The Feasibility of a Neighbourhood House in Kamloops, BC, Canada

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2019 Laurea
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Degree Program in Social Services
Bachelor’s Thesis
December, 2019
Neighbourhood houses are community activity hubs that provide a multitude of programs and services beneficial to the local citizens who use them and the communities they serve. They are found in cities all over the world, including Vancouver, British Columbia, which has several. The obvious success and utility of these centres, in Vancouver and elsewhere, leads to the assumption that they could be of value in cities that have never had one. This research focuses on one such city: Kamloops, British Columbia. The threefold purpose of the present thesis then, is to form a general impression about the possibility of a neighbourhood house in Kamloops 2) to introduce the concept of the neighbourhood house to a variety of Kamloops community leaders, and 3) to gauge their current reaction to that concept.

The framework of this study includes a general description of Kamloops, BC, as the operational environment, and a descriptive account of neighbourhood houses with regards to structure, staff and volunteers, partnerships and funding, programs and services. The centres in Vancouver are used as references, as they could serve as practical models for a neighbourhood house in Kamloops. The history of neighbourhood houses is also included, to demonstrate their longevity and continuity in improving the lives of people and positively impacting communities.

This is a qualitative study based on semi-structured interviews with various community leaders in Kamloops. Semi-structured interviews were chosen because they would allow for more spontaneous answers and deeper discussion, and thus greater exploration of the subjects related to the research.

The findings of this research reveal that a neighbourhood house would be a good possibility in the city of Kamloops, with favourable conditions present related to partnerships, funding, and the recruitment of volunteers. Community needs and gaps in service were identified and could possibly be filled by a neighbourhood house. Meaningful discussion was generated about the concept of a neighbourhood house in Kamloops. The discussions brought forth valuable insights, observations, and perspectives. The information gathered would be likely be useful to anyone wishing to explore this concept further.

Keywords: Neighbourhood house, Kamloops, community, programs, services
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1 Introduction

Neighbourhood houses exist in many cities worldwide. These community activity hubs serve diverse purposes and generate many benefits for neighbourhood citizens. They are multi-service community centres where local people can access information, resources and programs of various kinds. In addition, they typically have drop-in centres that welcome and encourage social interaction between and amongst community members. Neighbourhood houses also engage in community-building activities aimed at improving living conditions within the neighbourhoods they serve.

Despite the success and utility of neighbourhood houses in many cities, including Vancouver, British Columbia, the very existence of such facilities remains virtually unknown to citizens of many other cities across Canada. This is particularly the case for mid-size and smaller Canadian cities. The Neighbourhood house concept remains generally unknown in many such locations. It seems to be an idea not yet considered. Kamloops, British Columbia, appears to be one such city.

There are no neighbourhood houses in Kamloops, despite apparent surface suitability for such an undertaking. The threefold purpose of the present thesis is to 1) to form a general impression about the possibility of a neighbourhood house in Kamloops 2) to introduce the concept of the neighbour- hood house to a variety of Kamloops community leaders, and 3) to gauge their current reaction to that concept. The initial assumption of this re-search is that the leaders interviewed will be generally supportive of the idea of at least one neighbourhood house in Kamloops, regardless of whether they are ready to work actively to bring it about. Since those interviewed are very active in the affairs of the Kamloops community, it is probably safe to assume that valuable indications may be generated regarding the receptivity of the general Kamloops population to the neighbourhood house concept.

One of the challenges in developing this paper has been actually finding community leaders willing to be interviewed. These are busy people. Fortunately, several willing subjects were found, and their participation has been both valuable and greatly appreciated.

In the interest of context and background for the research interviews, this project includes a general description of neighbourhood houses per se: how and where they began, examples of their modern function, and basic information about how they are structured. Also included is a broad sketch of Kamloops, British Columbia, Canada. The research undertaken is specific to this location, therefore a mental picture of the town is vital for understanding the project.

At the heart of the research are the interviews themselves. They contain a wealth of specific, useful, and interesting insights into procedures and approaches to community work and
service, and the present conditions within the community that would indicate if Kamloops is ready and suited for a neighbourhood house.

2 Operational Environment

Kamloops BC is a city of about 100,000 residents in the interior region of British Columbia, about 350 kilometres from Vancouver. Originally a modest farming and lumbering community at the junction of two major trade routes, it has evolved into a culturally diverse, modern city with a solid economic base and a full range of services. There is, to name only a few amenities, a fully accredited university (Thompson Rivers University) with a student population of approximately 7000, a full range of academic offerings, a faculty of Trades and Technology, a law school, and a thriving inter-national program. Not far from the university is a large regional hospital, employing some 1500 workers and medical professionals. Canada’s two major railways meet at Kamloops, as well as two national highways. Along the railway just west of town, a large pulp mill also provides several hundred jobs. Service providers, smaller businesses, and tourism facilities add to the economic viability of Kamloops as well. In short, Kamloops is a thriving city that continues to expand and develop in diverse ways, including as a home to citizens of many cultures and origins.

Like many growing cities, however, Kamloops faces certain challenges with regard to the changing needs of a changing population. There exist various inequalities and differences of opportunity among its several neighbourhoods.

While there are many programs and services available to citizens, access is often limited by cost or by exclusivity. Communication between and among neighbourhoods is not optimum despite good roads and a public bus system. It seems fair to say that many citizens simply don’t feel welcome to participate fully in the wider community, or even in neighbourhood activities.

Some of this tendency to isolation may stem from the historical fact that the present city of Kamloops consists of five formerly independent towns and settlements; these smaller units were amalgamated into one large city by the provincial government in the 1970’s. Where there had been 5 separate councils, mayors, and populations, there became one unified city council, one mayor, one public works department, and one amalgamated population. Administratively, this has been much more efficient, but perhaps the older sense of identity and separateness has persisted within the new structure. It is certainly true that some of the neighbourhoods are separated by as much as 20 kilometres, including a fair amount of agricultural and open space between them.

Although the particular characteristics of the several neighbourhoods in Kamloops is of general interest, this paper will henceforward narrow its focus to the two largest population
centres. This is appropriate because those two areas of Kamloops are the likeliest locations for any future neighbourhood community centres.

The Thomson River divides the main part of Kamloops into two distinct halves. On the south side of the river, where the land is quite steep and rocky, lies the downtown core and principal commercial areas. Also on that side of the river are Thompson Rivers University, Royal Inland Hospital, the Trans-Canada Highway, the 6000 seat arena, and many of the most prosperous citizens. South Kamloops, it should be noted, was the original settlement and thus had more time to grow and develop in the years before it was amalgamated with the other populations nearby.

On the north side of the Thompson River, on the flat land that was until recently a flood-prone agricultural area, lies the single-story Tranquille Road business corridor, the working class subdivisions, the cheaper apartments, and an extensive park built over the former sewage-settling ponds down-stream from downtown and directly across from the often odoriferous pulp mill. The north shore, still called "North Kamloops" by local people, is generally considered the poorer, less desirable, and most dangerous part of Kamloops. This is somewhat unfair and inaccurate, perhaps, but the prejudice persists all the same. It is not unusual for South Kamloops residents to avoid the north shore because they feel unsafe there and because it is somewhat unlovely. The lower-rent commercial spaces on Tranquille Road are home to various social-support agencies: they locate there because they are needed there. It is likely that any initial Neighbourhood Centre for Kamloops would be appropriate in that area as well.

The present description of Kamloops as the operating environment for this thesis is generally accurate but cannot of course include or describe the full complexity of the city. The intent has been, simply, to give the reader, in broad strokes, an approximate initial impression of the setting for this project. Space does not permit a finely detailed approach, but additional in-formation will be added in other sections of this paper.

3 History and Origin of Neighbourhood Houses

Neighbourhood houses of today can trace their origins back more than a century, to the era of the Industrial Revolution in England, and the Settlement Movement that emerged there in the late 1800s.

