirecting money --it means responding in a manner that is community specific, strategically encompassing all related complexities faced by that community and fostering sustainable community capacity. Above all, it places the realities and priorities of local residents at the centre of the response and adapts organizational operations to re-align the unorganized community system into a resident/community organized system, using evidence based results to guide ongoing development to meet the ever changing dynamics that impact community development. No one level of government or agency is capable of addressing the myriad of issues impacting the diverse elements of any community.





Chandra at Reconciliation in Action - 2014

USING EXISTING RESOURCES MORE CREATIVELY

The collective impact place-based strategy used by Our Place is not financed by any level of government or foundation at this time. The majority of this work is carried out by the dedicated leaders of the partner agencies who believe in shifting the current approach. Notwithstanding, the challenges this brings, the partner agencies who have contracts with governments (including First Nations) or foundations meet weekly and dovetail their existing programs and services to create a seamless delivery system supporting all vulnerable children and families. This enables Our Place to identify emerging needs and strategically develop a collaborative approach to fill these needs with existing or new partners.

Ray-Cam Co-Operative Centre is a Vancouver Parks Board publicly funded agency and acts as the hub for the partner agencies where over 50% of the programs are delivered from social service agencies (Indigenous/Non Indigenous) from the area. While each agency must report back to their contractor under their existing siloed or segregated contracts, we are able to tweak the programs to meet the needs of residents and the non-profit is able to report back to their funder.

“Schools are the heart-beats of the community” and “community centres are the living rooms” are oft heard expressions. The place-based approach closely ties together these two existing publicly funded institutions to build fiscal, technological, and human sustainable capacities with community residents and friends.



A RECAP: GOALS OF THE PLACE-BASED APPROACH

Increase citizen connectedness by building social inclusion as a means to enhancing safety and well being amongst marginalized communities. Creating opportunities to establish relationships of trust among residents, and between residents, and neighbourhood institutions, is critical to building healthy places. Indigenous, immigrant, refugee and low income populations face systemic barriers and therefore developing solutions, such as recruiting residents, training, employing, volunteering, and cultural reflective practices are means to enhance inclusion.

Build upon and connect existing community supports services to partner with local agencies, such as schools, community centres and neighbourhood houses that are already well-established and trusted in the area. Rather than working in silos and creating programs and services that are redundant and unconnected (like the traditional approach). They need to work collaboratively to compliment, extend and enrich existing programs and services into a strategy that can be measured and adapted to meet community needs.

Increase the capacity for citizens to navigate systems, access resources and lobby for themselves. Community capacity is defined as the social and material resources that can be leveraged to solve collective problems and improve the well-being of a given community. Individuals and organizations with credibility and knowledge of local conditions are critical to developing new connections and championing the goals and interests of the community. When leaders emerge within a community, their status as peers enables them to serve as knowledgeable role models for other community residents.

Engage the community in planning and developing mechanisms, which prioritize community input. Place-based provide opportunities for citizens to have a real voice on issues, policies and services that affect them. Strategies should feature mechanisms that respond to community concerns, needs and aspirations. Policy-makers and service providers must collaborate together to gather community input, feedback and evaluation.

A healthy city is achieved when it is made up of healthy places, people and policies.

When citizens see that they can influence their daily social reality and environment, they are more likely to commit their energy to its enhancement. Residents, organizations and businesses can achieve collective impact and support positive change. By working together, they can bring new waves of creativity, thinking and energy to transform the negative variables of their place into one that thrives.

Developing a true place-based strategy involves listening, learning, critical self-examination and a willingness to change. It means making a real commitment to placing the priorities of a community above all else.



Ray-Cam Co-operative Centre President Marilyn Mckee



[Thank you](#) to all our partners, funders and collaborators that helped to make Reconciliation in Action: Where Change Happens a reality.

