

Federation of Canadian Municipalities:
Increasing Women's Participation in
Local Government Processes

Cowichan Research Project



Sponsored by:
Federation of Canadian Municipalities
Cowichan Women Against Violence / Safer Futures Program
Cowichan FCM Advisory Committee / Social Planning Cowichan

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Finally, thank you to the many, many individuals, agencies and organizations who have generously contributed their time, space, support and assistance in a variety of ways.

Chemainus Chamber of Commerce
City of Duncan
Community Options Society
Cowichan Family Life Association
Cowichan Lake Community Services
Cowichan Spirit of Women
Cowichan Valley Intercultural and
Immigrant Aid Society
Cowichan Valley Regional District
Brass Bell Pub
CWAV Society
District of North Cowichan
Duncan United Church
Frank Jameson Recreation Centre
Healthy Beginnings
Hiiye'yu Lelum Society
Horizons Program
Island Bagel

Kerry Park Recreation Centre
Ladysmith Auxiliary
Ladysmith Chamber of Commerce
Ladysmith Resources Centre
Ladysmith Vancouver Island Regional Library
Ladysmith Women in Action
News Leader Pictorial

School District 79
Social Planning Cowichan
Somenos House
The Citizen Newspaper
Thrifty Foods
Town of Ladysmith
Town of Lake Cowichan
Volunteer Cowichan
WAVAW

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Status of Women Canada / Federation of Canadian Municipalities

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Increasing Women's Participation in Municipal Processes is a Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) project sponsored by Status of Women Canada. The FCM Committee on Canadian Women in Municipal Government is responsible for the governance of the project, and the International Centre for Municipal Development (ICMD) is responsible for its implementation. The purpose of the project is to contribute to changing municipal consultation practices and policies so that the full diversity of Canadian women have a meaningful voice in the decisions that affect their daily lives.

The specific objectives of the national project are:

- To equip municipal governments with information, tools and strategies that will assist them to develop and implement public participation processes that involve the diversity of women in their communities.
- To make recommendations, to FCM and to participating local municipalities, for action to strengthen women's involvement in public participation processes.
- To develop national and local partnerships that will strengthen the capacity of municipal governments to involve women, and the capacity of women's organizations to participate in municipal consultation and decision-making processes.

Research through the national project will produce a report documenting the extent to which current municipal public participation processes include the full diversity of women, and identify the factors that inhibit or facilitate the participation of women in municipal consultation processes. A survey of public participation processes in Canadian municipalities and the information obtained from six local research projects will be applied to produce a tool-kit of gender-inclusive public participation tools and strategies for municipal governments and women's and community groups. The tool-kit will be useful for non-governmental organizations and community organizations as well as municipal governments.

The Cowichan Research Project

Cowichan was one of six communities across Canada to carry out local research into women's participation in local government processes. The research took place between October, 2003 and March, 2004, and sought to gather information on:

- What structures are currently in place at the local level?
- How are diverse women participating?
- What are the barriers to participation for women in the region?
- What would help women to participate in local government processes?

The research process included:

- Compilation of background information and selected socio-economic data on the Cowichan Region, as well as local government structures and consultation methods.
- The development and distribution of a community survey in consultation with the Cowichan Advisory Committee, Social Planning Cowichan and with the assistance of numerous community organizations in the region.
- Focus/discussion groups and interviews with women representing the diversity of the region, as well as the range of geographical and jurisdictional areas - the CVRD, City of Duncan, District of North Cowichan, Town of Ladysmith, Town of Lake Cowichan.
- In all, approximately 400 women representing the diversity of the region contributed to the research through surveys and discussions.

Women's participation in local government processes in the Cowichan Region

Background research looked at local government structures and numbers of women participating as elected officials and on committees, based on information provided through the FCM member survey and local government web sites. The available information indicates that:

- Eleven of forty-three elected officials of the CVRD and member municipalities are women.
- Representation of women on various committees of the Board and Councils ranges between approximately 17% to 53% of total members.
- Local governments do not collect or maintain data on the number of women (or diversity of women) attending or participating in consultation processes. However, the general perception indicated from the FCM Survey and from personal contacts, was that women are well-represented and comprised between 35-50% of people in attendance at meetings.

However, the results of the survey and discussions indicated that the majority of women do not participate at the level of local decision-making on a regular basis. The reasons for this lack of participation were quite varied.

Barriers to Participation

What emerged from the research was a clear indication that while some women are able to engage in and navigate the system to their satisfaction, many experience insurmountable barriers to participation in local government processes.

- Those who were/are involved, indicated that a high level of awareness, confidence, and initiative were key factors. While some women felt satisfied that their participation was/is effective and worthwhile, some were not satisfied, and expressed frustration with various aspects of the 'political realm'.

Six themes emerged around barriers to participation:

- lack of time and energy due to competing responsibilities of home, family, work and for some women, sheer survival; differing priorities
- lack of resources related to income, childcare, transportation
- obstacles to accessibility such as meeting times, locations, language and cultural differences
- complexity and formality of the system
- lack of information and awareness about the system
- lack of faith that they could make a difference, frustration with political systems

The research indicates a gap between the efforts of local governments to involve the public in decision-making processes, and the ability of many women to participate. Generally speaking, the higher the number of barriers in life, the greater the challenges were to participation. At the same time, given some choice, many women choose to spend their energies elsewhere, where they feel they can have the greatest impact.

Recommendations for addressing women's participation in local government processes

Women who participated in the research are highly motivated, caring citizens, who are very involved in family and community life in many ways. They are concerned about many aspects of their neighbourhoods and communities and have a great deal to say on a variety of topics including housing, transportation, recreation, the environment, economic development, etc. Yet, for many, participation in local decision-making processes was difficult to impossible. This presents a clear indication for the need to develop avenues for enhancing women's access and ability to participate. Women stressed that the benefits of doing so would include:

- being able to tap into a great deal of experience and energy that currently is not being utilized;
- enhanced knowledge and understanding of various issues such as the working poor, needs for low cost recreation, housing, etc., and an intrinsic interest in children;
- new styles of decision-making and new opportunities for meeting problems in an integrated way; and
- better and more imaginative solutions, and a safer community for everyone.

There was a range of ideas presented for changes that would help women to participate and have a greater voice in matters that affect their communities.

Key themes arising from surveys and discussions included:

- Enhancing provision of basic information and of information flow between citizens and local government
- Education and mentoring to foster knowledge and skills, and to provide support and encouragement through community development avenues
- Enhancing consultation mechanisms to incorporate needs for accessibility, informality, and diversity
- Increasing accessibility on a variety of levels through information, outreach, addressing needs for public transportation and assistance with childcare
- Enhancing communications and accountability through creating clear expectations, regular reporting, and follow-up
- Systemic change to foster respect, non-partisanship, and to establish policies and practices for inclusion of gender and social values

Developing actions to support implementation of recommendations

Discussions with community and committee members stressed the importance of ensuring that their input resulted in action. At the same time, local governments have indicated capacity and interest in increasing community involvement.

The recommendations put forward by participants apply to policies and practices of local governments, to programming of community organizations, and they suggest the need for coordinated action from the local, to the regional, to the provincial and national levels. In reviewing the recommendations, the Cowichan Advisory Committee stressed that:

1. National tools and actions need to support, and be coordinated with, local action plans. However, it will be important to develop local tools that are tailored to the communities of the region.
2. Local actions need to be well-coordinated. With such a diverse region, it will be important to take both a regional and localized view. Actions need to be tailored to each community, and at the same time, shared at a regional level to foster sharing of information and best practices.
3. Action should begin with the development of goals and benchmarks to define what we want to achieve.
4. Careful consideration should be given to goals. For example, is the goal to help women be more involved, or to help local government be more accessible, or both?

5. The process should begin with dialogue to explore avenues for implementation; a review of structures, policies and practices currently in place will help to identify opportunities.
 - Local governments may feel that they are already providing for some of the avenues that have been presented. An individual evaluation process of current policies and practices may assist in identifying how each might improve or enhance what exists, and address gaps, based on local community factors and in consultation with local community groups.
 - Community organizations may be able to offer avenues for incorporating information, education and awareness activities into current programming, and to partner on any initiatives arising from the project recommendations.

Next steps

The current project provides for completion of research and the development of an action plan by March 31, 2004. The report will be circulated to the community and shared with the FCM Steering Committee to contribute to a national report and toolkit for municipalities across Canada. It will also be circulated to the broader community. The action plan provided at this stage suggests a framework for identifying short and long term objectives, and developing process and structure to facilitate actions.

- Refer report to Social Planning Cowichan and the CVRD Community Safety Advisory Committee with a request for endorsement and support to work on planning and implementation
- Explore feasibility of recommendations and identify available mechanisms (and appropriate structures) for planning and implementation
- Develop goals and benchmarks; identify short, medium and long term actions and relevant areas of responsibility
- Identify resources needed
- Confirm overall plan and begin implementation of objectives

I. INTRODUCTION

Background

Municipal government is often described as the level of government that is closest to people. The activities of local governments affect both women and men in ways that are fundamental to satisfying basic needs and that have a significant impact on quality of life. As the *International Union of Local Authorities (IULA) Worldwide Declaration on Women in Local Government* states, municipalities are therefore in the best position both to involve women in the making of decisions concerning their living conditions, and to make use of their knowledge and capabilities in the promotion of sustainable development. Yet, on a national scale, women continue to be significantly under-represented in municipal decision-making roles. Indications are that women are also under-represented in the public participation processes that inform and influence decision-makers.

FCM Increasing Women's Participation in Municipal Processes Project – The National Project

Increasing Women's Participation in Municipal Processes is an Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) project sponsored by Status of Women Canada. The FCM Committee on Canadian Women in Municipal Government is responsible for the governance of the project, and the International Centre for Municipal Development (ICMD) is responsible for its implementation.

The purpose of the project is to contribute to changing municipal consultation practices and policies so that the full diversity of Canadian women have a meaningful voice in the decisions that affect their daily lives.

The specific objectives are:

- To equip municipal governments with information, tools and strategies that will assist them to develop and implement public participation processes that involve the diversity of women in their communities.
- To make recommendations, to FCM and to participating local municipalities, for action to strengthen women's involvement in public participation processes.
- To develop national and local partnerships that will strengthen the capacity of municipal governments to involve women, and the capacity of women's organizations to participate in municipal consultation and decision-making processes.

The national project will produce a report documenting the extent to which current municipal public participation processes include the full diversity of women and identifying the factors that inhibit or facilitate the participation of women in municipal consultation processes, and a tool-kit of gender-inclusive public participation tools and strategies for municipal governments and women's and community groups.

The national project is using five main strategies: building and strengthening partnerships, surveying the "state of the art" of gender-inclusive participatory practices at a municipal level, participatory action research in local communities, developing action plans and creating tools. Building and strengthening partnerships will be a key strategy at all stages of this project. Building partnerships involves identifying and strengthening existing networks, as well as developing new connections.

Research into the "state of the art" of gender-inclusive public participation processes in Canadian municipalities will provide the context for local projects and the final report. A scan will be performed to assess where Canadian municipalities stand in relation to how they involve the public in a meaningful way, use participatory practices that facilitate public involvement, and provide access to these processes for diverse groups of women.

Six municipalities were selected to participate in participatory action research. Although the local projects have been based on a framework developed nationally, each local community has tailored the research approach to their circumstances and priorities. It was intended that local women, women's organizations, and municipal representatives would be involved in adapting the research strategy, implementing the activities, analyzing the findings and developing a local action plan. The local research would include activities to reach and involve diverse groups of women who are generally not involved in that municipality's participation processes, with a focus on hearing from women whose experience may be affected by race, class, ability, sexual orientation, refugee or immigrant status, age, language or geographical isolation.

A collaborative and inclusive approach to developing action plans is critical to outcomes at the local and national level. Locally, the development of action plans is an opportunity to integrate the analysis based on the experiences of women living in the municipality with community organizations' understanding of change strategies, and the knowledge of municipal representatives in relation to existing policies and structures, points of innovation within local government, current priorities, internal decision-making processes, etc. The findings of the survey of public participation processes in Canadian municipalities and the local projects will be applied to create a tool-kit of public participation methods that can effectively involve diverse women in municipal processes and decisions. The tool-kit will be useful for non-governmental organizations and community organizations as well as municipal governments.

II. OVERVIEW OF THE COWICHAN RESEARCH PROJECT

In August, 2003, Cowichan Women Against Violence (CWAV) Society submitted an application on behalf of the community to undertake a local research project and was selected to participate in the national research project along with five other Canadian communities: Halifax, Montreal, Iqaluit, Saskatoon and Thunder Bay. Each community was given a budget of \$10,000 to cover wages and expenses related to the research and reporting.

The FCM Women's Committee / National Steering Committee provided direction and support to the local research through hosting an initial planning session in Ottawa in October, 2003. The meeting presented an overview of the project, and assisted participating communities to begin their planning processes. Additional support was given through three teleconference meetings between the six communities to share progress and information. A final meeting will be held in Ottawa in March, 2004.