During the late 19th century, rapid changes in methods of production, in transportation, in international trade, and especially in population patterns permanently interrupted the lives of the working poor in Britain. The old rural life in agricultural settings, with hand tools and hand production in cottages and small enterprises was largely wiped away. The invention of the steam engine, the spinning jenny, the power loom, the locomotive, and many other such
devices and machines made large numbers of rural labour- ers unnecessary. Cottage hand looms could not compete with power looms set up in huge factories. Horse-drawn carts and small boats could never hope to move products and resources as efficiently as the railroad. The system of small landholders and public grazing land could not withstand the onslaught of large enterprises focused on farming on an industrial scale to supply the wool and other raw materials needed by factories and heavy industry in centralized locations such as London. Without useful work, with- out access to grazing land, without political power or wealth, the rural poor were swept into the cities, where factories and other new technologies needed workers. There was a chance in the cities to survive and perhaps even prosper.

Increased production and industrialization had created new wealth and bet- ter living stan- dards for many, even leading to the rise of a new middle-class. However, mass migration into the newly industrialized cities had resulted in extremely overcrowded and impoverished neighbourhoods.

Cities like London became filled with people who had no chance of ever returning to their former rural lives in the countryside of England or other European countries. The overpopula- tion of workers meant they had to be willing to accept any wage. Factory owners and employers could set very low wages and demand long hours in poor conditions. There were also many displaced people who had moved into the cities but were not able to find work. According to an account from the online Victorian Web, London slums arose initially as a result of rapid population growth and industrialisation. They became notorious for overcrowding, unsanitary and squalid living conditions.” (Dinieko and Litt 2013)

In response to the poverty, poor living conditions, and growing social is- sues, there emerged several social reform movements and rescue societies in English and later, American cities, “to provide support to resolve the problems of poverty, disease, prostitution, mental illness, and other afflictions.” (Social Work Degree Guide 2019) The most prominent and influential of these were the Charity Movement and the Settlement Movement.

3.1 The Charity Movement

The charity movement, dominated by the London Charity Organization Society (COS), was fo- cused on individuals, with the general view that individuals who found themselves in unfortu- nate social circumstances were some-how accountable for their own misfortunes, or rather incompetent in some way.

“...the COS reflected the prevalent mid-19th-century individualist philosophy that attributed poverty to failings or fecklessness among the poor. Poverty was not blamed on social or structural factors, such as low wages or economic mismanagement by governments, or seen
as an intrinsic feature of capitalism, but was blamed on the failings of affected individuals.” (Dorey 2015)

One method used, for example, involved volunteers encountering and inter-viewing people, learning about their issues, and then referring “deserving” cases to appropriate organizations that could help rehabilitate them, and lead them toward better life choices. (Dorey 2015) Individual clients, of course, would also be eligible for various forms of charity.

3.2 The Settlement Movement

The Settlement Movement, in contrast to the Charity Movement, did not view the personal failings of individuals as responsible for the poverty and harsh living conditions they were experiencing. Factors beyond the control of these individuals were considered as reasons for the poverty and poor living conditions of the people, such as the current economic environment and social policies.

The approach of the settlement movement was not to give charity and rehabilitation assistance to deserving individuals, but rather to build community, utilize social interconnectedness, promote social action, and improve social conditions. In comparison to the charity movement, the settlement movement “adopted a more collective and holistic approach, focusing on community values and organizations.” (Social Work History Project 2011)

The method of the settlement movement, in England and later in America, was to set up residences in suburban slums, where university graduates and members of the upper class could live beside and amongst the poor working people. As neighbourhood residents, the settlement workers observed and identified the needs of their lower-class neighbours and created various types of support services that “enabled people to begin to improve the quality of their lives.” (The Settlement Movement 2018) They started day-cares and health clinics. They created social, recreational and educational programs, including music and fine arts. They built parks and playgrounds and theatres. Settlements were also involved in social action initiatives that led to social welfare programs, and reforms in child-protection, housing, labour organization, factory safety, legal aid, and even milk pasteurization. (Hanson 2011)

The first settlement house, founded in East London in 1884, was Toynbee Hall. Originally referred to as a “university settlement”, it was established by the church cleric and social reformer, Samuel Barnett. The following excerpt provides a description of the first settlements in London:

“Settlements, as first established by Barnett, were residential colonies of university men in the slums intended to serve both as centres of education, recreation, and community life for the local poor and as outposts for social work, social scientific investigation, and cross-class friendships between élites and their poor neighbours.” (Koven 2004, as cited in Simkin 2014)
As the oldest settlement house in the world, Toynbee Hall still stands, 135 years later. According to its current website, the centre continues to give community members “the skills and knowledge they need to help them-selves while working to influence opinion and to change the systems and policies that affect people today.” (Toynbee Hall 2018)

Neighbourhood houses that exist today evolved from the settlement movement and continue to be guided by the values of inclusion, social justice and community connection. These values are reflected in the following excerpt from the Association of Neighbourhood Houses of British Columbia:

A neighbourhood house “is a model for social inclusion and justice. This is seen in their activities, values, and vision for more equitable, interconnected and welcoming neighbourhoods.” (ANHBC 2017)

4 Neighbourhood Houses Today

This section will provide a brief description of neighbourhood houses as they exist in cities today around the world, with special focus on those in Vancouver, British Columbia. It will indicate how they are typically organized, staffed, and funded, and touch on the type of partnerships they have with other organizations within the wider communal network. It will show the kinds of activities, programs and services commonly offered by neighbourhood houses, using specific neighbourhood houses in the Vancouver area as illustrative examples.

4.1 General Overview

Neighbourhood houses exist in many cities around the world, though they may be called settlement houses, community centres or community hubs. Some cities have several of them, each serving a specific neighbourhood or geographical area. Vancouver, British Columbia, for example, has ten neighbourhood houses, which are all overseen by the Association of Neighbourhood Houses British Columbia (ANHBC).

While many neighbourhood houses have been around for decades, a neighbourhood house may begin quite modestly with only a volunteer board of directors and a limited number of activities that run out of borrowed spaces. Ideally however, the organization will grow and expand to incorporate more services and include more programs. As it grows, it will also expand its volunteer base and the number of paid staff. Ultimately, the organization would acquire a street level location in the form of a multi-functioning building. This then serves as the multi-service centre, the communal drop-in centre and the main centre for running activities.
As non-profit organizations, neighbourhood houses rely greatly on community volunteers, partnerships with other organizations, and various forms of funding, fund-raising, and even social enterprise.

4.2 Structure

The structure of a neighbourhood house may change as it grows and as it increases the number of programs and services it provides. In the beginning, a neighbourhood house may be governed by a volunteer board of directors, consisting of the usual primary roles; president, vice-president, treasurer and secretary. The board is generally elected and then accountable to members of the organization. Initially, the board would not only take care of and report about the financial and legal responsibilities of the organization, but also help in running programs and directing volunteers. As the organization grows, resources develop, and paid staff are hired, those latter duties may be designated to an executive director. As the organization continues to grow, more roles are created and filled by people with qualifiable knowledge, skills and experience.

4.3 Staff and Volunteers

Although they are volunteer-driven, neighbourhood houses of a considerable size usually employ paid staff to manage volunteers and to coordinate programs and services. Paid staff members may be professionals with education and experience related to social services and community support, such as qualified early childhood educators, or they may fill more administrative roles such as financial officers.

Naturally, a neighbourhood house that has been running for many years will have an organizational structure that can accommodate several paid staff and a strong volunteer base. To provide a general idea of the sort of roles filled by paid staff at a neighbourhood house, the following list of staff at Gordon Neighbourhood House in Vancouver is provided as an example: Community advisory board, as well as the following list of staff: Executive Director, Senior Director, Director of Operations, Director of Youth and Family Programs, Director of Community Development, Farmer/Community Programmer, Community Programmer, Chef, Community Support Worker, Community Programmer for Seniors Programs, Family Support Worker and Front Desk Workers (Gordon Neighbourhood House 201)

This list of course does not include the many volunteers that neighbourhood houses typically rely on. Volunteers may run programs, assist in support services or be part of outreach teams. They may use their skills for work at the front desk, in the community gardens or in the community kitchen. They may be translators, builders, or chefs. They may even sit on the advisory committee. (ANHBC 2017) Volunteers are recruited using a variety of means, including word of mouth and social media. Their contributions are usually greatly appreciated and are
considered not only essential, but an integral element to the organization. In short, “The NH belongs to the community and volunteers reflect that community ownership.” (ANHBC 2017)

4.4 Partnerships and Funding

In order to fulfil its mission of providing affordable and valuable services and programs that benefit the community, it is essential that neighbour-hood houses form partnerships with other organizations and obtain funding through a variety of sources. Neighbourhood houses may form partnerships with businesses, service groups and other community organizations like the United Way. They may also partner with schools or school boards, libraries, or recreation centres. (ANHBC 2017)

Like any non-profit organization, a neighbourhood house needs continual sources of income to sustain its programs and services. In addition to supportive partnerships, neighbourhood houses need to be able to secure constant sources of funding and be able to find other sources of income revenue. The ANHBC Tool-kit points to several possibilities where a neighbour-hood house can obtain funding, including “various fundraising methods including writing grants/proposals, holding fundraising events, soliciting individual and corporate donors and social enterprise. Funding may be available through the United Way, community foundations, corporations, municipal, provincial and federal government sources.” (ANHBC 2017)

In terms of social enterprise, it is typical of many neighbourhood houses to run daycares at their centres. Another common source of income is renting out spaces in their facilities for other organizations who need space for their offices, services and/or programs.

