

DEVELOPING SENIORS AS LEADERS

FINAL REPORT OF A
LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM
FOR THE DOGWOOD PAVILION ASSOCIATION
CITY OF COQUITLAM

SUBMITTED TO:

The Seniors Leadership Initiative Board
A New Horizons Project
Dogwood Pavilion, Coquitlam, B.C.

BY:

Sandra A. Cusack _____

Wendy Thompson _____

FEBRUARY 1, 1993

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Developing Seniors as Leaders	3
The Plan: Leadership and Organizational Development	5
The Study: Leadership in Dogwood Pavilion	6
History of Dogwood Pavilion	6
Activities and Programs	9
Professional Leadership: The Coordinator	11
Seniors Leaders: Presidents	13
Membership	16
The Culture of Leadership: An Interpretation	18
Nature of Retirement	18
Needs of Seniors	20
Power	22
Leadership	23
Summary	25
The Survey	26
The Training Program	30
Evaluation of the Training Program	31
Press Release: January 1993	34
Recommendations	36
Future Directions in Leadership	38
Appendices:	
A. The Culture of Dogwood Pavilion	41
B. Developing Seniors as Leaders: A Survey	61
C. Leadership Needs and Interests: Questionnaire	68

DEVELOPING SENIORS AS LEADERS

The concept of recreation is changing and seniors are playing an important part in that process. Recreation means more than physical activity, games, and sport—it means recreating your own life and helping others do likewise. With the growing population of healthier and better-educated retired people in Canada, seniors centres are becoming "big business"—a business of helping older adults to create more satisfying and meaningful lives for themselves in the third age or retirement phase of their lives. In order to develop and deliver a wide variety of programs and activities to serve the needs of a diverse population of older adults, seniors centres require a supply of willing and able senior leaders to share in the responsibilities.

During recent years, the Dogwood Pavilion Association, like many other seniors centres, has experienced a shortage of trained leaders willing to assist in the delivery of over 100 activities the centre provides to everyone over 50 in the community of Coquitlam (a district which became a city in December of 1993). In consultation with two leadership training consultants, the Coordinator in charge of the centre (Jill Rowledge), Past President (Crosby Johnston), and President (E.T. Cross) brought together a New Horizons Board to secure funding for a project, The Seniors Leadership Initiative, to develop more effective senior leadership at Dogwood Pavilion, the Town Centre Seniors Group, and throughout the City of Coquitlam.

The project included two equally important aspects of leadership development:

- (1) a close examination of leadership in Dogwood Pavilion
- (2) a leadership and personal development program for members

The culture of leadership in Dogwood Pavilion was undertaken using the same ethnographic methods that anthropologists use to study exotic cultures. The researcher recorded informal observations, participant observation records of Advisory Group meetings and the AGM, interviews with senior leaders and the Coordinator, and a focussed group discussion. Fieldnotes were analyzed, the history and organizational structure outlined, and a narrative was constructed portraying the culture of leadership in the centre. The term "culture" refers to beliefs and values commonly held, often assumed and unspoken, which exert a strong influence on behaviour. The interpretation of the culture was intended to provide insights into beliefs people hold about the nature of retirement, the

function of a seniors centre, effective leadership, the needs and capacities of seniors, and power and authority.

By offering a training program, members become empowered to speak their views and contribute their skills and talents. Staff and seniors, however, work within an organizational structure that defines and often restricts and inhibits what is possible. Real empowerment requires that participants develop a critical awareness of the organization's structure and functions so they may take an active role in decision-making. This report includes:

- (1) Plan and time-frame of the project
- (2) Ethnographic study of culture of Dogwood Pavilion
- (3) Survey of membership regarding leadership training needs
- (4) Description of the leadership and personal development training program for members
- (5) Formal evaluation of the leadership training program
- (6) Press release to inform the community about the training program and future opportunities for senior leadership
- (7) Consultant's recommendations for leadership development
- (8) Final recommendations arising from the Focus Group discussion with members of the New Horizons' Board, the Advisory Board, training program participants, and staff.

THE PLAN

LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Purpose: To examine how leadership functions in the centre, to implement and evaluate a leadership training program for seniors, and to develop a long range plan for developing and maintaining effective leadership serving retired people in Coquitlam.

Objectives:

- (1) To engage staff and members in identifying leadership needs
- (2) To generate interest in leadership and personal development.
- (3) To coordinate, facilitate, and evaluate a leadership training program
- (4) To assist the Board in developing a plan to incorporate leadership development as an ongoing part of programs and services at Dogwood Pavilion.

Timetable: June 1992 to January 1993— 8 mos.

phase I	June - September	4 months
phase II	October - December	2 1/2 months
phase III	December - January	1 1/2 months

phase I: Needs assessment:

- (1) Planning meetings with the NH Committee
- (2) Survey of the membership (at AGM, June 29)
- (3) Outline of history and organizational structure
- (4) Attendance at 2 Advisory Board meetings and AGM
[Board meetings - July 8; Sept. 9]
- (5) Interviews with senior leaders and Coordinator
[Sept. 10, 11, 14 (8 brd.+ coord.+ townsite + OAP)]
- (6) Focus Group on leadership issues.
[Sept. 18 (Friday): 10:30 - 12:00]

phase II Leadership training

- (7) Informational session
[Sept. 21 ((Mon.): 10:00 - 12:00)]
- (8) Leadership training (9 sessions; Oct. 5 - Dec. 14)
- (9) Evaluation of the Leadership Training Program

phase III Evaluation and Future Planning

- (10) Preparation of the evaluation report (Dec. & Jan.)
- (11) Presentation of the evaluation results (January)
- (12) Deadline for submission of the project report: Feb. 28, 1993

THE STUDY

LEADERSHIP AT DOGWOOD PAVILION

Understanding leadership at Dogwood Pavilion was a complex process undertaken over a period of approximately a year, beginning with initial consultations with the New Horizons board, and including the survey, informal visits to the centre, participant observation records of the Annual General Meeting, interviews with staff and senior leaders, and a focussed group discussion. This section of the report includes a summary of the history of the Dogwood Pavilion Association, a description of the organizational structure of authority, and an interpretation of the culture of leadership in the centre. The term "culture" refers to commonly held assumptions about retirement, the needs of retired people, leadership, and power. Such assumptions are often hidden (though not intentionally), yet have a strong influence on people's behaviour—specifically on whether or not they are willing to take on a formal leadership role.