Hon Jean Augustine, Secretary of State (Multiculturalism) (Status of Women) officiated the launch of the project with the FCM Canadian Women in Municipal Government Committee, in Ottawa in October, 2003. (Photo: Renee Giroux)

The Cowichan research project activities included:

- Liaising/networking with local governments and the community (at large and other organizations) to create awareness and generate involvement.
- Establishing a representative local advisory committee to guide and direct the project.
- Designing and conducting a participatory research process that will involve the full range of women (individuals, women's organizations and local government) in the community.
- Compiling information on our community and municipal government structures and processes to provide an inventory, context and analysis (geographical and socio-economic overview; regional/municipal government structures; advisory committees, policies, mechanisms, processes).
- Analyzing the data and working with the advisory committee locally to develop an action plan that will be presented to the FCM and to local municipalities.
- Preparing a report with recommendations that can be implemented.
- Participating in the FCM Steering Committee to contribute to the development of tools, partnerships, action planning.
- Networking with the FCM steering committee and keeping them up to date on our activities and progress.

(Refer Appendix A for detailed project schedule)

Aims of the Research

The basic framework and objectives for research were set out as part of the national project, which determined that the process to be participatory in nature and focused on action. By design, participatory action research should be inclusive, representative, and action oriented. The principal investigators should be representative of participants; research should focus on outcomes while respecting outputs; and the outcomes should include enhancing participation, community building, increasing understanding of the issues and creating change.

Key questions to be addressed in the research were:

- 1) What local government structures are currently in place at the local level?
 - Government structures; Committees
 - Public input processes; e.g., council meetings; public hearings; surveys
- 2) How are diverse women participating?
 - As elected officials
 - As citizens, leaders, participants in public consultations?

- How aware are they of municipal government roles and processes?
- Do they participate? How? Why or why not?

3) What are the barriers? What is needed?

- Needs for participation
- Needs for structural and other changes on the part of government (e.g., decision-making processes; public input processes)

Cowichan Region FCM Advisory Committee

An advisory committee was formed to provide direction to research design and methodology and to oversee the project. The Cowichan Advisory Committee to the FCM project was formed as a sub-committee to Social Planning Cowichan (see Appendix B for Terms of Reference).

The purpose of the committee is to provide direction, support and assistance to the project work, and to provide an ethical overview of the process. The committee's role has been to oversee the research, and be part of the development and implementation of a local action plan that will contribute to national research and action. In turn, the project will report to Social Planning Cowichan during the research process, and provide a report to participants, the community at large, and the FCM.

Committee Members:

Anne Murray, Cowichan Valley Intercultural and Immigrant Aid Society
Carol Fryer
Debbie Williams, Hiiyeyu'Lelum / House of Friendship
Gillian Leverkus, Social Planning Cowichan
Jean Crowder, District of North Cowichan
Jenny Farkas, City of Duncan
Kathy Skovgaard, Cowichan Women Against Violence Society
Louise Hall
Patti Delisle
Sandra Goth, Cowichan Family Life, Social Planning Cowichan
Vern White, United Way, Social Planning Cowichan

The committee has met three times and communicated on an ongoing basis during the process of work between October, 2003 and March, 2004. It has worked on research design and process, and has played an active part in networking, promotion, communications and sponsorship.

Research Design and Methodology

While the overall aims and design of the research were laid out at the national level (i.e., basic questions, objectives and a focus on participatory action research), the design of the local research was determined and planned collaboratively between the project coordinator and the local advisory committee. Considerations for design focused on scope and range, research tools, and inclusiveness.

The question of whether the research would be done on a region-wide basis or be focused within a smaller geographical area (i.e., one municipality) presented a number of considerations and differing perspectives, including:

- the need to reflect differences between regional and municipal government structures (i.e., there are both municipal and regional governments and in one area, both levels of government may be relevant);
- overlapping experiences (i.e., people living in one area often use services in another, which means that their lives are affected by more than one local government);
- awareness of government structures and jurisdictional boundaries (i.e., that many people may not be aware of which jurisdiction they live in or which local government has responsibility for given services), and
- time and resource limitations of the project (trying to encapsulate the region, and conduct research that is valid in this large and broad context).

The advisory committee felt strongly that the research needed to reflect the regional context in which we live. It was decided that the research would take on a regional approach and look at the overlapping structures as well as experiences of women within them. It was noted that the various layers of local government included the region and four municipalities, as well as Cowichan Tribes. The question was raised as to whether First Nations government would enter into the research. As the research was intended to focus on municipal structures, it would not include a focus on First Nations government.

It was determined that research methodology would include a written survey, focus groups and interviews. Given time and budget limitations, the goal would be to develop a relatively short and simple survey with a maximum of about six to seven questions, and multiple choice answers to accommodate needs around compilation and analysis. Limitations of a survey were considered in depth and are discussed later in this section. The written survey would also be administered to focus groups and used as a discussion tool.

It was emphasized that the full range of women in the community need to be represented in the research, and that there should be an educational component around local government processes included as part of the discussion groups.

The Research Process

Background Research on Local Government Structure and Consultation Methods

Background research was conducted to compile descriptive information and socio-economic data on the Cowichan Region, as well as local government structures and consultation methods. This was done through statistical data gathering, literature search and direct contact with each of the five local government offices, including staff and elected officials. The FCM Member Survey (Appendix C) was filled out and returned by three of five local governments in the region; it provided additional information around local government policies and processes in support of women's participation for these areas.

Community Survey

A local community survey (Appendix D) was developed in consultation with the Cowichan Advisory Committee and members of Social Planning Cowichan Committee. The purpose of the survey was to provide an additional means of participation for women, an additional tool in conjunction with focus groups and interviews, and it was anticipated that it would also provide a useful comparison (test) of responses in relation to discussions. The survey was designed to be brief and as accessible as possible in terms of language and literacy levels. It contained seven multiple choice questions around participation, and five questions on personal information to provide basic information on respondents.

Twelve hundred copies of the survey were printed and distributed via eighteen pick-up/drop off locations throughout the region, including local government offices, business and community organizations. Advisory committee members and project staff also distributed the survey through numerous networking avenues (attending meetings of organizations, etc.).

In addition, several citizens and community organizations around the region provided invaluable support to the survey process through distribution, advertising and through hosting the survey at events.

- For example, a local Chamber of Commerce hosted the survey at their table at a weekend community event and encouraged attendees to fill it out.
- A local community group delivered surveys to their members to ensure women living in a rural area had access to participation.
- A local women's auxiliary and a local church advertised the project in their newsletter to support the initiative.
- These and other efforts were a reflection of the positive reception of the project around the region, and a generous community spirit.

A notice with background information and link to the survey was included on the Safer Futures website, and a written notice was sent via email to over 150 individuals and organizations in the region with a request to circulate (this email message included a link to the website).

Discussion Groups and Interviews

A number of focus/discussion groups and individual interviews were planned to represent the diversity of women from around the region, as well as the range of geographical and jurisdictional areas - the CVRD, City of Duncan, District of North Cowichan, Town of Ladysmith, and Town of Lake Cowichan. It was anticipated that focus groups could be done in partnership and with hosting of various community organizations and networking groups. Ten possible groups and a number of potential host community organizations were identified, some of whom were represented on the advisory committee. Each was contacted by the project coordinator who provided information and worked with organizers to plan and conduct the session.

In the majority of cases, host organizations did the bulk of outreach and contacting potential participants. Their knowledge of their local communities and their connections were absolutely invaluable in this regard. It should be stressed that the interest and efforts of these individuals and organizations were central to the success of the focus groups and provided critical sponsorship and support that was integral to the overall positive response.

Structure and Procedures

Focus/discussion groups and interviews were designed to be flexible and to be responsive to the needs of participants who had varying levels of experience, awareness, cultural and linguistic differences, and were of varying ages, as well as for different settings and the attendance in some cases, of mothers with young children. Costs for childcare and transportation were made available, however, as all of the groups were either conducted close to participants' home base, or in conjunction with programs that included sponsorship, these costs were not a factor.

Each group was very different, ranging in numbers of participants from 4 to 25, and in age, race/ethnicity, language and literacy levels, occupations, awareness and experience with local government processes. While the overall intent was to obtain information on women's participation in local government processes, the questions needed to be very broad to accommodate the diversity of participants, and the process needed to be very flexible to accommodate the variety of needs for information sharing and dialogue.

Each discussion was planned to begin with a brief overview of the project and process (including a written project summary), informing participants of the questions that were going to be addressed, and how the information was going to be used. It was emphasized that the discussions would be reflected in a formal report that would become available to

the community at large, and would be part of the national research project. Participants were advised that the report would attempt to reflect points raised, but would not be specific to that group or any community per se, unless points were factual in nature or area specific recommendations were made.

Information on local governments obtained from websites was made available to participants, and where relevant, the information was presented and brought into discussions. In many groups, an overview of local government functions and responsibilities was an important precursor to discussions. All but one of the groups were given a copy of the survey and asked if they would like to fill it out. Participants were given the choice to fill it out, or to keep it and return it at their leisure. Staff remained after sessions to provide assistance to fill out surveys where appropriate. After allowing for time to view the survey, a series of four to six questions, depending on the group, were posed one at a time.

The format followed four to six basic questions, and depending on the group, a number of prompting questions were posed:

- 1) What has your experience been with local government?
Have you had any experience with local government? What does local government mean to you? Have you been involved/have you participated in any way (voting, surveys, committees, etc.)? Why or why not?
What has been the most successful or satisfying of your experiences?
- 2) What are the barriers to participation for women (for you or others)?
What makes it difficult or hard to participate? What have the challenges been?
- 3) What would make it easier for women to be involved in local government processes?
What would need to change?
- 4) How would the community benefit from women's participation in local government processes?

For each group, notes were taken by the project coordinator or by an assistant, and subsequently transcribed by the project coordinator. Participants were asked to record their names and contact information on a sign-up sheet if they wanted to receive a copy of the report and/or to provide further input and feedback. Considerations for this part of the research included the need to ensure privacy of participants. In the following sections, reporting on focus groups, interviews and comments from the surveys are integrated into the general heading of discussions.

Communications and Awareness Activities

Throughout October, 2003 to March, 2004, information about the project was shared in a variety of ways. Networking and meetings also provided important feedback to the process.

- In November, 2003, letters of introduction were sent to local governments to provide information and request participation through providing survey drop off locations, and background information on consultation processes.
- In December, 2003, a presentation was made to Duncan City Council. Personal contacts were made with each chair/mayor or administrator by way of introduction, as well as to obtain information.
- Meetings with staff and volunteers of community organizations to discuss the project and plan focus groups was an important part of networking and relationship building.
- As mentioned, information about the project and survey was posted on the Safer Futures website, and considerable outreach and networking was done both in person and via email notices with over 150 community contacts, including individuals, businesses, churches, Chambers of Commerce, etc., and several individuals and community organizations assisted through distribution of information to their members.
- A media release was distributed in January, 2004 to newspapers and newsletters around the region, and two media interviews were conducted. The project generated two news articles and two community organizations included information in local newsletters (Appendix E).



Cowichan Survey Launch Photo: Colleen Dearden

Limitations of the Project

As mentioned, at the onset of the project, it was recognized that the short time frame and the budget would present limitations to the methods and scope of the research, particularly with respect to the survey. The survey itself had to be designed to be short, and administered with little assistance (although telephone surveys were offered, and some assistance was offered at meetings where staff were available).

As a broad mail-out was not possible within the project budget, the advisory committee discussed some possibilities around distributing it through existing mail-out avenues such as tax or utility notices of local government. However, it was determined that this avenue would be restricted to home owners, and other methods presented similar constraints and complexities. In the end, the decision was to distribute the survey via drop off locations and networking avenues such as meetings, email and the Safer Futures website, and consider the results in light of the limitations.

The decision to take a regional approach, while critical to the context of the project, did present further complexities. It was not possible to accommodate all of the possibilities or tap into the full potential of the region in terms of involvement and participation during the time available.

Also, the decision to take a regional approach was made after the research design and tools were developed. While the advisory committee was fairly diverse in terms of geographical representation of members, it lacked specific representation from three areas of the region. Consultation with women from these areas was not part of the research design processes, and feedback from some areas pointed out quite firmly that such consultation would have been helpful to provide input into the design, tools and methods.

It was noted that historically, decisions are often made centrally, and communities outside the Duncan area have often been considered somewhat peripherally. In retrospect, the decision to proceed with a regional focus should have been followed immediately with communications with individual communities to provide input and direction to the process. Once again however, the generosity of spirit of women from around the region paved the way forward despite this oversight.

III. LOCAL GOVERNMENT STRUCTURES AND PROCESSES IN THE COWICHAN REGION

This section will outline how local governments are structured in the Cowichan Region and look at how women, and interests specific to women, are represented in those processes. We begin by presenting a picture of the provincial legislation governing local governments.

Local Government in British Columbia

Local government in British Columbia is organized on both a local/municipal and regional basis through municipalities and regional districts, whose purposes generally include:

- providing good government for its community,
- providing the services and other things that the local government considers are necessary or desirable for all or part of its community,
- providing stewardship of the public assets of its community, and
- fostering the current and future economic, social and environmental well-being of its community. (Local Government Act, Chapter 323; 1998-34-1; 1999-37-1)

Briefly, under the provincial legislation, a municipality is a corporation of the residents of its area, the governing body of which is its council. A municipality may provide any service that the council considers necessary or desirable and may do this directly or through another public authority, person or organization.

While municipalities were established by the BC Government during the late 1800's, Regional Districts were not created until 1965. Regional Districts are considered as 'federations' of municipalities and rural areas, formed to secure representation and services in unincorporated areas and to ensure a regional approach to matters transcending municipal boundaries. Thus, residents are represented by a regional board composed of directors from both municipalities and electoral areas.