4.5 Programs and Services

Programs and services are designed to reflect the needs and interests of the unique community that the neighbourhood house serves. They are designed to be inclusive, affordable, and accessible. They are also designed to build a stronger sense of community:

NH programs and services are integrated bringing people of different classes, cultures and generations together. Many programs are group based to encourage community connections and mutual support. (ANHBC 2017)

Neighbourhood houses offer a wide range of affordable and accessible pro-grams and close at hand delivery of local services. These may include li-censed childcare, family resource pro-grams, employment services, food security programs, ESL literacy programs, volunteer men-toring opportunities, as well as special events and projects.

An exhaustive description of neighbourhood houses around the world is not appropriate for a paper of this scope. Even full description of every neighbourhood house in BC, including all their various programs, would be too long. It does seem necessary, however, to provide, by
way of representative examples, some concise information about the way neighbourhood houses are operating in BC presently. This will allow some idea, when joined with the previous description of Kamloops as the operational environment, as to whether there is at least some “goodness of fit” for a neighbourhood house to exist in the city of Kamloops.

As illustrative examples, the following section offers a description of some of the services and activities offered by a specific neighbourhood houses in the Greater Vancouver area.

Mount Pleasant Neighbourhood House, situated in one of the most diverse neighbourhoods in Vancouver, reaches out to a wide community with an array of programs and services designed to meet that neighbourhood’s needs and interests. Their list of activities includes employment services, childcare services, settlement services (including community connections), support for newcomers to Canada, literacy programs, food security pro-grams (community gardens/kitchen, cooking classes), activities for youth and pre-teens, multi-cultural family resource programs, as well as various educational and recreational programs for specific age groups, including the elderly. Space is also provided for community events and gatherings including a monthly Aboriginal cultural gathering. (Mount Pleasant NH 2019)

The following lists of some of the specific programs and services offered at the Mount Pleasant Neighbourhood House, as provided on its website:

- Indigenous Family Gatherings: Circle of Nations Cultural Sharing Night is families sharing cultural teachings and strengthening cultural identity, promote inclusion, enjoy healthy meals and create community engagement. Mondays, 5:30-7:30 p.m.

- Parenting Matters: VCH Healthy Living Program / Emotionally Intelligent Kids / FSGV Financial Literacy: Single Mothers & Taxes / Single Mothers & Family Law

- YWCA Single Moms Support Group: Meet other single mothers to share knowledge and resources.

- Dads at Play! Drop-In Program: A program for dads with children 0-5 years. A play-based program where children and fathers enjoy activities and talk about fatherhood. (Mount Pleasant NH 2019)

Although the whole neighbourhood is welcomed and served, the neighbourhood house typically offers services and activities designed specifically for groups of people in the community that are recognized as vulnerable to marginalization. These groups include the elderly, immigrants and newcomers, and youth. Special activities and services provide opportunities for people in these groups to enjoy suitable social and recreational experiences or to receive assistance that meets their particular needs. Services and pro-grams specifically designed for these customer groups also help to ensure that they are included in wider society.
The following section provides information about and examples of programs and services available at neighbourhood houses in Vancouver, for two of these groups: senior citizens and immigrants: senior citizens and immigrants.

4.6 Programs and Services for Seniors

With regards to senior citizens, Kitsilano Neighbourhood House, for example, offers its senior members recreational activities such as gentle chair yoga, pilates, and “Osteofit.” It also has a Seniors Peer Support group for newly retired people. (Kitsilano NH 2019) At Frog Hollow Neighbourhood House, seniors may join tai-chi classes, participate in a weekly program called “Community Slow Walk”, or join Choose to Move, where participants can learn to turn daily habits into forms of movement and exercise. Frog Hollow also invites seniors to play games and enjoy light refreshments together in its weekly Coffee and Chat Corner, or to join the Golden Age Meeting Group for tea, conversation, and outings. It also offers seniors’ computer classes, dance classes and knitting groups. (Frog Hallow 2019) South Vancouver Neighbourhood House sponsors a weekly Community Lunch for seniors, and a South Asian Men’s Group for “discussion, meal-sharing, and outings.” (SVNH 2019)

Other social and recreational activities found at neighbourhood houses include arts and crafts, karaoke, bingo, and cooking/meal sharing. Neighbourhood houses also provide opportunities for seniors to volunteer in various programs and community projects.

Many neighbourhood houses offer services to elderly people who live independently at home but may need assistance with grocery shopping, transportation, house and yard work. South Vancouver Neighbourhood House runs volunteer programs called Better at Home for these purposes. (SVNH 2019) Frog Hallow Neighbourhood House has Neighbourhood House on the Go where volunteers go to the homes of isolated seniors to bring programs and resources (activities, books, refreshments) to isolated seniors in the community. (Frog Hallow 2019) The 55 and Better program at Kitsilano Neighbourhood House helps “young seniors, aged 55 - 64, with light house-keeping to support them in continuing to live independently at home, and remain connected the community.” (Kitsilano NH 2019)

4.7 Programs and Services for Immigrants

Canada, like many countries around the world, is a destination for a great many immigrants and refugees. Canadian government agencies and community organizations view support services for newcomers as beneficial not only for the newcomers themselves, but also for the communities in which they settle. It is recognized that support services are instrumental in helping newcomers to get oriented in their new surroundings, while also increasing their sense of security and belonging.
In Canada, a pluralist integration approach guides government policy regarding immigrant settlement. This translates into various settlement services for every type of newcomer to the country. British Columbia Settlement and Integration Services for example, provides services that are available for refugees, for people who are waiting for permanent residency, for college and university international students, for naturalized citizens, and for temporary residence who work in the province. (BCSIS 2019)

Government programs and policies aimed at assisting immigrants in the settlement process cover areas such as language training and immigrant settlement and adaptation programs in the areas of employment, health, culture, and recreational services. Available services also include help with banking, shopping, and accessing resources. The delivery of government funded settlement integration programs and services in Canada is generally carried out by third sector organizations, or non-profits, including neighbourhood houses.

Settlement services and programs for immigrants and newcomers are a central component of most neighbourhood house agendas, especially in neighbourhoods where there are high populations of newcomer settlement. Settlement services that are designed and delivered to help guide newcomers through the integration process are focused on areas such as language acquisition, housing, employment, and education.

