



### A historic partnership: the Association of Neighbourhood Houses BC and United Way of the Lower Mainland

- The Association of Neighbourhood Houses BC and United Way both work to build strong and healthy communities.
- The Association of Neighbourhood Houses BC is comprised of Alexandra, Cedar Cottage, Frog Hollow, Gordon, Kitsilano and South Vancouver Neighbourhood Houses and Sasamat Outdoor Centre. The Association was established in 1894.
- United Way was established in 1930 helping families, children and seniors in need. United Way funds 146 agencies throughout the Lower Mainland delivering over 318 programs and services.
- Since 2007, United Way of the Lower Mainland has invested more than \$11 million into the Association of Neighbourhood Houses BC
- United Way contributes to program development and professional development of Association of Neighbourhood Houses BC staff. Their staff, in turn, are generous United Way donors.

#### Early history of Vancouver

- The Vancouver area is located on unceded Squamish, Tsleil-Waututh (Burrard), and Musqueam (Sto:lo) territory.
- In 1881, the City of Vancouver was incorporated with a population of 1,000.
- The city grew rapidly, with the arrival of large numbers of Europeans, and by 1931 the population was almost 250,000.



- The Wall Street Crash in 1929 fuelled the Great Depression and large numbers of jobless people were attracted to Vancouver by its relatively warm climate and the hope of finding employment.
- Long bread lines were common, and shanty towns sprang up around the city and its outskirts. By 1935 the City was almost bankrupt, with over a sixth of its budget funding social relief.

*Figure 1. Downtown Vancouver in the 1930s.*

## The creation of United Way

- In 1929 social services organizations, including Alexandra Non-Sectarian Orphanage (the predecessor of the first neighbourhood house), met to pave the way for the creation of United Way.
- In 1930, the Vancouver Council of Social Agencies and the Vancouver Welfare Federation were formed which eventually became United Way. Executive Director Howard Falk's vision was for a Vancouver planning body that would allow agencies to work together.

## The beginning of Neighbourhood Houses - 1930s and 1940s

*Total United Way funding to neighbourhood houses, 1932-1940: \$ 466,518*

- In 1938, the Alexandra Non-Sectarian Orphanage became the Alexandra Neighbourhood House, the first official neighbourhood house in Canada. It became a pioneer of community-based service with the support of United Way.
- In 1938, United Way (then called the Welfare Federation) started funding the West End Community Centre (which became Gordon Neighbourhood House). Allocations totalled over \$7,300.

## The 1950s and 1960s

*Total United Way funding to neighbourhood houses: \$1,121,852*

- During the 1950s, Cedar Cottage Neighbourhood House evolved from Cedar Cottage Youth Club. Until it became part of the Association of Neighbourhood Houses (ANHBC) in 1967, United Way allocations accounted for 85% of the organization's total revenue.
- Through the Association of BC Neighbourhood Houses, by the 1960s United Way was supporting services for a wide range of the population through Neighbourhood Houses, including family life education; day care services; psychiatric and medical consultations; and welfare and recreation research.
- Established in 1962, Sasamat Outdoor Centre believes that outdoor experiences are valuable training for health and personal growth for vulnerable kids. United Way <sup>[DB1]</sup> shared the belief.
- The value of the neighbourhood house concept for the community was highlighted in 1968 when Gordon Neighbourhood House was suddenly closed after the fire department condemned its buildings. The house was an important community resource, where local people, young and old, accessed not just the formal programs, but regularly used it as a drop-in, mixing with each other. A new house was not built until 1985, with a visit by Prince Charles in its first year.

## **The 1970s and 1980s**

*Total United Way funding to neighbourhood houses: \$ 8,716,390*

- In the 1970s, more neighbourhood houses were created and supported by United Way: Kitsilano (1974), South Vancouver (1976), Mount Pleasant (1977) and Frog Hollow (1977).

## **United Way's contribution to social planning, neighbourhood mapping and other research**

### *Social Planning*

- United Way has always been a strong advocate of research, with emphasis on neighbourhood needs. For example, the 1941 survey of the West End peninsula led to the recommendation of a neighbourhood centre in the area. The following year Gordon Neighbourhood House opened.
- United Way has always advocated for government to engage in social planning and research. In 1951 it formally requested that the provincial government fund a survey of social welfare services, and continued to do so until its request was met in the 1970s.

### *Mapping Vancouver's neighbourhoods*

- United Way, working with community partners and the City of Vancouver, helped create Vancouver's neighbourhood boundaries that are still used today. Neighbourhood boundaries were determined by assessing community assets such as libraries, community centres, schools and post offices.

### *Childhood Development: Case Study*

- In the early 1940s, when large numbers of women began entering the work place for the first time, United Way recognized the necessity for childcare services for pre-school children.
- United Way of the Lower Mainland continues to fund evidence-based early childhood development and parent education programs, early years refugee programs, community-school partnerships, after-school programs, and mentoring supports.
- The Association of Neighbourhood Houses BC is an important partner in program delivery for early and middle childhood, and have always been proponents of community centred childhood development and childcare.



Figure 1. A children's group at Alexandra House, 1940s.

## The present

*Total United Way funding to neighbourhood houses in 2016: \$1,329,993*

- The partnership between United Way and neighbourhood houses continues, as does United Way's contribution to social change in the region. This role is recognized by Deb Bryant, CEO of Association of Neighbourhood Houses of BC (ANHBC):  
“...not just as funder...but as a convener of business, labour, the charitable sector and government, like nobody else can do. There's no other organization out there who has those four parties sitting at the table thinking about social change.”

## About United Way of the Lower Mainland

United Way helps families, children and seniors in need. We are leaders in our field developing partnerships, bringing the right people together to initiate change, and tracking our progress. UWLM funds 146 agencies throughout the Lower Mainland to deliver more than 318 programs and services. To learn more, visit [www.uwlm.ca](http://www.uwlm.ca).

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## References

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