Policies and regulations governing the operations of Regional Districts are currently set out under the Local Government Act, which until recently, also governed municipalities in BC. The new Community Charter, adopted in 2003, currently applies to municipalities and will eventually apply to both municipalities and regional districts.

The Cowichan Valley Regional District and Member Municipalities

Incorporated in 1967, the Cowichan Valley Regional District (CVRD) is comprised of four municipalities and nine electoral areas, spread over 3,508 square kilometers, spanning the width of Vancouver Island and ranging from the Malahat to North Oyster. Cowichan is a diverse region, both geographically and demographically. It is both rural and urban, with a total area of 3,473 square kilometres and a population of 71,998. Approximately 8% of the population of the CVRD is foreign-born, approximately 9% is of Aboriginal identity, and approximately 4% of the population is visible minority (refer Appendix F).

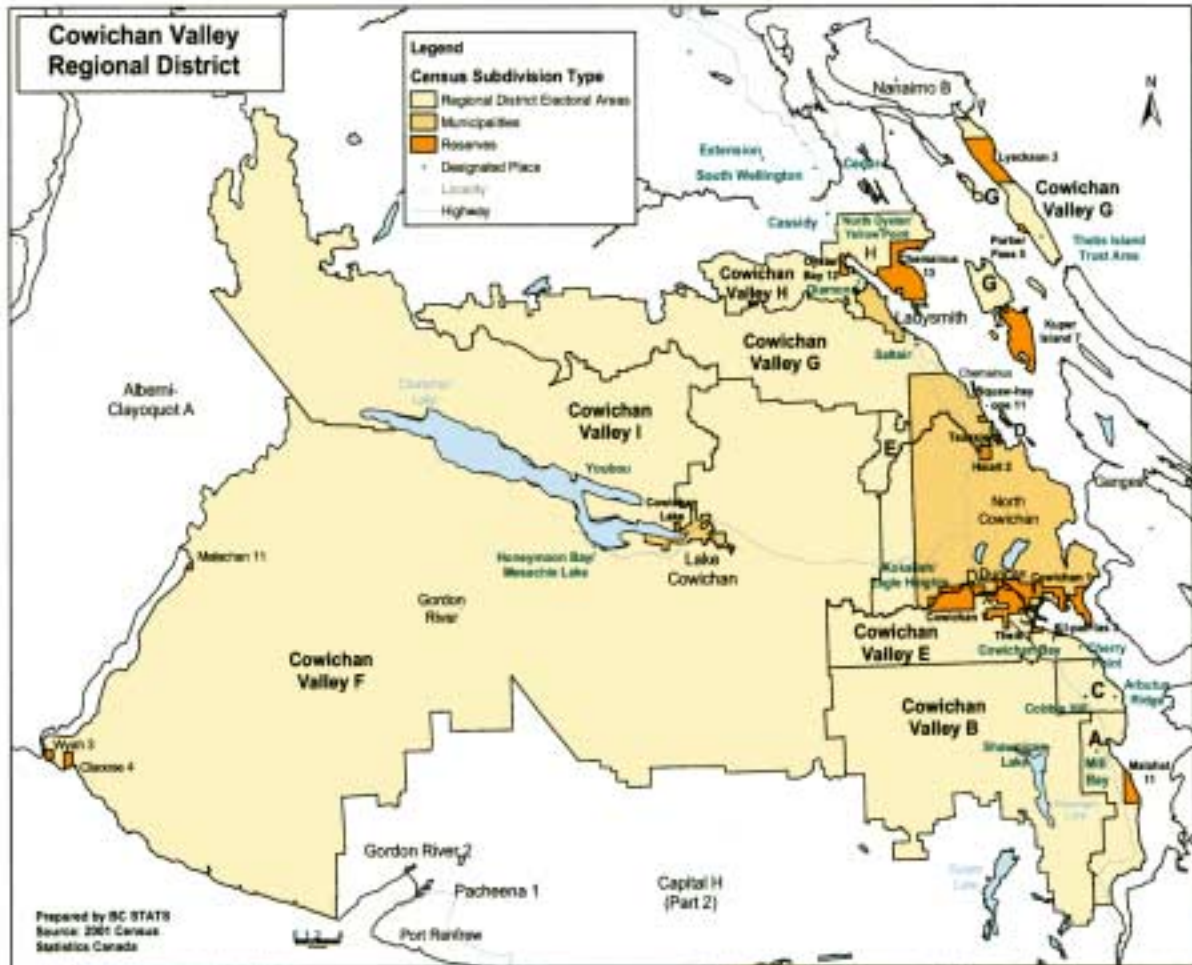
Figure 1: Location of the Cowichan Valley Regional District



Local Government Functions

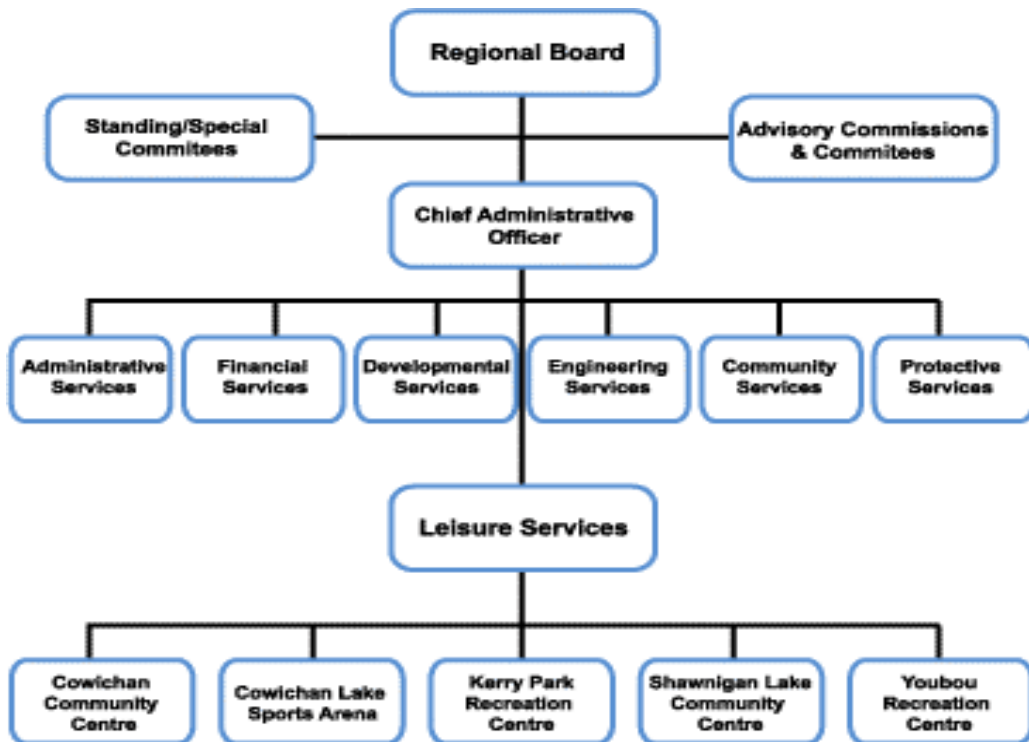
As a Regional District, the CVRD deals with local issues on a region-wide perspective, as well as administering local functions for the unincorporated Electoral Areas directed by locally elected officials. The Regional District Board responds to locally expressed needs for service and consults with residents about which services they can provide, where they are to be provided, and how the services are to be financed. Some services may be provided to only part of an electoral area, while others are provided region-wide. Costs are recovered by billing those taxpayers benefiting from the services.

Figure 2: Cowichan Valley Regional District Municipalities and Electoral Areas



The CVRD has seven departments that provide for a range of services and functions relating to community planning and development, financial management and human resources, water, sewage, solid waste management, protective services (911, fire), recreation and libraries fire protection, and emergency planning.

Figure 3: Cowichan Valley Regional District Structure



(Source: Cowichan Valley Regional District website; <http://www.cvrld.bc.ca>)

As corporations, municipalities are also responsible for a range of functions and services, each governed by their own council and managed or delivered through a variety of departments, including but not limited to administration, finance, planning and development, parks and recreation, public works, etc. While Regional Districts operate on the basis of responding to locally expressed needs for services, municipalities have considerably more latitude in what services they will deliver, and are responsible for such things as public works and infrastructure that Regional Districts are not.

Board and Council Representation

Each of the four municipalities of Duncan, North Cowichan, Ladysmith and Lake Cowichan, is governed by a separate council comprised of seven elected officials (six councilors and a mayor). Each municipality is represented on the Board of the CVRD, along with nine electoral areas represented by individual area directors. There are 15 Board Directors who handle the business of the CVRD.

Council Meetings

Meetings of Councils and the Board are held regularly, every two weeks for Councils, now once per month for the CVRD Board. With the exception of North Cowichan, meetings are held on weekday evenings. Agendas are set and formalized during the week prior to each meeting. Meeting dates, times, locations, agendas and/or minutes are posted on four out of five of the local government websites and can be obtained prior to meetings by contacting local offices.

Local Government Committees

Local governments have a range of committees and commissions that provide a variety of advisory functions to elected officials, Councils and Boards. From time to time, other committees may be formed temporarily for special purposes, such as the planning, development or review of an Official Community Plan. The CVRD has nine standing committees, three special purpose standing committees of the Board, as well as a number of Advisory Planning and Parks and Recreation Commissions representing individual electoral areas, and a regional Economic Development Commission.

Composition of committees and commissions (the latter which are established under by-law) varies with their purpose and function, and may include Directors, and/or residents and community organizations. In addition, Directors are also appointed to sit on other committees of the community and other levels of government.

Similarly, each municipality has a number of committees and commissions that provide relevant advisory functions. Table 1 provides a list of committees of local governments (note: this information was compiled from information listed on web sites and/or provided by local governments, and may not be comprehensive). Table 2 shows appointments of elected officials to various other committees (again, this has been compiled from information posted on individual websites).

Table 1: Standing and Special Purpose Committees, Advisory Committees and Commissions of Board/Councils in the Cowichan Region

CVRD	NORTH COWICHAN	DUNCAN	LADYSMITH	LAKE COWICHAN
Corporate Services	Admin & Finance	Finance	Finance & Administration	Finance & Administration
Electoral Area Services	Community Recreation	Public Works	Labour Management	Public Works
Engineering Services	Protective Services	Planning and Priorities	Public Works and Govt Services	Community Economic Adjustment Advisory Planning Commission
Protective Services	Forestry Advisory	Parks & Rec	Public Safety	
Transit Committee	Public Works	Labour Relations	Economic Development	
Round Table/Environ Agriculture	Technical Planning	Communications	Downtown Advisory	
First Nations Advisory	Commissions:	Public Safety & Emergency Services	Utilities Task Force	
Community Safety Advisory	Parks and Recreation Commission	Fire	Advisory Planning	
Special Purpose:	Harbours Commission	Parking Advisory	Parks/Rec	
Site Acquisition	Environment Committee	Advisory Planning Commission	Health and Safety	
Local Calling Area	Board of Variance	Race Relations	Board of Variance	
Regional Parks	Advisory Planning Committee		Green Street	
Economic Development Commission			Heritage Centennial	
Advisory Planning Commissions				
Parks Commissions				

Source: compiled from information posted on Local Government web sites
<http://www.town.ladysmith.bc.ca/>; <http://www.town.lakecowichan.bc.ca/>;
<http://www.city.duncan.bc.ca/>; <http://www.cvrld.bc.ca/>; <http://www.northcowichan.bc.ca/>

Table 2: Local Government Appointments to Advisory Committees

CVRD	NORTH COWICHAN	DUNCAN	LADYSMITH	LAKE COWICHAN
Economic Devel Comm	BC Forest Recovery Ctr	Chamber of Commerce	Celebrations	N/A
CL Community Forest Coop	VI Regional Library Bd	Community Centre Commission	Chamber of Commerce Festival of Lights	
City of Duncan Persons with Disabilities	Chemainus Festival of Murals Soc	DBIA		
Municipal Fincance Authority	Chemainus & Dist Chamber of Comm	Joint Utilities	Fisherman's Wharf	
Municipal Insurance Assoc	Cowichan Community Ctr Comm	Mid Island Treaty Advisory	Seniors Advisory	
VI Regional Library	Community Safety Advisory	Persons with Disabilities	Community Health Ctr	
Treaty Advisory Mid, West & South Island	Croton Community Ctr	Race Relations		
	Duncan-Cowichan Chamber	VI Library Bd		
	Mid-Island Treaty	2010 Olympics		
	Pioneer Park Complex	VICC Railway		
	Somenos marsh Wildlife Ctd	BC Forest Disc		
	Tourism VI Board	Canada Day Celebrations		
	Duncan Festival	Cowichan Exhibition Cowichan Sportsplex Community Safety Advisory Summer Festival Family Court Farmers Mkt Futurecorp Heritage Historical TAVI Valley Seniors Parking Advisory Housing Society		

(Source: compiled from information posted on local government websites)

Local government committees and commissions are usually appointed on an annual basis. Recruitment is often advertised in local newspapers. Some local governments include a written application process, either via an application form, or a request to have an applicant write a letter stating their interests. There are no written policies in place that state requirements for inclusion of diverse groups on committees; however, some committees do deal specifically with matters relating to diversity, such as the City of Duncan's Race Relations Committee, Persons with Disabilities Committee, the CVRD First Nations Advisory Committee and the Community Safety Advisory Committee.