As newcomers have distinct needs, settlement workers offer personal consultations to help create settlement plans for individuals or families. Where language poses barriers in the initial stages of settlement, there are often possibilities for newcomers to use their own languages during these consultations. The multitude of personalized services provided by the Frog Hollow Neighbourhood House in Vancouver, for example, is displayed on their website:

Frog Hollow offers one-on-one service that includes a one-to-one settlement plan, information & orientation, permanent resident card renewal, citizenship applications, career planning, BC housing applications, rental assistance, benefits applications (income assistance, tax credits, OAS, child care subsidy, CCB, school enrolments, etc.), medical applications... free English lesson referral, and so much more! One-on-one service is available in English, Cantonese, Mandarin, Arabic, and Spanish. (Frog Hallow NH 2019)

As mentioned above, neighbourhood houses embrace the values of inclusivity and diversity. These values are underlined and extended toward immigrants. Messages that neighbourhood houses extend to newcomers offer encouragement and motivation to make connections with other people and groups in the community. An example of a welcome messaging can be seen on the Settlement Service page of the Frog Hallow Neighbourhood House:

We understand that settling in a new place and making it home for you and your family is a challenging and long process. No matter where you are from or how long it has been since
you arrived in Canada, we welcome all newcomers to access support services and community 
involve opportunities here at Frog Hollow. Our programs are designed to help you suc-
cessfully navigate the stages towards citizenship and further on, for your long-term well-be-
ing and participation in society. (Frog Hallow NH 2019)

Mount Pleasant Neighbourhood House offers a multitude of settlement services for immi-
grants and newcomers. The following list of services can be found on their website:

1 on 1 support and settlement counselling

Information and referral to community resources

Information on health care, legal system, education, employment, finances, housing, child-
care and more

Help with filling out forms

Leadership training

Workshops

Opportunities to meet new people and engage in community activities (Mount Pleasant NH 
2019)

Neighbourhood houses also host Community Connection programs, designed to provide valuable information and skills for newcomers. One example is “Pathway to Leadership” for “em-
powering workshops for women with permanent status.” (Mount Pleasant NH 2019)

As an example of typical language programs available to immigrants/newcomers, the follow-
ing is a description given on the Mount Pleas-ant Neighbourhood House website about their 
ESL programs for different levels of competency:

Beginners English Conversation Club: Newcomers and immigrant families are welcome. 
Childcare is available for children 18 months to 5 years. In both groups, participants get to 
learn about Canadian culture and traditions to improve their settlement and integration by 
building relationships with others and community attachment. (Mount Pleasant NH 2019)

The foregoing descriptions and examples should give the reader an adequate picture of the 
kind of services and activities neighbourhood houses provide in the Vancouver area.

The relevance for this thesis project is that the city of Kamloops, though smaller, contains 
most of the elements present in the Vancouver situation concerning the suitability for neigh-
bourhood houses. What works in Vancouver may conceivably work in Kamloops. This brings
the discussion back to the central question: “Is Kamloops ready for a neighbourhood house?” and specifically, “Are community leaders in Kamloops generally in favour of the establishment of at least one neighbourhood house in the city?” This leads us to the research itself, which is the heart of this project.

5 Study Design/Methodology

This is a qualitative study based on semi-structured interviews. One of the characteristics of qualitative research, as defined by Hammersly and Campbell, is that it places “more emphasis on generating and developing descriptions and explanations than upon testing pre-defined hypothesis.” (Hammersly and Campbell 2012). As such, qualitative research was chosen in this study because it provided an exploratory approach to the research, where factors regarding community organization practices (partnerships, funding, etc.), with experiences related to these areas, could be examined. Gathered data was expected to provide indications as to the feasibility of a neighbourhood house in Kamloops, were it to utilize the same organizational practices within the same community environment.

5.1 Recruitment of Interviewees

Community leaders such as city councillors and program organizers/ coordinators were recruited for the interviews in this study. These types of people were chosen as the respondents because their experiences and perspectives in social and community affairs in general, and in Kamloops specifically, were likely to lend considerable value toward an assessment of the feasibility of a neighbourhood house in Kamloops. Furthermore, as important and influential actors in the community, their input and cooperation would likely be needed if plans for a neighbourhood house were ever to be put forward. As such, the interviews were also used to introduce the concept of neighbourhood houses in Kamloops.

Potential interviewees were identified from public listings of community services and civic entities. These people were contacted by email, phone, and in person at their offices, given a description of the topic, information about the research purpose, data method and publication intention. A letter of invitation was provided to the potential participants, requesting an interview for approximately 30 minutes in a semi-structured but largely free-form format. It was made clear that participants did not need expertise or extensive knowledge concerning neighbourhood houses. Their spontaneous reactions and opinions would be the valued product, as focus on actual words spoken seemed the most useful course of action.

5.2 List of Interviewees

Respondent #1. executive director of a business association
Respondent #2. elected city councillor
Respondent #3. settlement and integration officer
Respondent #4. municipal social and community development employee
Respondent #5. food policy council employee

5.3 Aim of the Interviews

The aim of these interviews was to gather information, along with the experiences and perspectives of community leaders and program coordinators regarding community work and organization practices, networks, services, programs and initiatives within the city of Kamloops.

The knowledge and perspectives of the respondents were gathered to create a deeper understanding of community conditions that may or may not point to possibilities for a neighbourhood house in Kamloops. The interviews were also used to introduce the concept of a neighbourhood house in Kamloops to the community leaders and program coordinators, and to gauge their receptivity to the idea of a non-profit neighbourhood houses within the community.

5.4 Method of Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the respondents. Campbell and Hammersly elaborate on this qualitative research approach as being less structured, with the objective being “to invite informants to talk at length about matters that are broadly relevant to the research, with the interviewer following up to encourage more elaboration, detail, or exemplification where necessary.” (Campbell and Hammersly 2012) The semi-structured interview method of this research was chosen with this type of objective in mind.

As referred to in Appendix 1, the interviews were guided by a set of questions surrounding community organization and practices, including their views on how a neighbourhood house could fit into the landscape. In keeping with the purpose of semi-structured interviews using mainly open-ended questions, the respondents were encouraged to relay experiences and express their ideas and perspectives in a free-flowing discussion manner. The interview method reflected the responsive style put forth by Rubin and Rubin using three types of questions in order to gain clarity and depth on the subject matters: main questions, probes, and follow-up questions. (Rubin and Rubin 2015). The respondent whose interview was conducted via email was asked to write her answers using any format and at any length, in keeping with the open discussion style of the other interviews.

5.5 Data Collection and Analysis

Verbatim excerpts from the interviews constitute the harvest of useful and interesting information from this research process. In keeping with the free-form style of the qualitative method, no statistical element was included, and thus no numerical outcome produced. Evaluation of the research would be based on general consideration of the content of the interviews.
For data collection, three of the four verbal interviews were recorded and later transcribed. Two were fully transcribed, and one transcribed with relevant excerpts selected. In the case of the interview that was not recorded, detailed notes were taken. The email interview was recorded in writing provided by the respondent.

Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis, utilizing both an inductive and deductive approach. In the deductive approach, relevant verbatim excerpts were extracted and categorized into the broader pre-conceived themes. These themes, as outlined in Appendix 1, were reflective of the theoretical framework of the thesis, together with the interview guide with a set of prepared questions, examples of which can be found in Appendix 1. In the inductive approach, “where the task is to generate categories rather than to place data into pre-determined ones,” (Hammersly and Campbell 2012), the method of coding was used. Phrases were highlighted and grouped together according to patterns that emerged in the responses of different interviewees. The data collected in this manner generated unexpected themes that were not pre-conceived as part of the theoretical framework and interview guide. Rather, they emerged from the data during data analysis, as significant and valuable within the context of the overall research question.

5.6 Ethical Considerations

In any research study, codes of morality and legality must be observed with regards to “the ethical treatment and care of people involved in the research studies.” (Saldana 2011) Ethical considerations have been considered and respected in this research study throughout the process. One of the ethical considerations has been informed consent. The meaning of this “involves providing participants with clear information about what participating in a research project will involve and giving them the opportunity to decide whether or not they want to participate.” (Wiles 2013)

Participants in this research were given clear information about the research project. In the time frame leading up to the actual interviews, the researcher contacted and communicated with each respondent, either through email, by phone, or in person to request a future interview. Each respondent was informed then about the purpose of the research thesis, the methods used for collecting data, the utility and publication of the research report. They also received a written letter of invitation, found in Appendix 2, offering background information, the purpose of the thesis, and expectations for an interview. Those participants who agreed to do the interviews in person were given the choice whether to have their interviews recorded or not, of which three out of four agreed to being recorded.
A consent form for the interviews, as can be viewed in Appendix 3, with a request of signatures, was sent to the interviewees during the thesis process. The consent form stated that the information, perspectives and opinions used as data in the research would be confidential. Confidentiality was ensured through anonymity in the thesis report. Also, the interviewees were given assurance that all recordings, written responses, and transcriptions would be destroyed at the time of submission of the thesis, and that only relevant verbatim excerpts from the data would be used in the final thesis report, protected by anonymity. These processes have been respected and adhered to.

6 Results and Discussion of Findings

As discussed previously, the findings in this study are structured around themes that correspond with the main subjects in the theoretical framework, which guided the broader questions of the interviews. However, the exploratory nature of these semi-structured interviews resulted in lively discussions, and many valuable and interesting bits of information emerged from the data beyond the theoretical framework and the interview guide. Therefore, themes presented in the findings reflect subjects found within the theoretical framework and interview guide, as well as subjects that emerged during the interviews, and later selected during the data analysis process.