History of Dogwood Pavilion

The history is brief; the centre has been in operation for only 15 years. While no formal documentation exists, an oral history was obtained from the Coordinator and a staff person who have been affiliated with the centre from the beginning. Like the surrounding community, the history of the Dogwood Pavilion Association is characterized by rapid population growth (beginning with a membership of 600 in 1977 and expanding to over 3000 members in 1992) that has influenced the culture of the seniors centre.

The surrounding community has grown from a total population of 8,501 in 1941 to 53,230 in 1971 and 84,021 in 1991. Table 1 on the following page shows the population growth of Coquitlam from 1941 to 1991 (according to Statistics Canada, 1991).

Table 1. Population growth for Coquitlam from 1941 to 1991

year	Coquitlam
1941	8,501
1951	16,066
1961	29,218
1971	53,230
1981	61,077
1991	84,021

Coquitlam is not a "retirement" community (e.g., the percentage of people over 65 was only 7.9% in 1986), and therefore the needs of seniors cannot be expected to be high on the list of priorities for tax dollars. Table 2 on the following page shows the breakdown of age groups in Coquitlam according to Statistics Canada (1986). [The latest figures for 1991 were unavailable at the time this report was prepared].

Table 2. Breakdown of age groupings in Coquitlam in 1986

AGE GROUP	COQUITLAM	
	population	percent
0-4	5,355	(7.7)
5-14	8,785	(12.7)
15-24	11,715	(16.9)
25-34	13,010	(18.8)
35-44	11,020	(15.9)
45-54	8,050	(11.6)
55-64	5,865	(8.5)
<u>over 65</u>	<u>5,485</u>	<u>(7.9)</u>
	total	(100)
	69,285	

During a period of steady growth and economic prosperity in the 1960's and 1970's, the municipality of Coquitlam expanded its community recreation programs to include an indoor pool complex and an ice rink. A group of seniors who met regularly in the pool complex to pursue recreational interests (e.g., bridge, carpet bowling) formed the Golden Age Club under the direction of a recreation programmer (the present Coordinator of Dogwood Pavilion. The local Old Age Pensioners Organization (O.A.P.O.) lobbied the Municipal Parks and Recreation Department for many years before a centre for seniors was finally built. Funding to build the seniors centre was shared by the Parks and Recreation Department and the provincial government, supplemented by contributions from a variety of service groups in the community (e.g., the Kinsmen Club donated \$30,000).

Members of the Golden Age Club were involved in the planning of the centre from the beginning, serving on various committees. Seniors involvement in planning the centre was so extensive that seniors assumed they would be responsible for the operation of the seniors centre. They were surprised to find staff in place to "run the centre" for them. Operation of the centre in the early days was described as "vastly different than today," a difference reflected in the activities and programs then and now.

Activities and Programs. In the early years, dinner dances were popular and the organizational work was shared by members and three staff (a coordinator, a recreation programmer, and a seniors citizen centre worker). One staff person recalls they would usually get about 125 people out to a dinner dance, and they would lay out a potluck smorgasbord. As the membership grew, the health department became involved and ruled that members should not be bringing food from home because of health regulations, so this practice was discontinued. Staff then assumed responsibility for preparing and cooking food at the dinner dances.

We'd have a salmon barbeque and we would hose off the scales out on the lawn. Then we would be in the kitchen cooking and washing pots and pans. When I look back, I don't know how we did it. It was hard work, but it was a lot of fun and everybody had a good time.

A number of people shared this nostalgia for the "good old days" and a feeling that things were better then. Staff and members worked together as a team, and staff always had time for people. A staff member reflected:

People in the centre should come first—if it wasn't for the people we wouldn't be here. I'm a people person. I know everyone. When I see bitchy people, I try to make them laugh. If you don't acknowledge people, they feel like they are being ignored.

She attributes the difference between the "good old days" and now to the size of the place and the level of education required to run it.

I think the difference is education—it's more like a business around here. I hated to see the last addition —it put us over the edge. There is a big difference in the staff now and the way they do their jobs. The workload is much greater and staff have to spend considerable time in their offices.. Some are so busy they don't have time to talk to people . . . I don't blame anyone—we are all overworked!

A perception shared by many of the older members was that the growth in membership reflected increasing numbers of younger people (i.e., aged 50 - 65 years) taking advantage of the wide range of low-cost educational courses and the athletic programs.

Now it's mostly younger people who come, and they take a course and go home. Our computer classes are filled. And we get 175 people out to the dinner dances every month, but it's different. Younger people come, but they don't volunteer and they don't mix. We like to get members involved—we can't run it with just staff.

Programming has grown in the past 15 years from approximately 30 activities to over 100, with a total of nine staff members (fulltime and partime) to assist in programming, registering, food services, and operation of the centre. From the beginning, the centre has had a strong sports program (e.g., curling, lawnbowling, snooker) as well as traditional crafts, woodworking, and musical groups. Community support services that hold their meetings in the centre include an arthritis support group, a blood pressure clinic, C.N.I.B. (for the blind), a stroke club, a cardiac rehabilitation program; H.E.A.R. (for the hard-of-hearing), W.H.O. (a group which began as "widows helping others" and has been changed to "women helping others"), and a care giver's support group.