Representation of issues specific to women

The CVRD has one committee that deals with issues specific to women's safety: the Community Safety Advisory Committee. This committee has been in existence since 1995 – beginning as a Select Committee on Violence Against Women, moving to a Task Force on Women's Safety, to a Women's Safety Advisory Committee, then to the Community Safety Advisory Committee (CSAC).

The CSAC is a standing committee of the Board and its purpose is to advise the Board on matters relating to community safety. It has been a catalyst in the development and implementation of projects and policies relating to prevention of violence against women through local government processes, including a Regional Public Safety Policy, Land use Planning Policies, and a Resolution to the Union of BC Municipalities.

Public participation in local government processes

Citizen input and feedback to local government decision-making happens by way of both formal (legislated) processes and informal (non-legislated) avenues. Formal processes are generally those that are required under the Local Government Act and/or Community Charter and may have specific requirements on how they are to be conducted. Informal avenues are not required per se, but are arranged by local governments in recognition of the need for process beyond that which is required (such as town hall meetings) or are initiated by the public (personal contacts, lobbying, informal meetings, etc.).

While they do not have specific policies around public participation, some local governments such as North Cowichan, Ladysmith and the CVRD, have included general policies to encourage consultation and involvement in general, and/or of specific groups, in their Official Community Plan(s). Each local government provides for all of the required methods of consultation, and there were many similarities in the ways in which informal consultation takes place.

Examples of formalized/required methods of public input and consultation include:

1. Elections and Referendums
2. Board and Council meetings – these usually include public question periods at the end where citizens and media may ask questions about items on the agenda.
3. Written correspondence - may also be sent to Council or the Board.
4. Delegations - citizens may request to be a delegation to Council or the Board and make a presentation; presentations are usually from ten to a maximum of twenty minutes at the discretion of the Chair.
5. Public hearings – these are required as part of the process of such things as OCP, zoning by-law approvals, development permits, variances, some of which include resident notification requirements. New under the Charter is the requirement for municipalities to establish performance measures that must be communicated to the public. Members of the public are invited to speak to matters at public hearings; the process usually requires that the person stand, state their name and address and their views on the matter at hand, in support, in opposition, or otherwise.
6. Committees / commissions - function as advisory bodies and meetings are open to the public; they may, but do not always include an invitation for the public to address the committee.
7. Surveys – local governments may conduct community surveys relating to the development of Official Community Plans, and for other purposes such as satisfaction surveys to assist in the development of priorities and business plans.

Examples of informal input and consultation methods include:

1. Informal meetings - include Town Hall meetings, information meetings, City meetings and Community Forums that provide an avenue for input and information sharing. They vary in the level of structure, are often based on pre-determined topics, but may allow for flexibility in discussion topics. There were some local distinctions around the way in which some things took place. For example, most local governments do use informal Town Hall / City Hall / Community Forums, but varied in terms of how regular they were.
2. Direct contact – citizens can contact elected officials and staff by telephone or email; they can also email general information addresses obtained from websites; chance meetings ‘on the street’ are also common in smaller communities.
3. Open door programs – some mayors set times when they are in the office and are available to the public on a walk-in basis.
4. Networking – includes community events and meetings where citizens can access elected officials and staff on an informal basis.

5. Workshops and focus groups – for example, may be used to share information and gather input to various processes, such as OCP's.
6. Media and letters to the editor – citizens and elected officials may write letters to the editor, use advertising, or spark interest from journalists which may result in articles and editorials.

Public Information

Information relating to the business of local governments is regulated under the Freedom of Information Act, which sets out what the public can have access to. A range of information about their structure, services, meetings, agendas, minutes, etc., is posted on each of the local government websites. The websites vary in terms of how much information is posted and how current they are; some are very comprehensive and include documents such as reports and by-laws, and instructions on how to request to be a delegation or how to apply to sit on a committee.

Other avenues used by local governments to provide information about services and events include brochures, notice boards, and notices (e.g., in tax or utility bills); special meetings and hearings are advertised in newspapers; and as mentioned, in specific cases such as zoning or variances, there are requirements for notification of residents by mail.

Inclusiveness and Accessibility of Local Government Processes

The previous section has outlined and illustrated the various ways in which local government decision-making processes are available to citizens. Certainly there are numerous formal and informal avenues for participation and input, and it is evident that local governments attempt to involve citizens on a variety of levels and in a variety of ways.

This project asks the question of how inclusive and how accessible these processes are. It focuses on participation of women and addresses this question on three levels:

- First, are there any structures in local government that address issues specific to women?
- Second, how are women currently participating in existing structures and mechanisms (as elected officials and as citizens on committees, etc.)?
- Finally, are these processes accessible to women and do they meet their needs and interests?

Representation of issues specific to women as part of local government structures

Many local governments in BC have policies and practices in place dealing with topics including employment equity, sexual harassment and provision of assistance to employees that experience violence in relationships. Training is usually part of employee programs and as such, would include some gender analysis. Training to local government elected officials and staff has been made available through the Safer Futures Program on women's safety.

As mentioned, the CVRD is rather unique in that it has a standing committee of the Board that deals with community safety issues with a focus on women. It includes representation of elected officials, individuals and community organizations representing interests and views of specific groups from around the region. The Community Safety Advisory Committee supports women's safety initiatives in the region. The Regional Public Safety Policy and Official Community Planning policies reflect a recognition of issues specific to women. However, no analysis on gender issues outside of this avenue were evident, and no training on gender analysis is evident.

Representation of women as elected officials and committee members

Tables 3 and 4 have been compiled based on information gathered through the FCM Member Survey and/or through a scan of membership lists available on local government web sites (as such, these may not be completely accurate or comprehensive). They show the estimated proportion (based on known breakdown) of women elected officials on Councils/Boards, and women elected officials, staff and citizens on Committees of Council or the Board.

There is no data that indicate representation of diverse groups of women. Regionally, just over 25% of elected positions are women; however, on average, 39% of elected officials of municipalities are women. The data on women's participation on committees is not comprehensive; however, it can be seen that participation of women varied from 17% to 53%.

Table 3: Representation of women as elected officials in the Cowichan Region

	CVRD	North Cowichan	Duncan	Ladysmith	Lake Cowichan
Proportion of women elected officials in relation to totals	1/15 (.06%)	3/7 (43%)	2/7 (28%)	3/7 (43%)	2/7 (28%)

Table 4: Estimated proportion of women participating on committees of local government

	CVRD	North Cowichan	Duncan	Ladysmith	Lake Cowichan
Proportion of women on committees of Council/Board	13/77 (17%)	22/88 (25%)	9/17 (53%)	26/51 (51%)	N/A
Proportion of women on Advisory Planning Committees/Commissions	N/A	2/9 (22%)	3/8 (37%)	N/A	N/A

(N/A: not available)

Representation of women and issues relating to women in local government consultation processes

Based on available information, it is evident that local governments do not collect or maintain data on the number of women attending or participating in consultation or input processes. However, the general perception indicated from the FCM Survey and from personal contacts, was that women are well-represented and comprised between 35-50% of people in attendance.

There are no formalized policies or practices around consultation of women on various issues by local governments in the Cowichan Region. However, some local governments have on occasion made specific efforts to involve women, for example through providing childcare at open houses. They have also been involved directly in, have been receptive to, and have taken actions in response to information provided to them through women's safety audit studies and similar consultation processes conducted by Safer Futures. This has resulted in both policy and action on a number of levels, relating to physical and accessibility improvements, land use planning, coordination of efforts, etc. More information on women's safety initiatives and outcomes can be found on the Safer Futures website at www.saferfutures.org.

IV. SURVEYS AND DISCUSSIONS WITH WOMEN IN THE COWICHAN REGION

This section will present the results of research undertaken through the survey and discussions with women around the region.

- In all, 310 surveys were returned from various areas of the region. Ten focus/discussion groups were held and a number of individual interviews were conducted involving 126 women in all, approximately two thirds of whom also filled out surveys.
- A number of community / organization meetings were also attended by staff and/or members of the advisory committee, that provided further informal opportunities for sharing information and gathering views and perceptions around women's participation. In total it is estimated that the inquiry process involved over 400 women from around the region.

Representation of Women in the Process

Survey Respondents

Age	Percent respondents	Cowichan Region¹
15-24	4.2%	11.7%
25-34	18.6%	25.3%
35-44	23.2%	
45-54	29.7%	15.7%
55-64	15.4%	10.9%
>65	6.5%	16.9%
Level of Education		
college/university (reflects attendance)	62.4%	(approx) 63%
high school	19.3%	12%
Training	9.8%	16%
middle school	1.3%	5%
Other	3.6%	
Family income		
< 10,000	6.5%	4.4%
10 - 25,000	12.7%	32.7%
25 - 40,000	17.6%	
40 - 60,000	20.3%	22.2%
> 60,000	26.5%	40.7%
Respondents with children at home	50.0%	47%
Respondents /member of a minority group	15.0%	(approx) 12%
Respondents with physical disability or mental health issue	14.4%	

¹ Source: BC Stats 2001 Census Profile of BC, Census Subdivisions;
<http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/data/cen01/profiles/59019000.pdf>

- The majority of women who responded to the survey (52.9%) were between the ages of 25 and 54. Women over 55 comprised 21.9% of the respondents, while young women 15-24 comprised the minority with 4.2%.
- The majority of survey respondents (62.4%) indicated that they had attended post secondary, college or university, with the remainder indicating middle or high school as their highest level of education. However, some respondents qualified categories chosen or indicated more than one category, so it is difficult to ascertain the accuracy of this information. However, in comparing figures on educational attainment in regional census data, it can be seen that approximately 63% of residents of the region indicate some attendance in post secondary institutions.
- The majority of respondents (about 40%) indicated incomes of over \$40,000 per year. Approximately 19.2% of those who responded indicated they earn less than \$25,000 per year. Just under 18% said they earn between \$25,000 - \$40,000.
- Approximately half (50.2%) of respondents indicated they have children at home. Just under 15% indicated they have a disability of mental health issue, and 15% indicated they were a member of a minority group in Canada, including First Nations, Metis, New Canadians, Lesbian, French Canadian, Jewish.
- A comparison of 2000 census data for the region indicates that survey respondents were generally representative of the region as a whole, except for age categories (respondents tended to be over represented in the 25-44 age groups and under-represented in other categories).

Discussion Group and Interview Participants

While participants of focus/discussion groups were not asked specifically for personal data, the location, focus and attendance for each group, provided a general framework for estimating representation.

- Geographically, the groups included representation from north, south, east/central and west, with the majority (about 40%) from east/central areas;
- Approximately 20% of participants were young women between the ages of 16 to 25; and 7% were seniors;
- Approximately 30% were women living in low income situations;
- Approximately 12% were First Nations women and 10% were new Canadians/new to the community;

Many participants also identified as being rural or small town residents, a few identified as having a disability, a few identified as lesbian women, and a few as either past or current elected officials. Overall, the estimated representation of young women, women living in low income situations, immigrant women and First Nations women, was higher

for discussion groups than for surveys (which tended to be more statistically representative of the community at large except in terms of age levels). As one of the aims of the project was to reach out to and include marginalized women, the discussion groups provided an important avenue for hearing from women who may lack access to more traditional types of consultation methods. One possible conclusion that may be drawn from this exercise is that consultation processes benefit from reaching out to specific groups of women who experience higher barriers to participation.

Women's Participation in Local Government Processes

Survey Responses (310)

Do you ever contact your local government elected officials? (e.g., Mayor, Councilors, Regional Directors)		
	% Respondents	# Respondents
No	48.7%	151
Yes	51.3%	159
If yes, how? (Of those who answered yes)		
by email	95%	151
by telephone	61.6%	98
in person	56%	89
write letters	42.1%	67
Do you ever take part in any of the following activities re: local government?		
No	21.9%	67
yes	78.1%	239
If yes, how? (of those who answered yes)		
vote in elections	82.6%	199
fill out surveys	73.4%	177
attend public meetings	58.1%	140
sit on committees	19.9%	48
run as candidate	3.7%	9
What topics or issues led you to participate?		
Land development, planning	47.7%	115
Environment	49.4%	119
Recreation	41.9%	101
Safety	38.6%	93
Business development	29.9%	72
Roads and Traffic	28.6%	69
If you do take part, about how often? (256)		
When I have an issue	45.2%	140
other	10.3%	32
Once per month	9%	28
Twice per year	7.7%	24
Once per year	7.4%	23
Once per week	2.9%	9

Overall, the surveys indicated that:

- About half of women have had some contact with their local governments.
- Most respondents vote and fill out surveys but relatively few attend meetings, sit on committees on a regular basis, and very few run in elections.
- A few respondents also indicated that they were involved through employment (e.g., polling stations), and community liaison related to work.
- Clearly all of the topics listed led women to participate, with the highest responses in conjunction with land development and planning, environment, recreation and safety, followed by business and roads and traffic. Other topics mentioned were social issues/policy, community development, school issues, business, culture, racism, criminal justice, anti-poverty.

Discussions

When asked whether they participated in local government processes, the majority of focus group participants indicated that they had little or no contact with local government on a regular basis, and that they did not feel involved or connected to a great extent. Many indicated that they did not have a daily awareness of local government activities – for some, this meant little or no awareness of local government structure and the activities of local governments. There were many reasons given for this, which are covered in the next section.

A few women indicated that they were either currently, or had been in the past, very involved with local government via their participation on committees, ‘interest’ groups, or as elected officials.