6.1 Partnerships and Cooperation Between Organizations

Partnerships and cooperation between organizations is generally considered necessary and beneficial for non-profits, including neighbourhood houses. As discussed in the literature review, the neighbourhood houses in Vancouver are partnered with other organizations, and the Association of Neighbourhood Houses of British Columbia is also partnered with other organizations. In their Start-up Tool Kit for Starting and Sustaining a Neighbourhood House, it is stated: “Organizing partnerships is a vital community development role that results in a broad base of visibility and support for the NH.” (ANHBC 2017) It is suggested in this tool-kit that a neighbourhood house may try to form partnerships with libraries, schools, recreation centres, health centres, community-based organizations, community services, residents’ groups, and businesses or service groups, amongst others. (ANHBC 2017)

In discussing partnerships between community organizations in Kamloops, most respondents commented on the partnerships that exist between their own organizations and others in the city, and expressed the view that partnerships are beneficial, if not necessary. Just as these other organizations have been able to form partnerships, it would seem possible and even likely that a neighbourhood house could find suitable and meaningful partnerships with other organizations within the city, provided it could prove its value to the community. Even forming a partnership with one other organization in the earlier stages of its development would help to stabilize and strengthen the role of a neighbourhood house.
Partnerships are almost always beneficial. They can increase your reach and bring more people in. R#2

All organizations compete for the same funding streams, and all are in partnership with each other. R#3

The general perception of respondents was that in order for a neighbourhood house to succeed, it would need to be formed in partnership with at least one other organization:

-I think there would have to be partnerships with a NH and another organization. R#5

-It is possible. It depends on how you are defining neighbourhood houses and what your vision is. R#2

6.1.1 Partnerships with Neighbourhood Associations

Some of the respondents gave suggestions for specific organizations that a neighbourhood house could partner with in Kamloops. Neighbourhood associations were the most suggested possibility for partnership. In Kamloops, neighbourhood associations are community organizations that represent and support different areas of the city. They often work with the municipal government to host neighbourhood events, or to carry out small community projects. Neighbourhood associations have public profiles on social media for sharing information and communicating with local citizens but have no central locations.

... partnering with neighbourhood associations could be a place to start a discussion about neighbourhood houses. R#2

-Existing neighbourhood associations would be logical groups to partner with. R#2

-There are some neighbourhood associations. There are three over here on the North Shore. McDonald Park, Kamloops Central and Brock. That would be a good idea because they're always struggling for membership engagement and any kind of resource base. R#1

Neighbourhood associations being named as the most likely organizations to partner with is worthy of consideration. The activities undertaken by neighbourhood associations are similar in nature to some of those undertaken by neighbourhood houses. Thus, the two organizations may be able to plan and cooperate on certain events and projects, such as fund-raising events for neighbourhood improvements and for enhancing community cohesion.

As R#1 noted, neighbourhood associations were constantly in need of stronger resource bases and membership engagement. Thus, partnering with a neighbourhood house would likely help to increase a neighbourhood association’s membership and resource base, and visa-versa. Furthermore, as the public profile of neighbourhood associations are presently limited to social
media channels, the central location of a neighbourhood house could provide not only a headquarters for a neighbourhood association to be able to conduct its affairs, but also increase its level of public exposure, communication, and engagement.

6.1.2 Partnering with Immigrant Services

The possibility and benefits of a partnership with the Kamloops Immigrant Services Society was suggested by different respondents during the interviews:

*I think there would have to be partnerships with a NH and another organization. Like you were talking, Immigrant Services...I mean that’s a population you think of right away, because people are new to the country, new to the city, and a neighbourhood house seems like a good way for them to connect...* R#5

*The Immigrant Services Society has a very strong immigrant service portfolio already, but that doesn’t mean you couldn’t partner with them to do some other stuff.* R#1

Immigrant and settlement services in Canada, as discussed within the main body of this paper, are generally provided by non-profit organizations of the third sector. In Vancouver, there are several non-profit agencies, including neighbourhood houses, that provide settlement and integration services for immigrants and newcomers.

In Kamloops, settlement and integration services and programs are provided by one non-profit organization called Immigrant Services Society. As Kamloops is a small to mid-sized city with significantly smaller numbers of newcomers settling within the city, the services rendered by this agency may be considered adequate. This may certainly be true in terms of the initial stages of settlement for which newcomers rely on assistance with such things as attaining permanent residency, housing, employment and education. Immigrant Services Society also has special programs and activities that help newcomers to connect with other people and groups within the wider community.

Duplication and redundancy of services in any realm is naturally viewed un-favourably. However, social and cultural integration is a continual and even life-long process for immigrants and newcomers, in terms of adapting to and “fitting in” to a new society. Therefore, having a multitude of programs available to newcomers, to help them adjust connect socially in the community are undoubtedly valuable. A greater number and greater variety of services and programs available for newcomers could only be considered valuable then. As such, a neighbourhood house may be able to provide greater possibilities and opportunities for newcomers to make meaningful connections in the city.
Suggestions made by respondents for a possible partnership between the Immigrant Services Society and a neighbourhood house reinforces the idea of a neighbourhood house being able to provide greater opportunities for immigrants and newcomers in the integration process.

6.1.3 Partnership with the Local School District

R#4 suggested the possibility of a partnership with the local school district, and gave accounts of situations where partnerships between organizations and the school district (and the municipal government) allowed agencies the opportunity to carry their programs forward:

- Well, depending on the location, maybe it’s a school district, perhaps it’s a closed down school...that’s happened....with the types of organizations like the Big Little Science Centre...they used a closed down school to be able to offer up their services. The Boys and Girls Club and the YMCA...the (un-named) School was closed down, and through partnership with both school district and the city, those two agencies have been able to open up their programs within that one centralized location R#4

6.1.4 Other Possibilities for Partnerships

Many other organizations were named as possible partnerships for neighbourhood houses. These included the local food bank, the community food centre, seniors’ centres, business improvement associations, the United Way, and the City of Kamloops (municipal government).

- There are a number of outreach organizations. You could look at the Food Bank, you could look at Mount Paul Food Centre, you can look at United Way...R#1

- The United Way may also wish to partner R#2

- Maybe the Food Centre could come to the NH to pitch in on a program R#3

- Going back to the question about what agencies a NH could partner with, the Centre for Seniors Information...that is absolutely one that would be a valuable resource. And they’ve just received significant funding from the province too, to expand their services ... R#4

- ...but other possibilities would be to connect with the business improvement associations, in support from community associations around them R#4

Considering the extensive list of partnership possibilities that were named, and the evidence that partnerships between different organizations in the city are not only common, but have proven beneficial, it may be presumed that a neighbourhood house would be able establish itself successfully, were it to find strengthening partnerships.
6.2 Funding

As with any community non-profit organization, a neighbourhood house would need continual sources of income to sustain its programs and services. While partnerships form one type of resource development, the ability to secure funding is another factor considered essential for survival of the organization. The ANHBC Tool-kit points to several possibilities where a neighbourhood house can obtain funding, including “various fundraising methods including writing grants/proposals, holding fundraising events, soliciting individual and corporate donors and social enterprise. Funding may be available through the United Way, community foundations, corporations, municipal, provincial and federal government sources.” (ANHBC 2017)

Respondents made several encouraging remarks regarding available funding sources and the possibilities that might exist for a neighbourhood house. Those respondents who work as program coordinators named various funding sources that their organizations received, and methods for securing such funding. Funding sources named were private corporations, government service agreements, contracts and grants, gaming grants, and the United Way.

Both R#2 and R#3 indicated that support for their programs, services and special projects came from a variety of sources. R#2 relayed that funding is more accessible to organizations that have a strong profile based on longevity. She also talked about social enterprise as a means of income revenue.

-Funding comes through applications for grants, private funding, government contracts, gaming grants... R#2

-We’ve got a bunch of different grants for different programs. But since the FPK has been around for a long time, that makes it helpful to apply for funding because we can show we’re a genuine organization. R#

-We also started a social enterprise a couple of years ago. So we make popsicles from gleaned fruit. That was funding from Maple Leaf and a private foundation. Yes, Maple Leaf the big company... R#5

The two city representatives both pointed to funding possibilities from all levels of government, as well as other sources.