Educational courses are increasingly part of the centre's roster of activities, although no leadership training courses have been offered, with the exception of one workshop on running effective meetings. An information brochure for the Fall of 1992 advertises a lecture series on the following topics:

- A Closer Look at Religion
- The Arab-Israeli Conflict
- Self-esteem
- Herbs and Your Health
- Expo and Europe, 1992
- Meditation
- Free to be - Friends! (Friendship Workshop)
- Philosophy: The Art of Wonder I (Introduction to Philosophy)

Computer classes are increasingly popular, and a computer group is involved in programming decisions and the operation of classes.

Their purpose is to encourage computer education and participation by offering a variety of computer programs, lab experiences, "open houses" and the like. Dogwood Pavilion Policies & Procedures, Computer Committee Guidelines, 1991)

A chair and vice-chairperson of the computer group are charged with encouraging participating members to assume various duties including contributing program ideas, assisting with program planning, supervising lab practice sessions, overseeing and coordinating all computer business, liaising with the educational director, and calling and chairing meetings of the computing group. In short, senior computing students are assuming the role of educational leaders as well as teachers and teaching assistants.

Professional Leadership: Coordinator. The Coordinator of the centre is described as a "powerful woman" by both members and staff. One staff person claims,

She is a terrific organizer, and not afraid to explore new areas. She has excellent organizational skills. She could have been successful as the head of a big business firm. As director of a seniors centre, she is underpaid.

The Coordinator has been in charge of the centre since 1977, providing strong leadership and continuity in the evolution of programs and services. Following the completion of a Bachelor of Recreation degree, she started as a recreation leader in the district of Coquitlam working with all age groups. In those days, she recalls, "there was no special training for working with seniors and I became coordinator of seniors programs quite by accident."

She particularly enjoys working with older adults and the continuity of relationships that it affords:

With other age groups the relationship between staff and participants is transient—there isn't the opportunity to develop meaningful relationships and a sense of community.

In the beginning, she had no formal education in gerontology because no such training existed in the 1970's, however, she now attends gerontology conferences and takes postgraduate gerontology courses. She speaks fondly of the influence that her grandmother had upon her. She describes her grandmother as excessively work-oriented—someone who couldn't see the value of recreation and had little pleasure in her life—and she attributes her vision for the centre to her grandmother's influence.

I wanted to bring pleasure to people in their later years. Some seniors centres are too serious, and they are not for people who are "younger-minded". I know most people don't like to think of themselves as seniors and I felt seniors could do anything. Like the

slo-pitch baseball team—at first they didn't think they could do it. I *knew* they could. Now we have a winning team!

Her mission was to help seniors to "think young", leave the work ethic behind, and enjoy their retirement years.

Since 1977, there have been three major renovations to the centre to accommodate the growing membership and diversity of programming needs. The Coordinator regrets that it is increasingly difficult to maintain personal relationships with members, although she says she always makes a point of greeting people by name even though she can not always stop and talk. With the growth of the centre and increase in staff, the Coordinator's role has become administrative. Three years ago, she applied for reclassification of her role, and suggested that a director of seniors recreation services was needed to coordinate district-wide initiatives. There has, however, been little support for this new position from her supervisors in the Parks and Recreation Department.

To accommodate the growing membership and the lack of staff time to socialize, the Coordinator has instituted a hostess program.

The role of the hostesses is to welcome people and this is where the women play a leadership role in the centre. Women like helping with the hostess program—they get to dress up—whereas the men just don't feel comfortable in the role.

She tries to encourage staff and hostesses to do "walkabouts" and to be as accessible as possible to members in the centre. She also encourages staff to socialize in the beverage areas and to facilitate connections among people—especially to introduce members to leaders of activities they may be interested in joining.

We need more volunteers. Some older people have a real fear of making a commitment, because they are retired and they worry that volunteer responsibilities might interfere with holidays—many go to California in the winter months. Others are reluctant if their health is not good, because they feel if they get ill, they won't be able to carry things out. Certainly, there is a greater reticence on the part of women.

She adds, however, that once people have had the freedom to relax and enjoy themselves in their early postretirement years, they often find they want to become involved in something more productive and meaningful to them personally.

That's when she tries to find a way to make use of their unique skills and talents in serving the needs of the centre. With the increasing size of the membership and growing administrative responsibilities, she has expressed the need for a trained volunteer coordinator to assist her in making better use of the resources of the membership. She is hopeful that the leadership training program, scheduled to begin in the Fall of 1992 will help prepare seniors in formal leadership roles to make others feel welcome and become more involved in the centre.

Senior Leaders: Presidents. Since its inception, there have been six presidents of the Association. The first president was a woman who had a broad perspective on leisure: she is described as very busy, somewhat of a "loner and a do-gooder." The second president was a retired business man who served for two terms and was "nice and congenial, with a passion for carpetbowling." The president who followed him was a man who was described as a "power-tripper." Then came a woman characterized as having a wonderful personality, warm and sincere, who emerged as a leader through the support of the craft group. She was followed as president by Charles and Lorne.

Organizational Structure

The Dogwood Pavilion Advisory Board Policy and Procedures Manual defines the formal structure of power relations and the roles of key people in the centre. Referred to as "the green book," it is continually being updated. The first item in the Constitution is the "object of the centre" [dated 1977; revised 1991]:

To promote within the limitations of allocated resources year-round opportunities for satisfying the leisure needs of senior adults in this community over the age of 50. As well, to provide information services for senior adults whenever possible.

To be a community focal point on aging where older persons can come together for services and activities, as well as a community resource for information on aging.