- The reasons for participation (in one form or another) often revolved around a strong desire to improve and/or contribute to community, or strong feelings about a particular topic. Very often, women who were involved as elected officials reflected a history of being involved in community, through schools and community organizations.
- Discussions highlighted a strong desire to make their communities a better place to live, and reflected a deep interest in social aspects, fair process, open and accessible government, and a holistic approach to community. This was accompanied by a high sense of satisfaction around achievements that benefited the whole community. Opinions and experiences around their participation varied greatly.
- Of women who said they participated in some way, most did so occasionally. Some did contact or attempt to contact local government when an issue arose. Some women indicated a high level of satisfaction; some even cited examples where they called upon local government elected officials to help them and were very happy with the outcomes.
- Others expressed a great deal of dissatisfaction with their contact with local government, and on a similar note, offered a variety of examples.

*“When you feel like you are bettering people’s conditions – that’s satisfying.”
“I have always been treated with respect... My only frustration is that it seems to take forever for decisions to be made and so a lot of public interest seems to be lost.”*

Despite the fact that many women said they did not participate to a great extent in local government processes, the majority conveyed a desire to make a positive contribution in their communities, indicated that they cared deeply, and were concerned about many facets of neighbourhood and community, including local development, housing and neighbourhood conditions, the need for parks, transportation and affordable housing, economic planning, roads, etc.

Several women talked about issues they were concerned with such as housing, recreation and infrastructure, and expressed a desire to make changes or improvements. For some, the choice has been to be involved through other avenues, especially community-based groups. Some women mentioned that this was a way to be part of a group that could speak to issues and create change.

Obstacles or barriers to participation and involvement

Survey Responses

Have any of the following affected your ability to participate in activities relating to local government? (310)		
Lack of time	41.3%	128
Family or work obligations	38.0%	120
Don't feel my participation would make a difference	26.1%	81
Meeting times or locations	21.3%	66
Have difficulty understanding process	14.2%	44
Lack of transportation	13.7%	42
Don't feel comfortable	13.9%	43
Lack of Childcare	12.6%	38
None of the above	11.6%	36
Topics are not relevant to me	9.4%	29
Safety concerns	7.1%	22
Disability	7.1%	22
Age	4.8%	15
Sexual orientation	1.6%	5
Race/ethnicity	0.6%	2

- The three most cited factors affecting the ability of women to participate in local government processes were lack of time, family and work obligations, and lack of faith in whether their participation would make a difference.
- Issues around access (meeting times, transportation and childcare) also figured prominently.

- A number of comments cited additional factors, such as problems with the system, lack of information and experience, not feeling heard, attitudes, intimidation and fear of public speaking, lack of interest and/or needing to prioritize other areas of life. Violence and isolation were also factors mentioned.
- Transportation, time, family/work obligations, age, comprehension of the process, comfort levels, faith in the process, and relevance of topics tended to be correlated with age and income levels, and to being a minority; i.e., they tended to be mentioned more by younger women, women living in low income situations (under \$25,000 per year), and women who indicated they were part of a minority group, as factors affecting their ability to participate.



Spectacle Lake Road, Malahat. BC (Photo: Colleen Dearden)

Discussions

These issues were mirrored in discussion groups, where elaboration on these themes provided more in depth explanations, and illuminated multiple and intersecting barriers that affect choices around participation.

Time:

Time was a primary theme, both in the survey responses and discussions, and was related to almost every other theme.

- The majority of women stressed that they either had been or still are, very involved in community life in one form or another, and that combined with family and/or work obligations, felt they had little or no 'extra' time to participate in civic affairs, and that they were 'tapped out'.
- The reasons for lack of time and energy were quite varied. For some women, there was no choosing – priorities needed to be elsewhere. For others, the choice of participating was balanced with anticipated outcomes. Would it be rewarding? Would it be successful, time well spent?
- For some women, participation in local government processes was or is a priority and was or is reflected in a conscious choice to be involved in various ways.
- For many women, beyond occasional participation in voting or surveys, etc., the real or perceived difficulties of the system, the process, or the struggles of day to day living and survival, presented obstacles to participation.
- However, in a couple of instances, the concept of time was challenged as a matter of priorities.

“Councilors are expected to attend endless meetings, sit on as many as six sub-committees, attend many functions and council meetings... I really couldn't commit to this level of involvement and remain a reliable person.

It really comes down to priority. I know that if something is important enough, one will make time for it.”

I think that average citizens expect too much of councilors, they think they should do a full time job for less than part time pay...”

Income and resources / transportation and childcare:

Lack of financial resources, or implications for financial resources (e.g., having to take time from work, having to pay for childcare, etc.) presented a number of barriers for women.

- Dealing with major issues of housing and employment, lack of transportation or childcare are major barriers to participation.
- Struggling with day to day living and a lack of resources presents a myriad of challenges in itself. It also means that a great deal of time and energy is spent on finding the necessary resources at the expense of things like recreation or civic activities. It also means a lack of resources for childcare and transportation needed to attend functions.
- Financial resources were also cited as a possible barrier to women wanting to run for office. For women living in low income situations, the barriers of lack of transportation or childcare, plus the need to earn an income over and above that paid by local government, would create difficulties.
- There was also concern about stigmatization of people living in low income situations, and experiences with disrespectful treatment by people in authority and decision-making roles. Some women expressed concern that they might not be regarded seriously by those in decision-making positions.

"I just can't get out to the issues."

*"Transportation is a huge barrier for us. The last bus around Berkey's is 5:30.
You have to make a decision about whether you can walk home."*

"If I call will they take me seriously?"

*"Prejudice decisions made toward people who live below poverty line, unemployed and
being a First Nation woman."*

*"My goal is to assist First Nation women with children to become achievers and voice
their experiences about local, regional and federal government..."*

*"Not enough child care programs, respite, and having to survive by going to food banks
and soup lines due to minimum living allowances."*

Responsibility for children and family:

- Being responsible and accountable for children and family, and the time needed to take care of family presented a 'time deficit' for many women who, as mothers and partners, felt they needed to and/or are expected to, have a primary focus on family before other things.
- As elected officials, some women noted that balancing the needs of family and public service can be difficult. It often means having to be very available to constituents much of the time, and it can be challenging to keep home life and public life separate.
- Some women noted that a focus in the home, combined with issues around income and transportation for example, can present additional problems around isolation and lack of awareness of community affairs. One survey respondent stressed that many women would not have heard about the project (despite efforts around communication) because of isolation.

*"With small children, I barely have time for a shower let alone attending meetings!"
"Everything takes a huge amount of effort when you have small children. To take time
from my family's schedule without really knowing it will have an effect.... Issues are
important but my family has to come first."*

Stage of life:

Several women talked about having spent much time during their lives immersed in family and community, and either choosing to taking time out for other things, or feeling that at this point, there are few opportunities for 'getting started'.

Being new to the community; language and cultural differences:

Moving here from another community, or from a different country with a different culture and language presented issues around understanding how the system works, and feeling part of the community.

- Establishing oneself in a new country requires a huge amount of learning and negotiation of new systems, language and culture.
- Some women noted that for a long time, their priorities focused primarily on finding employment and adapting to a new way of life, leaving little time for civic activities.
- Some women who were new to the country were unsure about whether they could participate if they did not yet have citizenship, or in general, would they be welcome?
- Language and communications can present enormous barriers to understanding, awareness and participation. In turn, this results in lack of information about how the system works, who is responsible for what, and who to call.

"As a First Nations woman from the Prairie Region and different cultural background, I experienced negative results in my search for employment, due to having a different cultural background, and not belonging to a particular community in this region...As leaders, one must lead toward providing equality for all people, not just certain classes of people."

Large amount of energy needed to be involved:

- Given some very tangible barriers such as lack of income, resources, transportation, childcare, language, etc., many women did not feel that they had a lot of choices around participation.
- For women who felt they had choices around participation, the large amount of time and energy to be involved, to get to know 'the system', to find out how it works and who is responsible for what, to attend meetings, and just to be emotionally connected to an issue and a hoped for outcome, presented deterrents.

- Reasons such as apathy, interest, meaningfulness of topics, etc. were explored. However, discussions often moved to illuminate a variety of other reasons for their apparent lack of interest and/or choices around non-participation.

*"Time is luxury."
"You can't be effective if you're only part way involved. It takes a lot of time."
"Politics is not rewarding time."*

The complexity of the system:

The sheer complexity and hierarchy of government systems – from federal to provincial to regional to municipal - and their intersection with other systems such as health, make access to, and understanding of, government systems in general, difficult.

- In many instances, women talked about the impact of federal and provincial levels of government on their lives and the lives of others. These concerns, which often revolved around the impact of higher levels of government on major life themes of income and supports, were linked to barriers that were in turn, exacerbated by other local factors such as lack of public transportation. At the same time, some women acknowledged that as the level of government closest to the community, they should see a concrete link to other levels.
- First Nations women also pointed out that they have an additional level of government to consider, and that for women living off reserve, living between two systems created further complexities. However, it was also noted that recent efforts around communications between municipal governments and First Nations government have helped somewhat to bridge these systems.
- Many women stressed that our system of regional and municipal government is complex, formal, challenging to understand and to negotiate.
- Political and geographical boundaries present an initial hurdle to understand which area you live in and therefore which system(s) and which people govern you. The mechanics of the systems, i.e., the process, rules and formalities, can also be confusing, frustrating and intimidating.
- The central focus and location of regional government operations also poses access issues for women who lack transportation and/or have a time deficit.

*"It is difficult to understand local politics, but it is not for lack of trying..."
"The system is so complex."
"There is so much red tape."*

*"Housing is so difficult. To apply for housing off reserve, you need a telephone number and address. That's hard if you don't have housing yet."
"I am just trying to survive. It's so hard for single parents."*

Information and awareness:

- Lack of information about all aspects of government, combined with a lack of understanding and awareness, and issues around inaccurate and sometimes changing information, were common.
- The list of information gaps was long. Many women were unsure of exactly what local governments do, who represented them (for some, this included what area they were part of and what the difference between a municipality and regional district is); what consultation processes are out there, who is responsible for what, who to contact, and information about prospective candidates at voting time, etc.
- Several women also mentioned that they felt that what they read in newspapers did not satisfy their need for full and accurate information, and suggested that media need to play a larger role toward providing factual information.

*"We talk all the time about these things, but we don't know who to call.
And if we did, would we be heard?"*

*"It's hard to find out much about candidates from newspapers. I find I don't have enough
information about them to make an informed choice."*

Accessibility:

- The Cowichan Region is geographically very diverse, and has a significant rural component and rural flavour. Meeting times and locations are not always accessible, and lack of transportation and childcare are obvious obstacles to attending meetings.
- Meetings that take a long time and have numerous topics to cover make for issues around time and interest.

*"I would love to visit the municipal (North Cowichan) offices.
But I do not drive and there is no local bus for this location."*

Frustration with systems and processes:

Despite the efforts of local governments, there was a gap between what local governments are doing to provide for consultation and input, and satisfaction of participants with consultation processes and avenues for public input.

- Many women felt that consultation processes were too formal, and that they did not always seem responsive.
- There were also perceptions that power imbalances (e.g., people in communities who can influence decision-making to their benefit) affected the outcomes of issues.

- Women talked about not liking 'the way things are done', that the process looks partisan, confidential, and that it appears that some decisions are made behind closed doors.
- There was frustration around lack of a dialogue approach – i.e., black or white / yes or no answers to requests without two-way communication to reach objectives.

"Sometimes it seemed like their minds were made up before they asked the public."

"If you consult us it should be with an open mind."

"The process looks unfriendly."

"there is a gap between talk and action."

Culture and attitudes - of politics itself, of women and men, and of rural/small towns:

For some women, the 'culture of politics' was a deterrent to their participation.

- Participants spoke about being interested in issues that did not seem to be part of local government agendas, or at least did not seem to be a priority. In particular, they noted that it can be a challenge to talk about 'social' issues that are not regarded as connected to local government business.
- There were concerns around 'being public', of voicing their issues publicly, and being vulnerable to personalized criticism and malicious gossip apart from actual issues.
- Stereotypes of women can affect participation; for example, how women may be judged on their appearance, and for being assertive.
- There are expectations around presentation – one must be formal, unemotional and articulate to address council in order to be taken seriously.
- Finally, lack of value of the experience of being mother and homemaker, and a perception that women are not as good at business decisions factor into negative stereotypes, some of which women said other women themselves, buy into.

"Politics has a very bad press. No one expects it to be caring."

"We speak different languages."

"The system is exclusive."

"It can be unsafe."

"I would not run for office. You have no privacy."

"I would be worried about having to compromise my values."

"Public life can be socially isolating."

What is working?

Despite the many barriers and the critical appraisals, there were also things that women felt were positive and functional aspects.

Key elements that surfaced for women who felt they had a good level of awareness and access to local government processes included: awareness and information (i.e., they had understood the process and had knowledge of how to get what information they needed and how to 'get things done'); and confidence, on both a personal and systemic level (not feeling intimidated by the system and confidence that the system could provide the means to achieve their aims, combined with acceptance of the outcomes).

While the very nature of small town life and politics was named as challenging, it was also one of the aspects noted most often as having benefits.

