





# **SAFER FUTURES**

## **ANNUAL REPORT 2006/07**

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**Safer Futures**  
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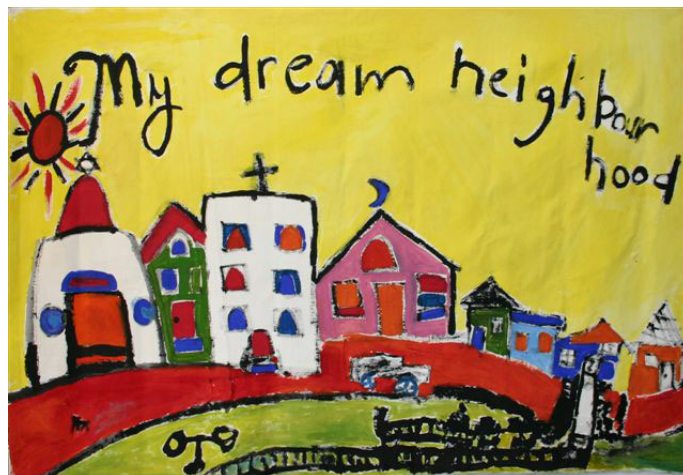


## What is Safer Futures?

Safer Futures works with people in the Cowichan Valley to create neighbourhoods that are safe, healthy and offer equal opportunities for a good life. Our two main roles are community development and research. We are a program of the Cowichan Women Against Violence Society.

## Our Motto

A safe and healthy community is one that works to provide all citizens with equitable opportunities for a good quality of life, to narrow the gaps between advantage and disadvantage, to ensure healthier children, stronger families and more cohesive communities.





## **Message from the Executive Director**

We know that personal safety, well-being and equality are achievable if community members work together to make these a priority. As the Cowichan Valley continues to grow and change, we must be ever vigilant that our more vulnerable neighbours attain their rightful place at the table, and that their voices are heard.

Community development - bringing together residents, community organizations, municipal governments, churches, schools and local businesses together to affect change and plan for the future - is complex. It takes time, sometimes years, to construct a foundation of mutual trust and communication. Most importantly, it takes understanding that social and behaviour problems are rooted in poverty, lack of opportunities, substance abuse and inadequate civic planning practices.

Jane Addams (1860-1935), social and anti-poverty activist from Chicago, once said, "The good we secure for ourselves is precarious and uncertain until it is secured for all of us and incorporated into our common life." As you will see in this report, that while the task of developing safe and cohesive communities seems formidable at times, we are making significant progress.

On behalf of the board, I would like to thank the members of our Advisory Committee and the staff of Safer Futures for their enthusiasm and support.

**Theresa Gerritsen, Executive Director  
Cowichan Women Against Violence Society**



## Message from the Community Research and Development Manager

As I reflect on the previous year, I am proud of what we have accomplished. Our community development focus is on two communities in the James-Alexander and Cairnsmore areas.

To assist these communities to address and plan for the future, we have fostered two neighbourhood groups made up of residents and representatives from local schools, police, businesses, churches, government and community organizations.

Together, we are moving forward with community plans. We are engaging community members in many ways: identifying and pro-actively discussing safety issues, hosting recreation and public awareness events, targeting activities specifically for youth and families and working with residents and planners to revitalize public areas.

To affect positive change, however, takes time and patience. It requires making the links between the issues and the solutions and working together with the whole community. This is especially true in neighbourhoods where there is high mobility and where people are struggling to meet the most basic needs including food, shelter and child care. Much of our work takes place quietly behind the scenes. It is not highly visible, but it is important foundation building.

Building community links, providing workshops and conducting research – all toward enhancing community safety are key to Safer Future's mandate. In addition to our work with local communities, we conducted and supported several research projects: Planning Ourselves In – Partners for Inclusion; Building a Comprehensive Community Safety Initiative for the Cowichan Region; Inadequate Shelter in the Cowichan Valley and the Status of the Community Report.

We also continue to work with the Cowichan Valley Regional District's Community Safety Advisory Committee, providing research, facilitation and education to the committee's work.

We evaluate and share our learnings with other communities and organizations both in British Columbia and beyond. As you can see, it has been a busy year.