To provide settings in which members may experience acceptance by others, the feeling of belonging and recognition as individuals of positive worth. (p. 1)

An elaboration of "Seniors Program Objectives" [dated Sept. 1978; revised Sept. 1985] outlines the following mandate:

1. To encourage adults over the age of 50 to participate at (DP) and in community programs.
2. To create an enjoyable, fun, and non-threatening atmosphere.
3. To appreciate individual lifestyles and capabilities, and help them to realize their own personal goals.
4. To provide opportunities for social interaction and to facilitate the development of friendships and the acceptance of others.
5. To provide a range of recreational activities that allow for individual choice and are accessible cost-wise to seniors of differing income levels.
 - (a) Keeping Fit and Active Programs
 - (b) Craft/Skill Programs
 - (c) Education/Information Programs
 - (d) Food Services
6. To encourage participants to use own initiative in developing and leading programs.
7. To maintain effective communication amongst [DP] members and other senior citizen organizations and institutions.
8. To facilitate the provision of services for seniors by other agencies when appropriate through facility use, volunteer or staff support, publicity, etc., within limitations of available resources. To be a community focal point on ageing and a resource centre for seniors for information referrals on appropriate agencies/services.

Significantly, despite a very detailed list of program objectives including a goal of encouraging seniors "to use their own initiative in developing and leading programs," there are no explicit references to lifelong learning, leadership training, or personal development, although there are references to "education/information" programs.

The second item in the Constitution outlines power relations between the Coquitlam District Council and the DP Advisory Board, and emphasizes the need to comply with the District of Coquitlam Parks and Recreation Department policies. As such, DP receives an annual budget to cover advertising, utilities, program maintenance, supplies, programs instructors' salaries, maintenance

and administrative salaries, and staff training. The District receives the annual membership and program fees.

Authority is given by the District Council to the Coordinator who works with an Advisory Board and with activity committees. She attends all Advisory Board meetings in the role of non-voting "executive secretary", charged with the task of informing the Board if any of its recommendations are not in accordance with district policies. If the Board wishes to recommend a policy change, it can request that recommendations be forwarded to the district Recreation Program Manager and, if necessary, to the Parks and Recreation Committee of the District Council.

The Advisory Board is defined as a representative group of senior adults who

voluntarily assist and advise the Centre Coordinator regarding program direction of [DP]; program being the sum total of all that individuals do in the name of the Centre. Potential members of the Advisory Board will be given a copy of the Advisory Board terms of reference—as ratified by Council Resolution no. 1324—so that they are in full understanding of their role and can agree to serve as a member in the outlined capacity. (District of Coquitlam, p. 2)

The role of Advisory Board members is outlined in the terms of reference as:

- to assist in identification and assessment of needs and desires of senior adults
- to act as a sounding board for suggested ideas and new programs from members and coordinator
- to make recommendations relative to program development.
- to promote the centre throughout the community
- to encourage involvement and attendance by all seniors in Coquitlam
- to assist in finding resources (e.g., members to lead/instruct)
- to identify problems which are of concern or cause tension and recommend solutions.
- to make recommendations regarding fund-raising, activities, objectives, and guidelines.

The Advisory Board consists of nine voting members: a President, Vice-president, Treasurer, Crafts Director, Dultural Director, Sports Director, Social and Educational director, and a Past President (as well as the non-voting Coordinator, serving in the role of Executive Secretary). The four Directors liaise with the various activity groups, conducting joint meetings with elected chairpersons from their respective groups to discuss common business, and

individual group needs and concerns. (Until this year, a non-voting President of the Funding Society also sat on the Board. With the formal amalgamation of the Funding Society and the Board, the constitution is being revised to incorporate two financial/fundraising advisors). All Board positions are elected annually, with the positions of president and vice-president elected at the Annual General Meeting. Members are limited to serving two consecutive one-year terms in any one position, with the exception of treasurer, who is appointed annually by the Board.

The business of the Advisory Board is conducted at regular meetings held once a month. An executive committee (consisting of the president, vice-president, treasurer, immediate past president, executive secretary, and two finance directors) meets as needed, with authority vested by the Advisory Board and charged with providing formal reports of such meetings at subsequently scheduled Advisory Board meetings. Each director prepares a report on the groups under his or her directorship for every second Advisory Board meeting, and presents an annual report at the AGM. On a quarterly basis, representatives from various community groups are invited to meet with the board. Such community groups include: two B.C. Old Age Pensioners (O.A.P.O.) groups, two seniors citizen counsellors, the local branch of the Royal Canadian Legion, Pacific Rim Rose Society, two retirement homes, the Coquitlam Lawn Bowling Society, and the various support groups (e.g., for the blind, hard-of-hearing, arthritis, stroke victims, widows).

Membership

The Constitution provides detailed regulations regarding membership. All senior adults participating in DP activities or programs must become members on or before their third visit. The membership fee is subject to annual review (membership sales commence in January with the exception of gift memberships, which are available before Christmas each year). "Any member who has not renewed his/her membership by the 31st of March shall not be entitled to use the facilities at [DP]" (p. 6). A member may be expelled for the following reasons: violating the constitution and bylaws, nonpayment of annual dues, failing to maintain objectives of the Association, inappropriate behaviour (e.g., sexual harassment, being a nuisance, misappropriation of funds, failure to carry out a lawful instruction of staff or board.) The policy and procedures guide allows that any member subject to a proposed expulsion be given an opportunity to address

the meeting of the Board at which the expulsion is being considered before it is put to the vote.

With respect to membership statistics, the District of Coquitlam does not publish a detailed profile of the membership of DP, although it is needed and, with the recent implementation of a computerized registration system, may be available in the future. The Coordinator, however, keeps her own records of membership and centre attendance. Although the population has continued to grow in the surrounding district, the membership total at DP has remained relatively stable from 1988 through 1991 (e.g., 1986 - 2238; 1987 - 2626; 1988 - 3000; 1989 - 3062; 1990 - 2909; 1991 - 3011). While the membership in 1992 remains stable, daily attendance at the centre has risen by 20 percent since 1988.