-There are numerous funding sources available from all levels of government, businesses, foundations and individuals. R#2

R#4 noted that the current provincial government was currently offering up significant funding opportunities for various programs and services.
We are in an era too, where the province (provincial government) is offering up a fair bit of money... R#4

References made towards various forms of funding for community programs and services has positive repercussions in terms of a neighbourhood house being able to secure adequate funding for its own activities. However, the perceived challenges and issues involved in securing funding are also worthy of consideration.

6.2.1 Challenges with Funding

Despite participants’ positive comments about funding opportunities, challenges related to funding were also brought forth by some of the participants. Such funding challenges would require further investigation during the planning stage of a neighbourhood house.

- I think that sustainable funding is a challenging obstacle to overcome, though there are mechanisms that might be able to help. R#1

- I think we’re starting to see corporations back away from funding. There’s so much pressure from so many different points to fund, that many of these traditionally large organizations are pulling back on their funding models now, because there’s too much pressure. R#1

- There’s always that uncertainty with funding. You never know if you’re going to get it or how much you’re going get. We rely on it. We wouldn’t have the gleaning program without it, unless we had some other source of ....We kind of assume we’re going to get the funding, but if they sent us a letter and said we’re not funding you this year, we would wonder what are we going to do now? R#5

According to respondents, challenges related to funding involved the uncertainty of receiving funding, sustainability of funding issues, and the recent trend which shows that funders, especially corporate funders, are becoming continually over-extended and therefore continually less generous.

The challenges related to funding are important considerations in a neighbourhood house start up, and especially in its ability to sustain its long-term survival and mission to provide affordable programming for local citizens. Further investigation would be required in the early planning stages of the start up, and this should include gauging the real possibilities of securing funding once a stable model for a neighbourhood house were presented.

6.3 Support from the Municipal Government

Support from the City of Kamloops (municipal government) was mentioned in most of the interviews, both by the city representatives and the program coordinators. Support in the way
of funding, partnership, sponsorship, service agreements, and grants from the City were brought forward as valuable and/or necessary contributions made toward their organizations.

City support and cooperation seems to strongly tie in with the ability of some organizations and agencies to carry out their activities, initiatives, projects and events. Community organizations, such as the neighbourhood associations and the food policy council seem to have some level of reliance upon the City’s support and cooperation. R#5’s comment describes the funding support their projects and initiatives have received and continue to receive from the municipal government:

-We’ve gotten social planning grants from the City in the past for certain projects. And actually we did get some money from the City to start the social enterprise…We are now requesting a more steady stream of funding from the City. Just like ICS has service agreements with the City for the community gardens and stuff…there’s a service agreement that works for that. R#5

Both city reps described and gave examples of some ways the City of Kamloops supports local organizations:

-We help with specific projects...social planning grants - we open up a call for applications, and then we issue out for community groups......but the city also does service agreements R#4

-We (the City) also have neighbourhood matching funds. So a neighbourhood can apply for funding to help support an initiative they will be launching. R#4

-Check out the McDonald Park Neighbourhood Association. They have just funded a mural through private donations, a grant from the City of Kamloops, corporate sponsorships and more. R#2

Most of the respondents suggested that a neighbourhood house would need the support of the municipal government in order to get established and to succeed. R#1 emphasized the importance of support and cooperation from the City with several insightful comments:

-I think anything that’s really going the community realm here in town needs to be considered in partnership with the City, because the City is really heavily engaged with community development. R#1

-Who is on board...getting support from the City. Would the City be supportive? It must be. The proposal to the City must be presented in the right way, like showing how a neighbourhood house could fill in service gaps. R#1
6.4 Community Needs and Gaps in Service

The mission of a neighbourhood house is to provide valuable and long-term benefits for the community and its members. However, regardless of the benefits that a neighbourhood house may be able to offer, the existence of one would not be feasible in a city where community leaders (and members) do not see the community need or any gaps in service.

Kamloops is a city that offers many worthwhile services and programs to its local citizens, through various agencies and organizations. A multiple of opportunities exist for local citizens to participate in social, recreational, and educational activities, that covers all ages and interests. Important services exist for seniors, youth and newcomers to the city, and for marginalized groups in the community. The argument could be made that the services and programs available in Kamloops are adequate to fulfil the most or all the needs and interests of the population. The perception may exist that there is no need to fill in any gaps in services, or that there are perhaps too few to mention. This perception was presented by participants from the City of Kamloops, at least when neighbourhood houses were initially brought up.

Both representatives of the City of Kamloops expressed doubts during different parts of the interview, that a neighbourhood house was needed in Kamloops; that the services and programs available through both the City and through other organizations were meeting the needs of the population:

- My first question would be whether there is a need for neighbourhood houses in Kamloops. Our neighbourhood associations across the city are quite strong. Most of them have a presence on Facebook. Neighbourhood associations don't have a physical location but they do build community and help identify and solve any issues. They also have block parties, some of which are funded by the City. R#2

- I feel there are already many organizations and non-profits in Kamloops in all areas...arts, sports, learning, recreation, etc. R#2

- Community centres such as the YMCA, TCC, Westsyde Pool, Brock Arena, Heritage House, etc may also help fulfil the role that neighbourhood houses play. R#2

- In Kamloops, there are many services, programs, and activities available for special client groups with certain needs and interests, such seniors, youth, and newcomers to Canada R#2

- I've read that they are typically run by non-profits, but I see a lot of the work we do in our different community halls here at TCC, as neighbourhood centres. They are activity centres. R#4
According to those opinions expressed by a city planner and a city councillor, the role of a neighbourhood house is already being fulfilled in Kamloops. This may or not be perceived correctly, but as the feasibility of a neighbourhood house would probably require the support of city council members and city planners, this perception is valuable in determining whether Kamloops is ready for a neighbourhood house.

6.4.1 Drop-in Centres

Community needs and interests were identified by the city leaders in other parts of their interviews, however. They both made references to discussions about and the public interest and desire for drop-in centres for different purposes:

- There has been some talk about an intergenerational drop-in centre for youth and elders. This could be a good addition to Kamloops. R#2

- Significant consultation has been done with the public to identify the types of recreational needs, and what we’re learning from that is...drop-in and spontaneous play (in whatever form that looks like, not necessarily sport) is what our community has been looking for... R#4

Gaps in services for specific groups were identified by most of the respondents, including R#4. The perception of a need for better services for these different groups increases the likelihood of a neighbourhood house being feasible in the city.

6.4.2 Enhanced Services for Specific Groups

- (Gaps exist in) youth services, mental health for youth, recreational pro-grams and arts for youth, services for men. There is too much focus on parents with small children. R#2

- Definitely for seniors ...One of the most important things that I’ve noticed about (neighbourhood houses) is the socializing piece for seniors ...Our aging population, absolutely, that’s an area that definitely needs support ... R#4

- our LGBT community, our indigenous community, our at-risk youth, and youth and families in general, they all need support, they all need opportunities, they all need socialization, education, you know, personal growth and development opportunities ... R#4

- Childcare is a significant area that we’re learning about. There are significant gaps, both for childcare spaces, and the ability to retain staff, to hire staff, to have funds for staff, for these childcare places... R#4

6.4.3 A Central Location of Services

R#4 expressed her opinion that a need for a central location of services is needed. She spoke quite extensively and enthusiastically about the possibility of a neighbourhood house being
able to provide a space where several agencies could deliver services at one location. Positive outcomes of that, in her view, would be better cooperation amongst agencies, a resolution to duplication issues, and better accessibility and speed in resolving issues for service-users:

-A central “welcoming house” for agencies to have satellite services where all agencies were involved, co-operation would be an asset. A neighbour-hood house could provide a central space for that. There would be more accessibility for service-users, issues would be resolved faster...quicker turn-around, less duplication...a one-stop shop. R#2

- It resolves duplication (in services) issue. Several services in one location saves clients having to go to several places to get the same information.... housing and employment training etc. Mental health services could be broadened. Lots of gaps exist, in all services. The central location of a neighbourhood house would improve accessibility for people...Services exist but are too spread out; accessibility by bus is sometimes an issue for people. R#2

6.5 Recruitment of Volunteers

As a grassroots organization, a neighbourhood house is volunteer-driven. The ANHBC Toolkit, in fact, states that neighbourhood houses are completely run by volunteers when they first begin, adding paid staff only as the resources grow within the organization. Paid program coordinators and executive directors may be hired only after funding capacity is developed. (ANHBC 2017)

The conditions of volunteer recruitment and volunteer retention in Kam-oops, including the issues and challenges involved, were discussed at length by all of the respondents. Generally, the respondents viewed volunteer recruitment favourably in terms of the “volunteer spirit” in Kamloops. The point was made by some respondents that volunteers tended to be drawn more toward specific events, or to projects where they would be reciprocated in some way.