- In a small town, familiarity with people and elected representatives (often on a first name basis), chance meetings with elected representatives on the street, in a store, at a function, etc., are more common than in larger urban areas.
- Knowing that the mayor has an open door program on a certain day and that people can go in and talk without an appointment, without the presence of cameras or the press was also appreciated.
- The opportunity for informal personal contacts, and opportunities for localized, focused meetings like Town Hall, Open houses and forums were avenues that represented accessibility and an important way to have input outside formal processes.
- However, the perception that small, rural communities provide easier access to local government processes was also challenged as being a factor of size and not the system.

Internet was a welcome tool for many (but certainly not all) women. For those who own a computer and have access to the internet, communications and information sharing, internet was noted as a definite benefit. However, many participants were not aware of, or had not visited local government websites. In part, this was related to lack of awareness about the system of regional and municipal governments. Many said that they would not automatically know that there are five different local governments or which one to look up.

Finally, there was a sense among some women that 'times are changing', that we are seeing a shift in the role of local government, a shift in representation of women on councils, and a slight movement towards considering bringing social issues onto agendas. Despite the level of dissatisfaction that was expressed, many women remained hopeful that the system might evolve to accept and even promote the kind of respectful, holistic and non-partisan system that they desire. The following section outlines the numerous suggestions that were brought forward to create positive change.

What would help women to participate in local government processes?

Survey Responses

What would help you to be more involved in activities relating to local government? (310)		
More information	40.6%	126
Training & education around local government to better understand how it works	32.9%	102
Meeting times that fit my schedule	25.8%	80
More informal processes	25.8%	80
Compensation for my time	13.2%	41
More accessible meeting locations	10.6%	33
Childcare	10%	31
Transportation	8.8%	27
Having information in another language/ form	2.6%	8

- More information was the most cited factor by respondents in relation to helping women be more involved in activities relating to local government, followed by training and education around local government, enhancing accessibility through meeting times that fit women's schedules, and more informal processes.
- Addressing issues around resources, such as compensation for time, childcare, transportation, and accessible meeting locations were noted by between 8% and 13% of respondents, followed by the need for information in other languages.
- Other survey comments revolved around the need to develop more clear, responsive, relevant, accountable and respectful processes and approaches, to improve information flow, and to enhance accessibility.
- Younger women indicated more often than older women, the need for information and compensation, and women living in lower income brackets and minority women, tended to indicate more often that training and education, accessible meeting locations, transportation, childcare and compensation for time, would help them to be more involved.

Discussions

While there were differing emphases in the various groups, in general, discussions mirrored the survey responses and provided important elaboration on each of the themes. For the most part, discussions touched on all aspects, but in many cases, there tended to be an evolution toward discussing the need for changing the system to make it more welcoming, accessible, to make it 'make more sense', and to be more connected to issues that are relevant for, and have the greatest impact on, women.

Needs for Information:

Needs for information were extensive and included:

- Very basic information, like who is in charge of what, who represents which areas?
- Where does our water come from? Is it safe?
- Who can I call?
- Who runs the buses?
- How do we do a petition?
- How are various decisions made and how does the system apply to me?
- Just how do we access the system?
- Which area do I live in? How do I find this out?
- More factual information – unedited.

*“It would give a level of comfort to know what they are about.”
“When women are more aware of the effect of local government decisions and of the
whole structure on people’s lives they will become more interested and involved.”*

Suggestions for how to provide this information were also extensive and quite varied, indicating a need for many different and sometimes creative ways of communication:

- A central information number – a 1-800 number with a real person at the other end
- A region-wide community directory with a subject index and sections that answered common questions
- Signage to tell people who to contact, for example, about a park
- Information pamphlets in different languages
- Displays at malls on a regular basis
- Events
- Newspapers / media coverage that is more factual and comprehensive
- Local bulletin boards
- Information at temples, churches, recreation centres
- Internet
- White pages of the phone book - subject oriented instead of government level oriented

Training, education and mentoring:

Training and education topics included basic information on local government system, roles and responsibilities, etc., consultation mechanisms, running as a candidate (how to).

Ideas for mentoring included community projects that build support groups for women interested in entering politics, and community development projects with a focus on youth/young women:

- Re-connect with local communities from women's safety audits that have been done, with the goal of mentoring groups through a process of creating change in their community.
- Mentoring youth was felt to be very important to involve more young women for their life experience. Approach youth and start where they are, again, using a community development approach to tap into their ideological perspectives and passions. Their mentor could be a conduit to council. This would need to be met with reception and not roadblocks. Build in plan to follow up and evaluate what worked and what didn't.
- Fostering knowledge and skills could be done through community-based efforts and initiatives that could be linked with existing activities, such as Community Kitchens and other informal groups.
- Youth also said they would like to work through issues and solutions with local government, to take an issue and approach decision makers as a group, as a unified voice, with the objective of two way communication.
- Many discussion participants recognized the need to take responsibility for action in their communities, to be proactive and to get involved. In addition to suggestions noted above, they identified actions such as going to meetings, asking to be a delegation, writing letters to the editor.
- Finally, education on principles of diversity and equity, and on communications for government officials at all levels, was noted as a need.

"We could meet and explain how we feel. We could tell them why this is an issue and talk about what would help. We could also listen to the reasons why they can't do something and maybe come to a solution."

"We understand that there are two sides to every story."

"Education is a key factor toward understanding and creating a balance in all government structures that will dissolve the barriers set up by some people."

Consultation mechanisms:

Suggestions to enhance consultation mechanisms and processes focused on making methods and processes accessible, but they also came with an emphasis on consulting on a regular basis and creating a safe and respectful environment. Suggestions included:

- Varied methods of consultation so that people who can't be involved in one way have access in another way (for example, surveys provide a written method, but they are not accessible to the homeless, people with literacy issues, or people with sight impairments).
- Make sure meeting times and locations are accessible.

- Focused/single topic meetings were preferred as a way to help women manage their 'time deficit'.
- Hold open houses about every six months; regular public forums; surveys sent to homes on a regular basis.

"Women in poverty attend the food bank monthly, soup line daily if they are in need. These are the places the leaders should look at, how can they help with this type of crisis, how can people help themselves if they are hungry?"

Enhance access:

Outreach and engagement were seen as key, both for new Canadians / new community members and in general, for connecting with women outside formal processes to create familiarity and build relationships. Ideas included:

- Visit groups of women, particularly those with accessibility issues such as mothers with children, new Canadians, women who are isolated.
- Hold family oriented events with a focus on diversity.
- Provide information that is accessible to people whose first language is not English.
- Utilize intercultural centres, churches, temples, moms' groups, women's groups, etc., as information and communications avenues.

Enhancing access also included:

- Holding meetings at varied times and locations, and at wheelchair accessible locations
- Providing assistance around transportation and childcare
- Addressing gaps in provision of public transit (work to provide transit in areas that currently don't have it, and address scheduling and provision in areas where residents experience higher needs)

Communications and accountability mechanisms:

- Women stressed that communications need to be respectful, transparent and open. They stressed that they need to know if their input made a difference, and that they need to go away feeling informed.
- The need for communications (with a focus on follow-up) went hand in hand with the need to demonstrate accountability for decisions and actions. This included the need for ways to enable more women to get to know their elected

- representatives, have opportunities for two way communication, and also to know that their input was taken into consideration in a meaningful way.
- To be accountable, women stressed the need for adequate mechanisms for reporting, follow-up and evaluation, such as annual report cards, accompanied by criteria and clear expectations.
 - Accountability needs to include criteria for diversity and equity.
 - In addition to citizens needing to learn how to communicate with decision-makers, decision makers were urged to learn good communications skills.

*"We need to be listened to and treated with respect."
"Create a sense of really listening..."
"Show me we can make a difference."
"Thanks would help."*

- Accurate information was noted as paramount to this process and it was also suggested that more work could be done by and with local media to facilitate this.
- There were also suggestions and ideas for other additional community –based mechanisms such as a ratepayers association.

Finally there were a number of general suggestions to make local government processes:

- ➔ Make more sense
- ➔ Clear
- ➔ Respectful of differences
- ➔ Less political
- ➔ Less vulnerable to power imbalances
- ➔ More accepting of differences
- ➔ More supportive
- ➔ More relevant to women's interests and priorities; valuing of social objectives and of women's roles

These suggestions are representative of broad, value-based, systemic changes that are difficult to translate into concrete actions, but are reflective of all of the suggestions that have been put forward.

How would communities benefit?

During the course of meetings and discussions, occasionally the question was raised as to why communities should focus our energies on understanding women's needs for participation in local government processes? Although rare, the focus on women was challenged: "Men's experiences are important, men experience barriers to participation as

well, and should we not be focusing on all citizens? Does increased participation of women in local government make for better decisions?"

"...childcare, language and time pressures are not exclusive to women... to focus only on the difficulties which women (only) experience does not give anyone a good picture of why we sometimes end up with a slate of less than ideal candidates, both locally and federally. Perhaps future work should include a broader specter of society."

On the other hand, focusing on a particular group can help to highlight the particular experiences and challenges of a segment of society that we know is under-represented in local government processes on a national level. At the same time, we can transfer this understanding to the community as a whole.

When asked what the benefits of women's participation were, many women expressed similar views:

- Women have a lot of knowledge about their local communities and decision-makers can tap into that knowledge and energy.
- Women can bring important experiences and understanding of various issues such as the working poor, needs for low cost recreation, housing, etc., and our intrinsic interest in children.
- To combine the different styles and interests of women and men would enhance overall decision-making.
- The presence of women on councils, boards and committees provides important role models and mentors for other women, and new opportunities for meeting problems in an integrated way.
- The presence of women somehow changes the balance of culture in a given setting. Having an equitable representation or 'critical mass' of women in local government allows for expression of views in a way that doesn't happen when women are a minority.
- We might have better and more imaginative solutions, and our community would be a safer place for everyone.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This report has outlined local government in the Cowichan Region – what it is, how it is structured, how it operates, and how it works to involve and consult with citizens of the region. It is clear that there are both formal and informal mechanisms in place that provide for participation and involvement, and that many of those who work within the system make concerted efforts to involve the public within that framework.

At the same time, there was some recognition that the systems and mechanisms are imperfect. There was also some awareness of frustrations experienced by citizens, and some desire to find ways to enhance citizen involvement and participation.

What has emerged from the research is a clear indication that there are gaps between the efforts of local governments to involve the public in decision-making processes, and the ability or willingness of many women to be involved. Some women indicated that they are able to engage in and navigate the local government system to their satisfaction. While some of these women indicated they felt effective within the system as it currently operates, some did not feel that they could effectively achieve their community objectives within the system.

The majority of women who participated in the research are not involved to any extent in local government processes. Lack of time, competing commitments and lack of faith that their participation would make a difference were the top three factors noted; age, income levels, and access issues also figured prominently in relation to participation. At the risk of over generalizing, the research indicates that women who experience multiple barriers in life, also experience the greatest challenges to participation in civic processes. Many women experience insurmountable limitations and barriers that make participation in civic processes at the most, a remote idea.

Appendix F provides data on income levels of females and lone parent families (which are mostly female-led), illustrating the significance of income differences in the region. In 2001, there were over 2000 families living in low income situations in the region. Females and lone parent family incomes are less than half of males and two parent families respectively. The issue of poverty was described by one participant as so limiting and in fact, traumatizing, that for many women, day to day survival around food and shelter for their families is their focus and takes up much of their energy. In such a

“What is equally important for good municipal governance is that the people who actually do the work and use the services should be involved in decisions. Meeting this need for local authorities also meets a strategic need for women: to participate in decisions that affect them.”

(FCM; Gender and Municipal Development; Ottawa: Author; 1996; p. 5)

'poverty lifestyle', civic functions are but a backdrop, and the idea of being able to access decision-making processes does not enter into daily living.

Having said that, the majority of women, regardless of age, race/ethnicity/language, income, ability or sexual orientation, expressed lack of confidence and disillusionment with the system – that it was simply limiting in terms of being a mechanism in which they felt they could affect the kind of community change that they wanted. Many women perceived that their priorities were different to priorities of local government, that what they were interested in was not on existing agendas.

Some women, faced with choices about how to prioritize their time in relation to home, family and/or work, choose to spend their limited time on community activities where they felt most effective. Yet, in discussing their interests in community, the topics invariably included such things as building strong neighbourhoods, addressing affordable housing, transportation and recreation, all of which are among the responsibilities of local governments.

The women who participated in the research indicated a high level of concern for community well-being and were highly motivated and caring citizens. It was clear that their communities are important to them; that if presented with new possibilities and opportunities to address topics that are meaningful, and in a way that is effective, they could be more involved. To illustrate this, they brought forward numerous concrete recommendations that they felt would enhance their ability to make positive contributions.

"The important thing to remember is that all these groups have difference perspectives and priorities, and that within these groups there are major differences – we are not all one big public."

(Planning Ourselves In Group;
Planning Ourselves In;
Vancouver: SPARC BC; 1996;
p.5)

The themes that were articulated out of the research emphasized the importance of enhancing information, communication, and accessibility through a variety of avenues:

- Simplified / informal processes that avoid legal jargon
- Respectful 'dialogue' approach that strives to achieve objectives over providing yes or no answers; focus on objectives
- Non-partisanship; criteria-based decision-making
- Inclusiveness and diversity
- Inclusion of gender and socio-economic factors/criteria in decision-making processes

They also emphasized the importance of meaningful input, and of building capacity, both in terms of women's ability to be part of local decision-making processes, and of local government's ability to seek and be responsive to women's involvement. They highlighted however, that there *is* existing capacity and that what is needed, is to tap into existing networks to invite and encourage participation. For example, there are many community organizations that serve and support women throughout the region. These may provide potential avenues for learning, engaging, and mentoring.