The stabilization in membership is due, in part, to the fact that rapid population growth is occurring in a region of this large, sprawling district at some distance from DP. Consequently, a small group of approximately 150 seniors, with encouragement and support from the DP Coordinator and Board, is operating in a new community centre serving all age groups—circumstances reminiscent of the emergence of the DP seniors group in the 1970's. While history appears to be repeating itself, economic restraint has prevented the construction of additional recreation facilities. An item in the July/August DP newsletter reads:

On a more political note, we must share the loss of the referendum with our [members to the north] as so much new, needed development for seniors was at stake. Pity!—it is lost, but all may not be lost and one hopes that good sense and money will come to restore and recover some of the needed facilities and services in the fast-growing north section of our community.

While a breakdown in membership with respect to age and sex is unavailable, the Coordinator estimates the ratio of women to men in DP to be 3:2. The men are, however, more visible and considerably more active in leadership roles.

Women chair committees and activity groups, but few women serve on the advisory board. Generally, the women think that men should have their say. Men, on the other hand, come in and want to be in charge—snooker and bridge just aren't satisfying enough for many of them.

A narrative of the culture of Dogwood Pavilion, which portrays the interactions and relationships of people who work and play there and how the business of the centre is conducted, is contained in Appendix A. [It is important to note that the narrative is written from the perspective of a middle-aged consultant who was new to the centre. Furthermore, the study was written prior to the implementation of a leadership training program, which served to challenge many of the basic assumptions that serve as barriers to effective leadership.]

The Culture of Leadership: An Interpretation

The narrative (which is contained in Appendix A) was constructed from an ethnographic study of the centre and is intended to give the reader an experience of Dogwood Pavilion, its members, and their activities. Its primary purpose is to provide the reader with insights into how to get members more involved and willing to make a contribution to the centre. The story takes a self-conscious look at this large modern organization addressing new problems created by a growing population of increasingly healthy, better-educated retired people. The primary impression conveyed through the story is that leadership in Dogwood Pavilion is similar to traditional organizational leadership in the service-sector of the business world, with more men than women in formal leadership positions, and men having a stronger voice in the operations of the centre. The perspective is a critical one from the viewpoint of a middle-aged professional woman and it is intended to be provocative and to challenge fundamental assumptions about the nature of retirement, the needs of seniors, effective leadership and the sharing of power

The Nature of Retirement. Judging from the variety of activities the centre offers to anyone in Coquitlam over 50, retirement is a time to remain both mentally and physically active. The high profile given to athletics suggests the third age may be the time to develop a level of excellence in sports such as slo-pitch baseball, golf, tennis, and swimming. One can also keep mentally sharp by engaging in educational courses such as Introduction to Philosophy, and one can even become a volunteer teacher in computer classes.

Senior leaders at DP agree that retirement has generally met all their expectations. As one man said,

Retirement is excellent. It is probably the best—or at least the second best—time of my life. My teenage years were pretty good, too. Fitness is very important—I look after myself and my health has been good.

Some people are so busy they don't have enough time for themselves, to go dancing or just relax. Some people say they are busier now than they ever were when they worked. Indeed, Alice observed few people "smelling the roses" in the rose garden.

Many people said they joined DP "to keep busy and to stay active". Others joined "to make new friends" or "to play a little snooker". Women often joined with their husbands, because their husbands retired. Some described DP as a place to go when people have nothing to do with their time—a place to just "hang out". There was general agreement that,

the main function is keeping people busy. If someone sits at home and worries, they are better off coming down here and doing some pottery or some embroidery, making something in the workshop or playing table tennis—i.e., exercising body and mind.

The Coordinator, however, was adamant that the centre's main function was social: "All the activities are just a vehicle to bring people together."

Increasingly, with the growth and diversity of the membership, retirement is becoming a "big business." Certain features of Dogwood Pavilion suggest that the organization is a business (e.g., aspects of the environment, the history, the organizational structure, the many references to finances, and the long list of rules for members and conditions under which membership can be terminated. Running such a business requires effective and efficient fiscal and organizational management. As one senior leader said, "Old people don't like to be pushed around, but sometimes it's necessary."

Most people were reluctant, however, to think of their seniors centre as a business,

because I don't think we are here to make money. We are a non-profit business. If it is a business, we are in the people business . . . the business of living.

One person simply said that the centre's function was "to cater to the needs and desires of retired people." The question is, what are the needs and desires that this seniors centre serves?

Needs of Seniors. People have various needs that might influence them to get involved in a seniors centre, and they have certain abilities that might be given expression there. As already mentioned, one Member of the Board specifically said he was looking for an outlet for his ambitions and wanted to see if he had an interest in "climbing to the top" in a seniors organization just as he did in his professional working life.

Few people, however, joined the centre with the idea of taking on a leadership role, although some found themselves involved. A common reason they gave for assuming more responsibility was that they "couldn't say no" or that they felt "dutybound." A strong element of the Protestant work ethic seems to be in operation: "I think everybody *should* do volunteer work—I don't think it's good to just sit and play bingo or play pool all day". One person added, "Sometimes volunteer work interferes with the square dancing, and my wife and I would rather go dancing!" But when asked, "Why would anybody take on a leadership role when they would rather go dancing?," everyone agreed it was a good question. But none could provide an answer, other than "everybody *should* volunteer . . . *if* they have the time . . . and *if* they have the time to *join*, they have the time to *volunteer*".

There were, however, many rewards for volunteering, that senior leaders experienced. One woman said,

I always get more out of things than what I put into them. Many people don't know what they might get out of it. They don't believe there is really anything in it for them. If you could convince them of it maybe they would come out.