-the work that this department has done and from what I’ve seen from the others, recruiting volunteers tends to be project specific...event specific. We do have very good success that way. R#4

-When we started the gleaning program, it was pretty easy to get volunteers because we had something to offer right (fruit)...especially at the be-ginning of the season. We often turned people away, especially at the be-ginning of the season, when everyone’s so excited right? R#5

6.5.1 Challenges with Volunteer Recruitment

All the respondents felt that there were challenges involved with both the recruitment, and/or keeping a solid base of volunteers. Respondents’ men-tioned that volunteers could not always be relied on and volunteer bases could easily dwindle over time. Various reasons for
this were touched on, such as volunteer “burn out”, overcommitment, people becoming too busy, and the high level of competition between the many organizations, projects and events in Kamloops where volunteers are needed:

-In Kamloops, there’s so many organizations always looking for volunteers. There’s so many sporting events....so there’s competition I guess for volunteers R#5

-(there is) easy recruitment in Kamloops (but difficult to sustain a solid base, and difficult to keep a full roster (volunteers come and go...) R#2

-Finding people who are available at the times needed is a challenge. As mentioned above, Kamloops has dozens of committed volunteers but they are often overcommitted to a number of causes. R#5

-It is good to be able to rely on volunteers, but volunteers may have other commitments come up at the last minute. If the organization is required to keep certain hours, you may need to hire someone. R#2

...people get burned out...they get tired of always volunteering. R#5

R#5 talked about her positive experience of having a practicum student for one of her recent projects, and suggested that social work practicum students could be good prospects for volunteers:

-I mean it’s nice...we were really lucky this summer to get the social work practicum student. She did so much for us, and we didn’t have to pay her. So we were really lucky and that was great. So that sort of thing...if you can get social work practicum students. They’re sort of invested in that work... Practicum students are a good possibility for volunteering because they get something bigger. The get work experience, they’re learning, they get credits toward their program... R#5

A neighbourhood house in Kamloops, as anywhere, would rely greatly on volunteers, and difficulties in maintaining a steady base of volunteers would affect its ability to provide its services and affordable programs to local citizens. While this consideration may make it a less feasible option for the city of Kamloops, solutions that could help resolve this issue are likely to exist. Those wishing to establish a neighbourhood house in Kamloops may find solutions by investigating the methods for recruiting and keeping the volunteer bases at neighbourhood houses in Vancouver, where it appears to be less of an issue.
6.6 The Challenge of Location

Most neighbourhood houses have central and visible street locations, usually a large building with facilities that allow it to deliver a multitude of programs and services. They also typically have a drop-in centre for members of the community to socialize, get information, or use the resources available there.

Finding a suitable location was recognized as a possible obstacle or challenge in establishing a neighbourhood house in Kamloops. Size, affordability and geography were all cited as possible challenges:

- *If someone were to establish a neighbourhood house in Kamloops, they may find a number of challenges. Finding a physical location that is affordable and that the neighbourhood house can afford to maintain is one.* R#2

- *Securing a location of proper size. The building shapes the vision.* R#2

- *Location. Real estate is an issue.* R#4

- *Geography of Kamloops could play a central role and present a challenge.* R#2

While location issues could pose a challenge and lessen the feasibility of a neighbourhood house being established in Kamloops, there is the possibility, according to R#1, for challenges with location to be overcome.

- *I think location is a big question. What does it look like, how is it going to be oriented into your community, what is its community impact...So location would be a potential obstacle, but as long as you're working it properly, it could probably be overcome.* R#1

6.7 Other Challenges

Other possible challenges were identified by respondents, with regards to starting and sustaining a neighbourhood house, such as producing a sustainable model for the organization, finding credible leadership, and ensuring accountability on behalf of those using, and those offering the service. Accountability relates to the level of community support a neighbourhood house would need to be successful. Some respondents pointed to the possibility of a neighbourhood house facing social stigma through association with the city’s visible street population, and the current opioid crisis:

- *Well, the one that you talked about...is attracting the right people, which is...I don’t know how else to say that. Like making it so everyone feels welcome. Like you don’t want people being afraid to bring their kids there because there’s sort of scary populations hanging around...* R#5
-Potentially, social stigma would be the number one...dependent upon the client group that comes to the house. The community may not be in favour of it. If you put a community house there, and most of the people who show up to your programming our homeless, then there’s a social stigma around that’s very difficult to work through. R#1

7 Conclusion

Many neighbourhood houses, in Vancouver and other cities around the world, have existed for decades, with roots that go back to the settlement movement of the post industrialization era. These centres are continually expanding and many have grown into thriving communal hubs where great value and benefits are generated for the communities they serve and the members of those communities. They are generally distinguished by a central street level location from which various social, recreational and educational programs and activities are run, a multi-service point, and a welcoming drop-in centre that promotes social interaction.

The purposes of this study were to form a general impression of the possibility of a neighbourhood house in Kamloops, to introduce the concept of the neighbourhood house to a variety of community leaders, and to gauge their current reaction to that concept.

The overall impression gathered from the research suggests that a neighbourhood house in Kamloops would be a good possibility. Furthermore, the findings indicate that community leaders would generally support a neighbourhood house project in the city of Kamloops, if someone were to take the lead. Although the respondents didn’t appear ready to spearhead such a project at this time, (nor were they asked to), they were certainly interested in and ready to discuss the concept.

While neighbourhood houses in many cities, including Vancouver, have long histories and have flourished into large centralized activity hubs, in all probability, a neighbourhood house in Kamloops would begin rather modestly, with local residents and possibly some supportive community leaders forming a vision and embarking on discussions that promote community building. In the beginning, it may have only a volunteer board of directors and run only a few programs or activities using rented or borrowed spaces provided by individuals or organizations. Ideally however, it will grow and expand to incorporate more services and include more programs. As it grows, it will also expand its volunteer base and the number of paid staff. Ultimately, the organization would acquire a street level location in the form of a multi-functioning building. This would then serve as the multi-service centre, a communal drop-in centre and the main location for running activities.

The framework of this report included descriptions and examples of the types of services, activities, and programs that neighbourhood houses generally offer, with illustrative examples of centres in Vancouver. Neighbourhood houses in Vancouver would likely serve as models for
a neighbourhood house in Kamloops, were one to be initiated. It is important to note, however, that the types of programs, activities and services provided by a neighbourhood house are meant to reflect the community it serves. A neighbourhood house in Kamloops would be of most value if it reflected the needs and interests of the community.

A theme that emerged through analysis of the data, perhaps somewhat surprisingly, was that, according to most respondents, a neighbourhood house in Kamloops would require the support of the municipal government through partnership, sponsorship, funding, and/or service agreements. This seems to be the case for many community organizations in Kamloops. Finding a suitable location for the centre may also depend on the level of support the municipal government would be willing to give.

It seems certain that support from the municipal government would be linked to the City’s perception about the value of a neighbourhood house, whether the community needs one, and if it could fill perceived gaps in service. While the local government representatives interviewed seemed to express the belief that the City itself was providing enough in the way of social and recreational activities, they also recognized that there were several needs and interests, as well as gaps in service within the community that were not being presently filled. Some of these included drop-in centres, more social activities for seniors, and support services and programs for vulnerable groups such as the LGBTQ community, the Indigenous populations, and at-risk youth. Childcare service was also brought up as a service that is greatly lacking in the community. All of the aforementioned needs, interests, and gaps in service in the community could conceivably be filled by a neighbourhood house.