At the same time, it is evident that there is some receptivity within the local government system to making efforts to make the system more responsive and inclusive. There is some recognition that traditional mechanisms and culture of local government limit its capacity to provide for citizen involvement. The fact that there has been at least some movement to develop avenues for participation outside of legislated requirements, is evidence that local governments do have the capacity and willingness to make changes.

The possibilities do exist then, and the opportunities for change are present. The challenges will be to move forward in a collaborative effort between citizens and government, to explore, test and evaluate new ways to 'do business'.

The way forward needs to begin with an acceptance of the feedback that has been offered and to avoid the potential pitfalls that can arise when critical evaluation is given. It then needs to move to the development of a plan that outlines priorities, responsibilities and timeframes, and one that is coordinated to avoid problems that can arise with misinterpretation or 'scatter-gun' approaches.

For example, while one of the recommendations was to enhance access through better transportation, it is likely that without other changes, transportation to meetings alone would not make a difference. To implement for example, a free-ride to meetings program and have it fail because women still perceive meetings to be problematic in themselves, or worry about standing up to voice their opinions, could result in the mistaken conclusion that "women said they needed transportation and we provided it and they still didn't attend." There are many examples of poorly timed or poorly planned actions that fail because they were implemented on a simplistic basis.

Collaboration and coordination will be key. With such a diverse region, it will be important to take both a regional and localized view of the recommendations. The advantages of moving forward in a coordinated way will be sharing of information and best practices, and perhaps some evenness of progress. The challenges will be to ensure that actions are appropriate at the local level, and connected to the local community, while shared at a regional level.

"It is important that all parties – members of community-based equality seeking groups, government policy makers and researchers – discuss and agree to work together on the basis of a set of shared understandings. This includes: agreeing upon an open, clear and inclusive policy process..."
(WIPPP; Steps Toward a Credible and Inclusive Public Policy Process; June, 2000; p. 6)

Perhaps the greatest challenge arising out of this research however, is associated with the notion of the 'culture of politics'. As one participant put it, politics has a 'very bad press', and the very topic of government or politics held a negative connotation for some women. This was associated with particular behaviours and perceptions around power. While on the one hand, it can be viewed and justified as the nature of the system, it remains a significant deterrent to participation, and as such, needs to enter into community dialogue.

There are numerous examples of things that have worked and are working, and efforts that have been or are being made that are working to move our communities in positive directions. Efforts of individuals, and changes in the way local governments are approaching their roles did not go unnoticed. Examples of how a particular elected official or staff went out of their way to assist a resident, listen, negotiate, provide advice, or simply be respectful, provide a backdrop of good practice from which to draw upon.

The following section begins by presenting a summary of needs identified by participants. It then presents recommendations arising from the research, and outlines a plan to move forward. The recommendations are presented in a general way; i.e., to provide information to all local governments on what would help women to participate in local government processes. They are not intended to be area specific, nor have they been developed to provide specific assessment of any one area.

Local governments may feel that they are indeed, already providing for some of the things listed. Each local government may want to begin with the objective of evaluating current policies and practices and identifying how they might improve or enhance what exists, and address gaps.

Summary of Needs Identified

I. INFORMATION

- A central (regional) information number (1-800 number (free); well advertised; staffed to provide general information on all aspects of local government functions and services)
- Central website
- A community directory with a subject index and sections that answer common questions about functions and services of local government, and perhaps other levels of government
- Blue pages of the phone book should be subject oriented instead of government level oriented
- Use events as a method to provide information; again, these should be planned strategically to invite people who usually do not participate in local government processes.
- Provide information through a variety of mediums such as newsletters, newspapers, displays in malls, etc., designed to reach people who may not be as in touch with mainstream media, people whose first language is not English, people with sight impairments, people with literacy challenges.
- Recognize the need to find creative avenues beyond traditional means such as tax notices that are limited to home-owners. Suggested avenues:
 - Information at temples, churches, recreation centres
 - Local bulletin boards
 - Information pamphlets in different languages
 - Email communications
 - Explore ways to provide information in auditory format

II. EDUCATION AND MENTORING

- Topics: Basic information on local government system, roles and responsibilities, consultation mechanisms, etc.; running as a candidate (how to); communications skills
- Community development projects involving youth/young women, using past safety audits as a way to build on previous work and involvement, and/or partnering with existing programs to explore ways of fostering women's involvement
- Foster skills and knowledge via informal networks and supportive environments (women's groups, social gatherings, workshops)
- Hold workshops in advance of elections to provide information on political structures, mechanisms and processes
- Develop Individual consultation mechanisms for elected officials who may need support in dealing with issues arising in the course of their work
- Support/mentorship networks for elected officials

III. CONSULTATION METHODS

- Consultation methods should be varied to allow for different needs for access
- Make processes as informal as possible
- Organize meetings/information sessions on a regular basis; plan focused topics. Arrange meeting times and locations that are accessible (i.e., varied between day/evening; varied locations; wheelchair accessible; safe)
- Surveys sent to homes are a way that consultation can reach most people. Use this more often and for input into a range of topics. Ensure that they are accessible in terms of language, literacy, etc.
- Use focus groups and workshops to involve specific groups; i.e. people who may not normally be involved and/or who have issues around accessibility. Link with relevant community organizations and agencies who can assist with connections. Tap into community groups who can provide energy and incentive. Go to 'where women are'.

IV. ACCESSIBILITY

- Visit (i.e., elected officials, staff) groups of women, particularly those with accessibility issues such as mothers with children, new Canadians, to establish contacts, and provide information
- Develop and provide information on various aspects of local government functions and services that is accessible to new Canadians
 - Provide information in brief, factual formats, in different forms, languages, literacy levels
 - Utilize intercultural centres, churches, temples, moms' groups, women's groups, etc., as communications avenues
- When organizing local meetings, arrange at varied times and locations that are accessible to people who don't own a vehicle, and at wheelchair accessible locations
- Make meetings accessible to parents with children (through allowing children to be present, or providing childcare on site)
- Assist with transportation to meetings (i.e. pay attention to possible needs for transportation and provide assistance where possible)
- Address gaps in provision of regional public transit
- Hold family oriented events in neighbourhoods; invite local residents to meet their elected reps; focus on inclusion of 'hard to reach' neighbourhoods
- Foster opportunities for informal dialogue, for example, through integrating this topic into programming of community organizations; notion of gathering places for women

V. COMMUNICATIONS/ACCOUNTABILITY

- Develop mechanisms for reporting, follow-up and evaluation of functions, services and issues, such as annual report cards, accompanied by criteria and clear expectations.
- Provide accurate, factual information through a centralized method to address problems around different information coming from different sources

VI. BROADER SYSTEMIC AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Review and establish policies/practices for consultation to include criteria and benchmarks for inclusiveness and accessibility of local government processes:

- Assess local government processes for inclusion of community priorities.
- Evaluate consultation policies and practices (Council decisions, appointments and communications) to assess their inclusiveness (i.e., how have women, youth, seniors, First Nations, new Canadians, people living in low income situations, and/or other relevant groups been consulted?)
- Ensure that wherever possible, information is disaggregated for gender, income, geography, and other relevant socio-economic factors
- Develop criteria and checklists as part of decision-making / briefing processes (for example, to indicate how women and other relevant groups have been consulted; how aspects such as gender, social values, environmental values, etc., have been considered and addressed)
- Ensure that information and education on inclusiveness and gender analysis is provided to elected officials and staff as part of orientation processes
- Work with relevant community organizations on an ongoing basis to provide feedback and input into consultation processes
- Develop a supportive framework (e.g., a committee or task force) to provide assessment and guidance, develop goals and benchmarks for success

Action Plan

The previous section presented a summary of suggestions put forward by participants to enhance local government decision-making processes by making them more inclusive and responsive in a variety of ways. This project, as it has been framed, provides for completion of research, and the formation of recommendations and a local action plan. The report will be submitted to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities in March, 2004, and contribute to a national report and toolkit for municipalities. The national report and toolkit will be presented at the annual FCM conference May 28th, 2004 in Edmonton.

Participants in the Cowichan project also stressed the importance of local action beyond the research phase, and the development of local resources to facilitate information, communication and involvement.

Coordination of Local, Regional and National Priorities and Actions

The recommendations put forward by participants have a fairly strong emphasis on policies and practices of local governments, and their support will be critical to success; however, many are also related to programming of community organizations, and they suggest the need for coordinated action from the community and local government level, to the provincial and national levels. In reviewing the recommendations, the Cowichan Advisory Committee stressed that:

1. National tools and actions need to support, and be coordinated with, local action plans. National tools and actions must compliment efforts at the local level and try to be relevant to both rural and urban communities.
2. Local actions need to be well-coordinated. With such a diverse region, it will be important to take both a regional and localized view. Actions need to be tailored to each community, and at the same time, shared at a regional level to foster sharing of information and best practices.
3. Action should begin with the development of goals and benchmarks to define what we want to achieve.
4. Careful consideration should be given to goals. For example, is the goal to help women be more involved, or to help local government be more accessible, or both?
5. The process should begin with dialogue to explore avenues for implementation; that a review of structures, policies and practices currently in place will help to identify opportunities.

NEXT STEPS

As part of the current phase, the advisory committee will:

- 1) Circulate report to broader community and present to Federation of Canadian Municipalities
 - obtain additional feedback and exploration of ideas and possibilities
 - determine how information will be integrated into national report and toolkit
 - participate in development of national report and toolkit

- 2) Circulate the final report to local governments and the broader community and make presentations to create awareness around the findings.

As part of the subsequent phase, the Advisory Committee will:

- 3) Explore feasibility of recommendations and identify available mechanisms for planning and implementation.
 - dialogue with communities and local government to explore ways and means for the ideas expressed by participants to be developed and implemented. This may be done at both a regional and local level.
 - discussions as to the feasibility of recommendations, and existing mechanisms within local government and communities that can contribute to implementation.

- 4) Identify short, medium and long term actions and relevant areas of responsibility.
 - develop concrete goals and benchmarks
 - establish support and involvement from relevant authorities and community members to develop a coordinated approach

- 5) Identify resources needed.
 - available and potential resources (e.g., some works may dovetail with existing initiatives; some may require specific projects to be developed)
 - identify the appropriate structure(s) needed to support the work (i.e., committees, networks, etc.)

- 6) Confirm overall plan and begin implementation of objectives.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Project Schedule

PROJECT WORKPLAN AND SCHEDULE

Oct. 2003	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project coordinator to attend FCM Steering Committee meeting in Ottawa. • Confirm funding and budget; sign agreement. • Establish a Project Chair and a representative local advisory committee to guide and direct the project.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrange initial meeting with advisory group. • Provide info packages on the project and IMCD website. • Prepare terms of reference. • Design the participatory research process that will involve the full range of women (both citizens and elected officials) in the community to gather information on barriers to involvement in municipal decision making processes. • Discuss evaluation plan; ethics; participatory consent form.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare summary of meeting / info package summarizing the project to distribute to community partners, etc. • Send plan to FCM Steering Committee
Nov.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compile / prepare community inventory: • Compile information on our community and municipal government structures and processes to provide an inventory, context and analysis (geographical and socio-economic overview; regional/municipal gvt structures; advisory committees, policies, mechanisms, processes; information relating to involvement of women in these processes; i.e., numbers of women participating).
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Become familiar with the FCM interactive website and post community info there.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications with local governments and the community (at large and other organizations) to create awareness and buy-in. • Meetings/presentations with relevant committees
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that local governments fill out the FCM survey.
Dec Jan Feb	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin / carry out participatory action research • Contact community organizations to request/arrange to attend groups and conduct focus groups. • Distribute survey early December.
By Feb 15th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare draft report with findings by February 15th, 2004
By Feb 28th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with the advisory committee locally to develop an action plan that will be presented to the FCM and to local municipalities.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare a report with recommendations that can be implemented by the community and FCM.
March 2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend FCM Steering Committee meeting: contribute to the development of tools, partnerships, action planning for the national project.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare final report • Disseminate: • Distribute report locally • Post on web
May, 2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FCM Annual Conference in Edmonton will share the results of the research

Appendix B: Advisory Committee Terms of Reference

COWICHAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Federation of Canadian Municipalities Increasing Women's Participation in Municipal Processes Project – Cowichan Valley Research Project Cowichan Valley Advisory Committee Draft Terms of Reference

The Cowichan Valley Advisory Committee is a sub-committee of the Cowichan Social Planning Council. The purpose of the committee is to provide direction, support and assistance to the project work, and to provide an ethical overview of the process.

The overall goal of the project is to enhance the ability of women to participate in local government processes. The process will undertake research into local government processes in the Cowichan Valley, to better understand the local issues that are important to women, their barriers to, and needs for, participation. The research will take on a regional approach and look at the overlapping structures as well as experiences of women within them.

The committee will oversee and provide direction to the research, and to the development and implementation of a local action plan that will contribute to national research and action. The project will report to the Cowichan Social Planning Committee during the research process, and provide a report to participants, the community at large and the FCM.