Others talked about a sense of feeling wanted and being appreciated, of accomplishment and achievement. It was a good feeling to know "that what I do to some degree benefits somebody else's life." Being a leader gave them recognition, a feeling of importance, and self-esteem. One Member of the Board who had been an administrator in his professional life, felt that

ego aggrandisement is something we all need. Being in a leadership role is a chance to feel my usual self in spite of the importunes that are upon me at this time. It is maintaining a sense of self-worth. I don't mind being seen with glasses, but if I have a hearing aid or I have to walk with a cane, then that bothers me. And we see that amongst people. It is a sense of having status and recognizing in myself what I have done and what I am capable of doing and it offsets some of the difficulties. This is why we are in leadership positions.

Whereas, another Member of the Board said,

Some of us, maybe in the course of our lives, have never had the opportunity to be in the forefront. Now that we are retired, we see the chance and we say, "hey, it's my turn to be in the forefront and let somebody else "gopher" me.

The same person spoke of the energy that being in a leadership position gave him,

There are lots of days when I get up in the morning, and I think geez, I have to go to the centre, and I feel good about it. It really does give me a reason to get up in the morning.

One man made a direct connection between energy and the challenge that being a leader presented to him.

One of the advantages of being in a leadership role is to develop whatever it is you are setting out to do, whether it is programs or procedures in a large organization such as this. We put our brains in gear and we are challenged—we are looking for new problems as well as solutions. I find this particularly energizing to me to be challenged to think. We need to use our brains in spite of getting aged . . . to keep them from going a little grotty later on.

The enthusiasm with which the men debated an issue, such as the smoking or parking problem, was a testament to that energy. And the Coordinator concurred,

It is the excitement. I have seen all of you get energized. And I see a wonderful blossoming that has occurred because of your energy. It is not only you that get energized, but you cause more energetic things to happen around here.

What seemed to prevent people from volunteering at DP was a pervasive attitude (particularly common to the men) that "I have worked hard all of my life and I don't have to anymore." Many retired people have "had it with the work scene" and feel they should not be obligated to volunteer. Whereas, women who have not worked outside the home do not see themselves as leaders, and lack confidence in their abilities. While senior leaders agreed there was an element of power that is a benefit to them, they could not say that it was the reason they got involved.

Power. The Coordinator is a "powerful person", although the designated title of "coordinator" does not suggest that she has administrative power. She has both administrative skills and power, which she uses judiciously. Those interviewed felt that seniors did not "run" the centre, rather they volunteered to serve in various capacities.

Despite formally designated titles of "director" on the Advisory Board, members of the Board generally felt they had very little power.

Technically, we are an advisory board and if anybody wants to listen to our advice that's fine. And if they don't want to take our advice, that's their prerogative.

One person said, "The President probably has about as much power as you can get around here." And the President agreed that, 'the Board can give all the advice it wants, but if the Coordinator doesn't want to act on it, it doesn't go anywhere.'

Nevertheless, the general consensus was that there have been a lot of changes in the centre and the Advisory Board has played a major role, simply because the Coordinator and her staff try to act in members' best interests. When the Coordinator has not been able to initiate change in response to the wishes of the Board, she has represented the interests of seniors at the level of the Parks and Recreation Commission. For the most part, limitations have not been imposed by the Coordinator or her immediate superior, but by financial constraints.

Where we spend our own monies that we have earned we do have the power to make our own decisions, but when it comes from tax monies we don't, and that is the way it should be.

With respect to matters of policy, the Coordinator and her staff act on the advice of the Board and do the jobs that they believe seniors would not want to do. In that way everyone works together to insure that policies get carried out and power is shared.

Those who have not had power in their working lives tend to view power as negative, as involving control over others, and as something they do not want. Others, like Charles, who have exercised considerable power in their professional lives, view it more positively and may fight to maintain a high level of power and influence in retirement. Lorne became a volunteer leader in mid-life and is enjoying a greater level of power in retirement. He seems, however, frustrated by the fact that he does not have as much power as he would like. (He was surprised to find staff taking on the responsibility of patrolling the parking lot, even though

he knows that controversial Board decisions (e.g., decisions regarding the smoking and parking problems) sometimes threaten the respect and recognition he may want or deserve.

The conduct of affairs at DP resembles decision-making in business, and men are more clearly identified with positions of authority, although power is limited. Both Charles and Lorne's styles of leadership are traditional in their emphasis on power and authority vested in the leader, and in the leader's responsibility for setting goals for the group, and making decisions according to the democratic process where the majority rules.

Leadership. Leadership at DP is similar to traditional leadership in a large business. Being a senior leader in a large organization requires a number of administrative skills such as taking charge of meetings and making decisions that are not always popular—skills more commonly developed by men than women in the workplace. There is, however, an important difference that is not always appreciated by everyone. DP is in the "people" business and, therefore, its focus is on serving members' needs, and keeping everyone happy.

Along with a traditional view of leadership, there is a general belief that leaders are born, and a belief that there are leaders and there are followers.

People who say they will help, aren't necessarily leaders. The leader is the one that decides what needs to be done—those who are helping are not leaders. The person in the kitchen who serves the coffee isn't a leader.

A distinction is made between leaders and volunteers. Volunteers are not necessarily considered to be leaders, nor is their influence in the centre fully appreciated.

If I came up to talk to the President of [DP] and to have a cup of coffee, I am sure I would get more out of talking to the president, than I would out of having a cup of coffee. Perhaps I know the lady behind the counter and I can discuss with her the weather, her children, her grandchildren, and things like that. If someone new comes in here and they have to wait in line and they get mad and take off, we couldn't care less.

Despite a general belief that some people will *never* be leaders, the Coordinator felt that every volunteer was a potential leader.

I think there are potential leaders and they don't know it. For example, their self-esteem is low. There are some people who have blossomed here over the years who never thought they could do it.

Many seniors have the abilities, but lack the confidence, and this is especially true for men and women who have not been leaders in the workplace. They need confidence building, encouragement, and support. One man said the way to begin the process was to

give people specific tasks—it gets them into some form of group action, and then maybe they will start to talk about their grandchildren or their kids. The reluctant person may be challenged enough to give expression to thoughts that are relevant.