**Terri Dame, Community Research and Development Manager  
Safer Futures Program**



## Highlights for 2005 to 2006: Cairnsmore Neighbourhood

- Neighbourhood Centre: we are working with the Growing Together Day Care to initiate a centre for children and families. Child care, parenting programs, community kitchens, clothing exchanges would be offered.
- Housing for Women and Children: Serenity House. A new project by community members to develop a transition home for young mothers and babies.
- Cowichan Valley Open Learning Cooperative (CVOLC): Several student initiatives are underway – a school mural, community gardens, backpacks for the homeless, reading program for elementary school children and a video about the Cairnsmore neighbourhood (to be featured at the BC Crime Prevention Association conference in Vancouver this September).
- Community Gardens: Cowichan Green Society, St. Andrews Church, CVOLC and Growing Together developing plans for community gardens.
- St. Andrews Church: Offered space for a resource centre, community kitchens, community gardens etc. Violence Prevention in Relationships Workshop (November, 2005). Peer Support Services for divorced or divorcing parents.
- Gala Vista Apartments: Apartment renovations and grounds clean-up. Developing secure play area and increasing security. Supporting the building manager to provide activities and programs for tenants.
- Centennial Park Revitalization (City of Duncan): When complete park will feature a pond, accessible walkway, new washrooms, basketball courts, community gardens.
- Youth and family programs: Working with the Action Team on family movie nights and a youth-centred activity roster in 2005.
- City of Duncan Official Community Plan (OCP): Worked with the City of Duncan to integrate community safety and neighbourhood issues into their OCP process.





## Highlights for 2005 to 2006: James Alexander Neighbourhood

- Neighbourhood Network: With residents, local organizations, schools and businesses to create a working group.
- Neighbourhood Plan: With North Cowichan to create a neighbourhood plan based largely on community consultations and a safety audit (draft neighbourhood plan to be released this summer).
- School Community Connections Project: With School District 79, and Gamella Consulting to develop a neighbourhood-friendly recreation area on school property.
- Housing and Neighbourhood Resource Centre: With Social Planning Cowichan and Canadian Mental Health Association to facilitate neighbourhood involvement in planning and operations of the new centre.
- Kinsmen Park Community Garden: With Cowichan Green Community to facilitate a community garden where neighbours can grow their own vegetables and produce.
- Youth Inclusion and Education – with SWOVA to bring in the Respectful Relationships Program to Quamichan Middle School; with youth to develop a neighbourhood project.





## Priorities for 2007: “Making the Links and Working Together”

- Neighbourhood Centre and Serenity House: fostering public support and funding.
- Establishing community gardens in the Cairnsmore and James-Alexander communities.
- Involving local youth in neighbourhood revitalization.
- Safety awareness and violence prevention: continuing public education through workshops.
- Duncan Official Community Plan: facilitating inclusion of local issues (eg. affordable housing, recreation facilities etc.)
- Programs and Services: continuing to support and advocate for much needed services (eg. child care, youth services – outreach, employment/training opportunities/counselling; addictions programs, on-site apartment programs).





### **Safer Futures Staff**

Terri Dame, Community Research and Development Manager  
Terri Ferris, Program Coordinator  
Thanya Al-Saadoon, Community Development Coordinator  
Suzanne Gray, Community Development Coordinator

### **Making The Links Project Steering Committee**

Patti Delisle, Social Planning Cowichan  
Chris Hall, District of North Cowichan  
Saila Hull, Cowichan Valley Regional District  
Nelson Folland, M'Akola Housing  
B McKenzie, Cowichan Tribes  
Lorna Newman, School District 79  
Veronica Scott, Communications Consultant  
Mark Turner, House of Friendship  
Cheryl Wirsz, City of Duncan

### **Sponsors**

Over the years our many contributors have included:  
Cowichan Valley Regional District  
District of North Cowichan  
Federation of Canadian Municipalities  
Ministry of Community Services  
Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General  
National Crime Prevention Council  
Status of Women Canada  
The Vancouver Foundation

### **Cowichan Women Against Violence Society Board**

Gillian Leverkus, Chair  
Maggie Hughes, Vice Chair  
Sharon Moss, Treasurer  
Linda Graitson, Director  
Genevieve Singleton Polster, Director  
Lucy Thomas, Director

Theresa Gerritson, Executive Director



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