

STRENGTHENING THE INTER-FAITH BRIDGES

in Burnaby



MAY / JUNE 2013

FAITH, FOOD & FUN FORUM – IT'S QUITE A STORY!



Photo Credit: Sara Shaw, South Burnaby Neighbourhood House

Wendy Charbonneau, Paul Dincer, and Naomi Steinberg, from the Vancouver Society of Storytelling

On May 7th the Strengthening Inter-Faith Bridges in Burnaby Project hosted its final event at the Shadbolt Centre. Over 70 participants enjoyed a delicious vegetarian dinner, voted in a “dotocracy” exercise, enjoyed informal fellowship and networking, and listened to, and told, some great stories.

The forum, intended as a celebration of Burnaby's rich faith diversity, brought together members of Burnaby's Christian, Islamic, Jewish, Baha'i, Buddhist, and Hindu communities. It also included participants who are not actively involved in a faith group, but respect and value the contributions that people-of-faith bring to this community.

According to participant evaluations, the highlight of the evening was the presentation by storytellers from the Vancouver Society of Storytelling. Wendy Charbonneau, Naomi Steinberg, and Suleyma Murat Paul Dincer shared stories that enthralled and delighted the audience.

Inspired by these 3 gifted storytellers, participants then exchanged their own faith story with a partner. These story “gifts” helped to make the evening a true celebration of faith and diversity. And, like any good story, they are being told and re-told to share messages of faith and courage.

Many thanks to the members of the Strengthening Bridges Advisory Committee; staff at the Shadbolt Centre for the Arts; the City of Burnaby Food Services; Empty Bowls Burnaby, and the Burnaby Public Library (for great door prizes) – all of whom made the evening such a success.

SUPPORT FOR INTER-FAITH ACTION IN BURNABY CONTINUES TO GROW

Burnaby has a long tradition of inter-faith co-operation and action. The City's Social Sustainability Strategy recognizes the importance of cultural and religious diversity, and expresses support for inter-faith initiatives. There are also many examples of Burnaby's faith communities coming together to support each other and the most vulnerable members of our community. One shining example of such multi-faith action is described in Wanda Mulholland's article on the next page.

It was in this context that, in 2010, the Burnaby Intercultural Planning Table (BIPT), undertook the Building Inter-Faith Bridges in Burnaby Project. That project brought together members of the Christian, Islamic, and Buddhist communities to share their experiences, learn more about each other, and celebrate faith in all its wonderful diversity.

The Building Bridges Project led directly to a second BIPT-sponsored inter-faith project, Strengthening Inter-Faith Bridges in Burnaby. This second project was guided by an Advisory Committee reflecting greater diversity, and included members of the Christian, Islamic, Buddhist, Jewish, Sikh, and Baha'i faiths. The project included 3 community dialogue sessions, and a celebratory forum. Overall, more than 150 Burnaby residents participated in these events, with a core group of committed participants who attended all 4!

As the Strengthening Inter-Faith Bridges Project draws to a close, a new initiative is emerging to carry on the work of building understanding between faith groups in Burnaby. This new initiative is exploring plans for a tour of faith centres in Fall 2013 as well as hosting inter-faith social events (both ideas garnered strong support throughout the Strengthening Bridges Project).

In the words of a Strengthening Inter-Faith Bridges participant, we must “continue to create and nurture fellowship, unity, and deeper connection” between people of different faiths because “we are more alike than we are different”.

As this important work moves forward, we need your help. If you would like to be part of the next exciting stage of inter-faith action in Burnaby, please contact jantaylor@shaw.ca.

INTER-FAITH COMMUNITIES WORK TOGETHER TO ADDRESS HOMELESSNESS IN BURNABY

By Wanda Mulholland, Community Development Co-ordinator, Burnaby Task Force On Homelessness



Photo Credit: Kimiko Karpoff

Wanda Mulholland, Community Development Co-ordinator, Burnaby Task Force On Homelessness



In January 2005 the Burnaby Task Force On Homelessness was established in response to community concerns about homelessness in Burnaby.

In July 2005 Staff Sgt Major John Buis RCMP and Ray Allen of the Southeast District Community Policing Advisory Committee invited inter-faith members to discuss policing concerns and discover effective ways to address homelessness in our community.

For the first time, inter-faith leaders talked together and worked towards a common goal. Leaders were encouraged to look no farther than Burnaby to witness grave need and an opportunity to work together.

As a result, Task Force member Progressive Housing Society operates an Outreach Resource Centre and Task Force member Lookout Society operates an Extreme Weather Response. For 8 years inter-faith communities have provided a location, food, clothing, toiletries, volunteers, and financial support.

This contribution from over 23 inter-faith communities is crucial in supporting the programs that assist a growing number of Burnaby citizens living in extreme poverty and homelessness.

During the Burnaby Intercultural Planning Table Faith, Food & Fun Forum, participants identified working with the Burnaby Task Force On Homelessness as an action priority.

In order to reach our goals of expanded services and housing for vulnerable Burnaby citizens, the Burnaby Task Force On Homelessness must mobilize

additional community support. New partnerships developed as a result of connections made at the Project's community dialogue sessions may help to achieve this goal.

Please add your voice to the list of endorsements for the work of the Burnaby Task Force On Homelessness by visiting the Task Force website www.burnabyhomelesstaskforce.org.

Please contact Wanda Mulholland at info@burnabyhomelesstaskforce.org or 604-317-8114 to:

- Learn more about the Burnaby Task Force On Homelessness, the local need, and how to help
- Schedule a presentation (PowerPoint or Informal)
- Arrange for an opportunity to play the What Do People Need game (suitable for elementary, secondary aged children, or adults)
- Donate financially to the Burnaby Task Force On Homelessness to sustain our work



Photo Credit: Sara Shaw, South Burnaby Neighbourhood House

Participants at the Living Our Faith in Burnaby Community Dialogue Session

More Good News from BIPT

THE WORLD IN BURNABY project aims to make Burnaby the most welcoming community in Canada. Join the movement here: www.worldinburnaby.com

The World in Burnaby is a new project with the goal of making Burnaby the most welcoming community in Canada. Together, we want to define what it means to be a resident of this community no matter where you come from and get actively involved in welcoming Burnaby's newcomers. The World in Burnaby project is an initiative of the Burnaby Intercultural Planning Table (BIPT) a consortium of senior representatives from 25 different agencies and organizations in Burnaby all working together to make Burnaby a more welcoming and inclusive city for immigrants and refugees.



This project is made possible through funding from the Government of Canada and the Province of British Columbia.