While many were prepared to admit that good communication skills and sensitivity to people's needs were important qualities for a senior leader, they did not feel that leadership in retirement organizations was any different than in the workplace.

Communication is always important—and there is no difference between then and now. My job is to show people that I am not afraid to make decisions whether they are good or bad and to stand by them no matter the consequences. That is my role as president. The most important thing is to be sure that the organization goes ahead, not necessarily in terms of profit, but in terms of making sure its members are generally happy and content with the way the organization is being run.

Senior leaders, nevertheless, felt that the emphasis had to be on the task at the expense of individual needs.

You have to have a plan and you have to explain to people what you are doing. But the most important thing is getting the job done—and you are never going to keep all of the people happy.

Summary

There are a number of beliefs and assumptions that serve as barriers to emergent leadership. First, retirement is a time to stay active, mentally and physically, in ways that are personally enjoyable. This message conflicts with the Protestant work ethic and a "do-gooder" mentality reflecting a view that everybody *ought* to contribute. The Coordinator has worked hard to promote retirement as a time for recreation and fun and to dispel the Protestant work ethic, knowing that once people have had the freedom to enjoy themselves, many will want to contribute to the centre. Many retired people at DP now choose freely, *without guilt*, activities that are personally enjoyable and they no longer feel the obligation to share the workload. Thus the centre needs to find creative ways to promote volunteerism and leadership among those who may choose to contribute to the centre.

There are a number of assumptions about traditional leadership that act as formidable barriers to the emergence of seniors as leaders at Dogwood Pavilion, such as:

- The assumption that the leader must be a visionary who takes charge and makes decisions on behalf of the group;
- the view that there are leaders and there are followers;
- the belief that most people will *never* be leaders;
- a view of leadership as involving the kinds of skills associated with leadership in the work place; and
- an assumption that men should be "running things."

Assumptions about power act as barriers to emergent leadership as well. Women and men who have not been in positions of power in their working lives tend to view power as negative and, therefore, say that they do not want it or need it. Thus the people who have always had power in their working lives and want to maintain the same level of power in retirement are the ones who are most willing to assume leadership roles in retirement. Such people often have traditional styles of leadership that perpetuate many of the assumptions about leadership [identified in the previous paragraph] that prevent the vast majority of older people from getting more involved, developing their personal potential, and sharing the power and the leadership.

THE SURVEY

A survey of the membership of the Dogwood Pavilion Association was carried out at the Annual General Meeting in June of 1992. The purpose of the survey was:

- (1) To generate interest in leadership training
- (2) To get suggestions from the membership about how leadership could be improved at Dogwood Pavilion and in the Town Centre Seniors Group
- (3) To determine the specific needs and interests of the membership in order to design a leadership training program that would meet the needs.

Some interesting findings of the survey are presented in this section. [The full report on the survey is contained in Appendix B]

Survey Respondents

From a total of approximately 225 people in attendance at the AGM and surveys distributed to members of the Town Centre, 63 people completed the survey: 55 were members of Dogwood Pavilion and 8 were from the Town Centre. The number returned represents approximately 25% of those who received a copy of the survey, and a little more than 2% of the total membership (given an estimated total of 3000 members).

When asked if they would be interested in taking the training,

- 21 people said, *Count me in.*
- 16 people said, *Tell me more.*
- 8 people said, *Maybe next time.*
- 18 did not sign their name.

The responses are encouraging, and suggest there are already 37 people who are interested in taking the training.

What Influenced Them to Get Involved?

There many reasons people get more involved and take on a leadership role. Many people said it was because they retired and had time to spend (10). Others said they got involved because they wanted to meet people (9) or because of an interest in a specific group or sport (8). One person took on the role of treasurer because she *moved to Coquitlam and I have a computer.* Other reasons for getting involved were:

- *I needed to fill the void of retirement.*
- *I have always been a motivated person..*

- *I like to be with people—to meet and to serve.*
- *I love working with people.*
- *Because I love the game of bridge so much, I wanted others to be able to play too.*
- *I wanted to help create a more fulfilling life for all seniors*
- *I enjoyed my past experience as a board member immensely and wanted to continue to play a leadership role.*
- *I feel there is a great need for housing for seniors that is adequate and affordable.*
- *I reached 50.*
- *I wanted to become active within the community*
- *I received a membership gift from a friend.*
- *I had a heart attack as I was about to retire so came for the exercise which has also helped with my arthritis*
- *I thought I should be giving more*
- *I wanted to be busy and involved in the community*
- *I got involved to relieve the boredom*

Many of the reasons for joining a seniors centre in the first place were the same reasons people became committed and involved and took on a leadership role—e.g., liking and wanting to be with people and to remain active in the community. More than that, they spoke of a need to be give to others and to help others to enjoy more satisfying and fulfilling retirement years.

What They Get Out of Participating

It seems that people get a great deal of pleasure out of participating in a volunteer/leadership role that they often don't anticipate. They mentioned payoffs like *happiness, pleasure, satisfaction, better health new knowledge, learning, and growth*. One person said their involvement gave them on-the-job *leadership training*. Another said being involved *expanded my horizons*, and added . . . *You can do challenging jobs as a senior!*

Eight people also said they got a lot of fun out of it. Some of the individual rewards mentioned were:

- *It makes me feel good doing things for others*
- *I get the feeling of being needed (self-worth)*
- *I have a sense of self-worth/value*
- *Being involved helps my nerves*
- *I get a wonderful feeling of accomplishment*
- *I get training in leadership*
- *I get personal satisfaction in making others happy*

One person went so far as to say that his involvement at Dogwood was *a pivotal point of my week*. And another said, *I get a lot of happiness and pleasure . . . due to the hard work of Jill Rowledge and all staff members . . . and added: thankyou!*

These are very strong words indeed, and suggest the key is in getting people *willing* to share the responsibilities—who then reap the rewards. Once involved they really seem to get hooked.