Possible challenges that may exist for a neighbourhood house, as brought forth in the findings, involve securing continual and reliable sources of funding, recruiting and maintaining a steady volunteer base, and becoming a socially stigmatized agency associated with the city’s street population and the present opioid crisis. These challenges and obstacles are likely surmountable. Those involved in the early development of a centre in Kamloops might look toward the centres in Vancouver, for guidance and solutions to these challenges. The identification of challenges is perhaps an opportunity for seeking out early solutions, especially during the planning stages of development.

In terms of introducing the concept of a neighbourhood house in Kamloops, a topic which appeared not to have been discussed before this study, as well as getting meaningful discussion started about it, this research study was very successful. The discussions brought forth many valuable insights, observations, and perspectives. The information gathered would be of great value to anyone wishing to explore this concept further. As is often the case, more research on this topic is desirable. However, this study has succeeded in beginning a worthwhile
discussion about the possibility of a neighbourhood house in Kamloops at some point in the future.
8 References


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Appendix 1: Interview Themes /Examples of Questions

Introductory questions:

- Could you please tell me something about your current professional title, your duties, and experience related to present and past projects?

- What sort of experience or knowledge do you have about community building?

- What do you know about neighbourhood houses at this point?

Themes and Example Questions

1. Partnerships/cooperation between organizations

1.1 Partnerships with neighbourhood associations

1.2 Partnership with Immigrant Services Society

1.3 Partnerships with school district

1.4 Other possible partnerships

Questions:

- What other organizations or businesses does your agency partner with? What do you see as being the benefits of such partnerships?

- Do you think that a neighbourhood house could be established in partnership with other organizations and/or institutions?

- What organizations or businesses in Kamloops could a neighbourhood house possibly partner with? How would these partnerships be beneficial?

- What do you see as being the benefits of these partnerships?

2. Funding

Questions:

- How does funding fit within the context of community building?

- How do people go about funding worthwhile projects in this community?

- How does your organization obtain funding? What are the processes?
- Where does your organization get funding from?
- Where do you think a neighbourhood house might be able to obtain funding from?

3. Challenges of Funding
- What sort of challenges exist in terms of obtaining funding?
- What challenges could a neighbourhood house face in getting enough funding, and long-term funding?
- Would competition for funding be an issue?

4. Support from the City of Kamloops (municipal government)
Questions:
- How does the municipal government support local organizations in Kamloops?
- Would a neighbourhood house be reliant on support from the municipal government?
- How likely is it that the City would be supportive of a neighbourhood house?

5. Community Need and Gaps in Service
5.1 Drop-in Services
5.2 Specific client groups
5.3 Central location of services
Questions:
- Do you perceive of any needs or gaps in service within the community that are not being filled right now?
- How could a neighbourhood house possibly fill these needs?
- Are there any special groups in Kamloops that may need extra services or an enhancement of services that already exist?
- How do you think a neighbourhood house might be able to fill any gaps that exist, and with what sort of additional programs and services?

6. Recruitment of Volunteers
Questions:

- In terms of how community non-profit organizations are staffed, how do you think a neighbourhood house could be staffed?

- What is your experience with or knowledge about recruiting volunteers in Kamloops?

6.1 Challenges related to volunteers

Questions:

- Are there challenges in recruiting volunteers and maintaining an adequate and steady volunteer base?

- What are the challenges?

- How do you think these challenges of recruiting and maintaining volunteers could be overcome?

8. Challenges of Location

Questions:

- Would a neighbourhood house be able to find a suitable and affordable street-level location in Kamloops?

- What are the challenges related to finding a location here?

- Despite the challenges involved in finding an affordable location for a neighbourhood house in Kamloops, how and where might it be possible?

9. Other Challenges

Questions:

- As a person involved in social affairs/issues and community here, what do you think would be the main difficulties or impediments around establishing a neighbourhood house in Kamloops?

- Could these challenges be overcome...perhaps with early planning and further research?
Appendix 2. Letter of Invitation

Dear ___________________________

My name is Jacqueline Tahvanainen. I work in Kamloops as a community support worker for people with developmental disabilities.

I have likely already spoken with either you or one of your colleagues recently. I would like to provide you with a little more information about my project and what I am requesting from you. I am nearing completion of a Degree in Social Services from Laurea Ammattikorkeakoulu (University of Applied Sciences), which I began in Finland in 2014. My final project is a bachelor level thesis/research paper.

The main subject of my paper is neighbourhood houses, such as those that exist in Vancouver, in other cities in Canada, and in many cities around the world. The focus of my research is to assess whether a neighbourhood house would be a feasible option in the city of Kamloops.

As part of my research, I am conducting interviews with people who work or volunteer in community organizations as leaders, councillors and coordinators, people with experience in community affairs who have some knowledge about such things as community building, community needs, partnerships, and funding.

Although you may already know something about neighbourhood houses, I hope you can find time to read the following bit of background information about them. I also hope you will be able to find time to participate in a brief (approx. 30 minutes) interview which will then be used as part of my research.

Background Information about Neighbourhood Houses

A neighbourhood house (NH) is a non-profit organization that functions as a multi-service community hub. It seeks to provide community members with a wide range of affordable programs, activities and services. Inclusion, diversity and social justice are major principles that guide neighbourhood houses. People of all ages and backgrounds are welcomed and activities are designed and delivered for people across the lifespan. Most NHS have special programming for children, youth, seniors, and immigrants.

A NH uses a grass-roots community building approach to strengthen and enrich the community. It relies on a strong volunteer base, partnerships with other organizations, and various forms of funding and fund-raising.

Ideally, NH activities are run out of a central street-level location. This location also serves as a service point and drop-in centre, where community members may come in to get
information about local services or to interact with other “neighbours”. In this way, the NH may become a sort of “neighbourhood living room” where people can connect and where community spirit can be strengthened.

A NH may begin quite modestly with only one or two programs being run by volunteers, using a borrowed space. Ideally, the organization will grow and expand to include many more programs, a larger volunteer base and the addition of paid staff. Ultimately, a suitable building is acquired as the central location of the NH. This serves as a drop-in centre and main hub for running activities. Vancouver, BC has several neighbourhood houses, overseen by the Association of Neighbourhood Houses British Columbia (ANHBC). The following excerpt found on its website provides a description of a neighbourhood house.

A NH is a warm, friendly place where people of all ages come together to meet individual and collective needs of their neighbourhood and to play an active role in their community. Utilizing local resources and talents, the NH is a neighbourhood-based, volunteer-driven and locally governed organization combining services, community building and social change activities. NHs are part of a shared common heritage and part of an international settlement movement - a movement with deep roots in working for social justice. While globally NHs may go by other names such as “Settlement Houses”, “Neighbourhood Centres” or “Settlement Centres”, they all exist for the same purpose - for the benefit of the community. http://anhbc.org/

Further reading (if desired):

Association of Neighbourhood Houses British Columbia website: http://anhbc.org/


Mount Pleasant Neighbourhood House website: http://mpnh.org/

Thank you for taking the time out of your busy schedule to read this. I would very much appreciate your participation in an interview to help me complete my research.

My contact information is provided below. Feel free to contact me to schedule an interview, or to let me know if there is a change in your schedule concerning an interview we have already scheduled.

Sincerely,

Jacqueline Tahvanainen
Appendix 3. Consent Form for Interviewees

In 2019, I participated in an interview with Jacqueline Tahvanainen, as part of a research thesis exploring the feasibility of a neighbourhood house in the city of Kamloops, British Columbia, Canada. Before the interviews were conducted, my consent to participation in the study was given. The background, purpose and methods of this research were communicated to me both orally and through a written letter of invitation.

I, ____________________, hereby give my consent for the information, opinions, and perspectives given by me during this interview to be used as research in the thesis that will be submitted to Lau-rea University of Applied Sciences in Espoo, Finland.

By giving my signature, I also acknowledge that my confidentiality is protected, and anonymity will be ensured. My name, my initials, and my official title will not be included in the official report.

In the case of those interviews that were recorded, may it be acknowledged that the recordings will be destroyed promptly upon completion of the research. Transcriptions of these recordings, in written form and on any technical device, will also be destroyed. Only selected verbatim excerpts, relevant to the themes within the research, will be submitted in the final report. Quoted excerpts will, as stated above, be anonymous.

My signature on this form will be submitted to my institution as proof of the confidentiality and anonymity that guides the ethics of this research.

Signature: ________________________________

Date: ________________________________