Committee Members:

Anne Murray, Cowichan Valley Intercultural and Immigrant Aid Society (Social Planning Committee)

Carol Fryer

Debbie Williams, Hiiyeyu'Lelum / House of Friendship

Gillian Leverkus (Social Planning Committee)

Jean Crowder, District of North Cowichan

Jenny Farkas, City of Duncan

Kathy Skovgaard, Cowichan Women Against Violence Society

Louise Hall

Patti Delisle

Sandra Goth, Cowichan Family Life (Social Planning Committee)

Vern White, United Way (Social Planning Committee)

Project Staff:

Terri Dame

Colleen Dearden

Appendix C: FCM member Survey



Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM)

FCM MEMBER SURVEY (I)

INCREASING WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN MUNICIPAL CONSULTATION PROCESSES

Fax Back to (613) 241-2126 before October 9, 2003

Please Leave Nothing Blank or Insert N/A

Section A Please Provide the Following Information About Your Municipality

Contact Name _____

Title _____

Municipality _____

Prov./Territory _____ Telephone _____ Fax _____

Email _____ Home Page _____

Population

- 0 - 999
- 1,000 - 1,999
- 2,000 - 4,999
- 5,000 - 9,999
- 10,000 - 24,999
- 25,000 - 49,999
- 50,000 - 99,999
- 100,000 - 249,999
- 250,000 - 499,999
- 500,000 plus

1. How would you describe your municipality? Check one or more.

- Urban Rural Northern Remote Other _____

2. What is the ethnic/cultural make-up of your municipality? Assign a percentage of total population for each of the following groups:

Anglo Canadian _____ Franco Canadian _____ Aboriginal _____ Visible Minority _____

Other _____

Section B Participation of Women in Municipal Governance

1. How many elected members are there in your municipality? _____

2. How many women are elected members of your municipal Council at this time? _____

3. How many of these women come from a diverse group?

Visible minority _____ Disabled _____ Immigrant _____ Other _____

4. What is the gender make-up of your municipal advisory committees (committees that report directly to council) at this time?

Total number of men on Advisory Committees _____ Total number of women on Advisory Committees _____

5. How many women from diverse groups listed above are members of Advisory Committees? _____

6. How many women currently chair municipal Advisory Committees? _____

7. How many of these women are from a diverse group? _____

8. How are appointments for Advisory Committees made in your municipality?

- In camera process Public process Other _____

Please fax back to (613) 241-2126 before October 9, 2003. Thank you for completing this questionnaire.

Section C Policies and Practices on Municipal Consultation

9. Does your municipality have a written policy statement on public participation?
 Yes No Don't Know
- (a) If yes, does this policy include specific recommendations for the inclusion of women in consultation processes?
 Yes No Don't Know
- (b) Does this policy include specific recommendations for the inclusion of women from diverse groups?
 Yes No Don't Know
10. Does your municipality have policies, programs and services that take into account the different needs of men and women in the field of crime prevention?
 Yes No Don't Know
11. Does your municipality use gender assessment tools to take into account the different needs of men and women when developing policies, programs and services?
 Always Most of the Time Some of the Time Never Don't Know
12. Is there training available on the use of gender analysis?
(a) Training is available for elected officials (b) Training is available for municipal staff
 Yes No Don't Know Yes No Don't Know
13. Please check the gender specific tools used in your municipality:
- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Equal Opportunity Program for Hiring | <input type="checkbox"/> Women's Safety Programs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gender Equity Action Plans | <input type="checkbox"/> Gender Impact Assessments |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Collection of Gender Disaggregated Data | <input type="checkbox"/> Targeted Consultation with Women's Groups |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Women's Safety Audits | <input type="checkbox"/> Diversity Advisory Committee |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Women's Advisory Committee | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |
14. Does your municipality keep statistics on the number of women who attend public consultations?
 Yes No Don't Know
15. Using a 5-point scale please rate the effectiveness of the consultation approaches you use in your community to include women. (1-most effective, 5-least effective)
- Public Meetings _____ Open House _____ Consultations with Women's Groups _____ Focus Groups _____
- Workshops _____ Surveys _____ Advisory Committees _____ Other _____
16. In general, what percentage of people attending municipal consultations are women?
 Over 50% 35-50% 15-35% Less than 15%
17. In general, how well represented are women from diverse groups at public consultations in your municipality?
 Extremely well Very well Somewhat Not well represented

Please fax back to (613) 241-2126 before October 9, 2003. Thank you for completing this questionnaire.

18. What do you believe are the barriers to increasing women's participation in municipal consultation processes in your community?

- Not enough information available to women about municipal services
- Municipality does not reach out to involve women in consultation processes
- Timing of public meetings is difficult for women
- Lack of support from the municipality for more inclusive policies and practices
- Municipalities and women's networks do not have established working relationship
- Lack of practical support for women (childcare, transportation)
- Language barriers
- Safety Issues
- Physical access barriers
- Other _____

19. What do you believe the benefits are for your community when women are fully included in municipal consultation processes?

- More informed decision making by elected officials
- Increased community support for municipal decisions
- More opportunities for women to take leadership roles in their communities
- The municipality is more effective meeting the needs of women and their families
- The municipality can respond more effectively to marginalized groups of women in the community
- Other _____

20. We will develop a tool kit for municipalities and women's organizations as a resource to increase participation of diverse women in municipal consultation processes.

(a) What information about tools, policies, and processes would be most helpful for your municipality?

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Policy examples on women's participation | <input type="checkbox"/> Women's Safety Programs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gender Equity Action Plans | <input type="checkbox"/> Gender Impact Assessments |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gender Disaggregated Data | <input type="checkbox"/> Targeted Consultation with Women's Groups |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Women's Safety Audits | <input type="checkbox"/> Diversity Advisory Committee |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Women's Advisory Committee | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |

(b) Do you have examples of consultation policies, tools or processes that have proven effective in your municipality that you would like to share for the development of the tool kit?

- Yes (please provide contact information below)
- No
- Don't Know

Contact Name _____

Department _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Email _____

For more information contact: Colleen Purdon, Project Coordinator (519) 376-7145, email: cpurdon@fcm.ca

Please fax back to (613) 241-2126 before October 9, 2003. Thank you for completing this questionnaire.

Appendix D: Local Community Survey



PARTICIPATION IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT PROCESSES SURVEY

We are conducting research to tell us how women are participating in local government processes and what their needs are. The information from this survey will be compiled into a report and action plan that will be given to the community. It will also contribute to a national report and tool kit for local governments across Canada. Your assistance to fill out the survey will contribute to both local and national knowledge and action. All information collected is non-identifying.

In this survey, local government refers to the Cowichan Valley Regional District, the City of Duncan, North Cowichan, Ladysmith, Lake Cowichan

1. Do you ever contact your local government elected officials? (e.g., Mayor, Councillors, Directors)

Yes No

If yes, how?

- Telephone
- Email
- Write letters
- In person
- Other _____

2. Do you ever take part in any of the following activities having to do with local government?

Yes No

If no, skip to question #4.

If yes, check all of the following that apply.

- Attend public meetings (e.g., Town hall meetings, Community Planning, Zoning by-law meetings, etc.)
- Fill out surveys
- Sit on committees (e.g., Advisory Planning, Economic Development, etc)
- Vote in elections
- Run as a candidate in local election
- Other _____

3. What topics or issues led you to participate?

- Land development, planning
- Business development
- Environment
- Recreation
- Safety
- Roads and traffic

Other: _____

4. If you do take part in activities having to do with local government, about how often?

- Once per week
- Once per month
- Twice per year
- Once per year
- When I have an issue
- Other - please describe (e.g, only at election time)

5. Have any of the following affected your ability to participate in activities relating to local government? (Check all that apply)

- Lack of transportation
- Lack of childcare
- Lack of time
- Safety concerns (e.g., evening meetings)
- Meeting times or locations
- Family or work obligations
- Disability
- Race/ethnicity
- Age
- Sexual orientation (lesbian/bisexual/transgender etc.)
- Don't feel comfortable (e.g., formal processes)
- Have difficulty understanding the process
- Don't feel that my participation would make a difference
- Topics are not relevant to me
- Other _____
- None of the above

Appendix E: Articles

Media Clips

Due to size restrictions, the media clips could not be uploaded to the Internet.

If you would like a copy of them please send an email, with your fax number, and they will be faxed to you.

Email address: saferfutures@cwav.org

Appendix F: Selected Statistics

SELECTED STATISTICS

CENSUS POPULATION OF CVRD ELECTORAL AREAS AND MUNICIPALITIES				
	1986	1991	1996	2001
Duncan	4,040	4,300	4,588	4,699
North Cowichan	18,675	21,375	25,305	26,148
Ladysmith	4,395	4,875	6,456	6,587
Lake Cowichan	2,170	2,240	2,858	2,827
Area A - Mill Bay/Malahat	2,425	2,820	3,259	3,416
Area B – Shawnigan Lake	3,725	5,435	6,591	7,081
Area C – Cobble Hill	2,525	3,340	4,287	4,545
Area D – Cowichan Bay	2,350	2,515	2,721	2,689
Area E – Cowichan Koksilah	3,160	3,440	3,828	3,805
Area F – Cowichan Lake South/Skutz Falls	1,620	1,645	1,762	1,763
Area G – Saltair/Gulf Islands	2,270	2,485	2,429	2,358
Area H – North Oyster/Diamond	1,925	2,125	2,357	2,250
Area I – Youbou/Meade Creek	1,240	1,195	1,426	1,149
Indian Reserves*	2,270	2,895	3,111	2,681
Total CVRD	52,575	60,685	70,978	71,998

Cowichan 1, Cowichan 9, Chemanus 13, Halalt 2, Squaw-hay-one 11, Tsussie 6, Claoose 4, Kil-pah-las 3, Kuper Island, Lyacksun 3, Shingle Point 4, Malachan 11, Malahat 11, Cowichan Lake, Portier Pass 5, Theik 2, Wyah 3, and Oyster Bay 12.

COWICHAN VALLEY REGIONAL DISTRICT - AGE OF POPULATION 2001											
Age of Population	0-4	5-14	15-19	20-24	25-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75-84	85 and over	Median Age
Duncan	270	480	275	240	1,145	525	405	490	605	270	44.2
North Cowichan	1,330	3,670	1,915	1,380	6,445	4,095	2,995	2,420	1,485	420	41.2
Ladysmith	330	985	445	275	1,720	985	660	640	420	120	41.1
Lake Cowichan	190	415	230	145	735	425	295	225	145	40	39.1
Area A	165	425	200	120	860	580	430	375	220	40	44.0
Area B	375	1,280	620	250	2,175	1,210	560	395	200	25	37.7
Area C	195	560	265	120	970	645	620	700	420	60	47.5
Area D	125	340	175	120	620	515	340	260	170	25	44.3
Area E	175	600	330	160	1,060	670	385	280	125	30	39.8
Area F	80	245	135	70	455	340	215	160	45	15	41.8
Area G	65	250	140	85	420	410	365	335	245	35	50.5
Area H	65	240	140	75	545	485	315	225	135	25	46.3
Area I	50	155	60	35	270	200	170	135	65	5	45.0
Indian Reserves	245	640	300	190	420	275	150	100	40	5	25.2
Total CVRD	3,640	10,275	5,215	3,240	18,190	11,340	7,910	6,750	4,315	1,125	41.3
Percent	5.06	14.27	7.24	4.5	25.26	15.75	10.99	9.38	5.99	1.56	

(Source: Statistics Canada Census; acquired at www.cvrld.bc.ca)

POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CVRD, 2001

Characteristics	Cowichan Valley Regional District		
	Total	Male	Female
Immigration Characteristics			
Total - All persons	71,310	35,060	36,250
Canadian-born population	61,485	30,510	30,970
Foreign-born population	9,610	4,430	5,180
Immigrated before 1991	8,750	4,050	4,700
Immigrated between 1991 and 2001	855	380	480
Non-permanent residents	220	120	100
Aboriginal Population			
Total - All persons	71,310	35,065	36,250
Aboriginal identity population	6,260	3,180	3,080
Non-Aboriginal population	65,055	31,885	33,175
Visible Minority Status			
Total population by visible minority groups	71,315	35,060	36,255
Visible minority population	2,780	1,335	1,435
Chinese	475	295	180
South Asian	1,360	610	755
Black	215	105	110
Filipino	175	35	135
Latin American	65	25	40
Southeast Asian	125	55	75
Arab	0	0	0
West Asian	75	40	30
Korean	50	25	25
Japanese	140	85	55
Visible minority, n.i.e	25	10	15
Multiple visible minorities	70	50	15
All others	68,535	33,720	34,815

(Source: Statistics Canada; Community Profiles, available at www.statcan.ca)

**SELECTED FAMILY CHARACTERISTICS
COWICHAN VALLEY REGIONAL DISTRICT, 2001**

Characteristics	Cowichan Valley Regional District
Selected Family Characteristics	
Total number of families	21,385
Number of married-couple families	15,400
Average number of persons in married-couple families	2.9
Number of common-law couple families	2,605
Average number of persons in common-law-couple families	2.9
Number of lone-parent families	3,380
Average number of persons in lone-parent families	2.6
Number of female lone-parent families	2,690
Average number of persons in female lone-parent families	2.6
Number of male lone-parent families	685
Average number of persons in male lone-parent families	2.4
Median family income (\$) - All census families	\$51,446
Median family income (\$) - Couple families	\$57,023
Median family income (\$) - Lone-parent families	\$24,662
Median Income - males	\$29,315
Median Income - females	\$15,522

(Source: Statistics Canada; Census Data, 2001, available at www.statcan.ca)