How to Improve the Leadership

Leaders at Dogwood Pavilion must be doing a lot of things right! There were many people (15) who said you were *doing a great job*. It was also encouraging to find so many people who believed that education and training would improve the leadership. There were a number of insightful comments, with many people saying that more people need to be encouraged to get involved. Some specific suggestions for improving leadership were:

- *Workshops are a good idea! All members could benefit from further education in leadership and more effective communication.*
- *We need more emphasis on communication—i.e., more notices in the entrance of Dogwood and Town Centre.*
- *We need to recruit and train more volunteers, and provide support and encouragement so more people will try it out.*
- *We need more trained leaders —many people could benefit from training.*
- *We need more of the membership to come out and support our leaders.*
- *If people are asked in person to volunteer, they are quite willing to help.*

How to Get More Seniors Involved in Leadership

This is an important question and a problem common to many seniors groups and centres. Two people who filled out the questionnaire said, *I wish I knew*.

Basically, there were three suggestions:

- provide leadership training
- give them volunteer opportunities/experiences
- encourage and invite them

Some specific responses were:

- *We need to offer incentives.*
- *We need to advertise for volunteers/leaders.*
- *I feel we have the opportunities if we so wish. The board is interesting but I feel I should earn that honour.*
- *We need more and better facilities [at the Town Centre site].*
- *A leadership training program should stimulate many to improve themselves.*
- *We need to get people to join in more activities—encourage them to do volunteer work at our centre. They have many skills they may not realize.*
- *If all other means fail, to dare people to take on jobs and functions that they feel they could not do.*
- *We need to build up their confidence and make them feel they are capable.*

- *Send letters of invitation to active seniors in the Tri-city area. Also hold special coffee/tea parties for seniors not involved and past members in past 3 years, also holding seminars on seniors affordable housing.*
- *Maybe if some of the leadership roles could be a joint responsibility - i.e., teams instead of one person, the commitment wouldn't be so overwhelming.*
- *A larger membership (at the Town Centre) might include more people who would be willing to accept a potions—if it were enjoyable and satisfying.*

It was interesting that one person thought we should, *Raise the age to 55 at least, so real seniors don't feel left out.* This is also something you may want to check out.

Do you have a style of leadership and expectations about leadership that tend to exclude the older seniors from taking on a leadership role?

Workshop Topics of Interest

While there was some interest in all of the topics, results suggest that people tend to be more interested in communication skills, improving their ability to make their point and speak more clearly, rather than skills more associated with traditional leadership. These are the kinds of skills that are general, transfer to other areas of one's life, and would be useful to all members. Following are the workshops topics arranged in order of interest (nb., numbers indicate the number of respondents who checked them off):

- 26 Communication skills**
- 26 Motivating, encouraging, and supporting others**
- 25 How to make your point**
- 23 How to speak and think more clearly**
- 23 Confidence building**
- 23 Giving and accepting criticism**
- 22 Developing confidence to speak out in a group**
- 22 Dealing with difficult people**
- 20 Listening skills: Getting others to listen to you**
- 20 Leadership and you (skills and styles)**
- 16 How to run an effective and enjoyable meeting**
- 15 Team building**

OTHER:

- *Develop ESL and related programs for other ethnic groups.*
- *How to keep organized while busy.*
- *I do not feel that I personally need any of the above.*

The question remains, how to interest people who don't *think* they need the training—who are often the very people who need it most.

THE TRAINING PROGRAM

The training program which was offered to the general membership was designed to address leadership training needs as identified in the survey. The program was also based on our findings from the study of the culture of leadership.

The leadership training program at Dogwood Pavilion was intended for those who are presently serving the centre in a voluntary leadership role, and those would-be leaders who may lack confidence and skills to take on some of the responsibilities. It was also for anyone who simply wants to improve their ability to express themselves and participate more comfortably in group activities.

Schedule of Weekly Seminar -Workshops

Week 1	October 5	9:30 a.m. - 12:00 noon
Week 2	October 19	9:30 a.m. - 12:00 noon
Week 3	October 26	9:15 a.m. - 12:00 noon
Week 4	November 9	9:15 a.m. - 12:00 noon
Week 5	November 16	9:15 a.m. - 12:00 noon
Week 6	November 23	9:15 a.m. - 12:00 noon
Week 7	November 30	9:15 a.m. - 12:00 noon
Week 8	December 7	9:15 a.m. - 12:00 noon
Week 9	December 14	9:15 a.m. - 12:00 noon followed by a celebratory luncheon

Topics

- Introduction to Leadership: Styles & Skills
- Effective Communication
- The Confident Leader
- Making Your Point: How to Speak and Think More Clearly
- How Leaders Listen and How They Get Others to Listen to Them
- Team Building: Roles & Groups
- TBA (topic to be decided by the group)
- Running Effective and Enjoyable Meetings
- Motivating, Encouraging, and Supporting
- The Senior Leader: Evaluation, Graduation, and Celebration

EVALUATION OF THE LEADERSHIP TRAINING PROGRAM

Who Participated in the Training Program. Thirty members of Dogwood Pavilion and the Town Centre enrolled in the training program, of which 25 received graduation certificates on the final day. Seven people completed either the pre or posttest questionnaire; two men and 19 women completed both pre and posttest questionnaires and information regarding these 21 people forms the basis of this formal evaluation report. Ages ranged from 50 to 71 years old with an average age of 63.

A variety of occupations were represented with seven people listing their primary occupation as "homemaker"; four had been clerical workers; twom nurses; and two, teachers. There was also an oriental woman who had trained as a cartographer in Australia, a former customs officer, and an electronics engineer. Sixteen of the 21 had completed grade 12; four were university grads; and four had prior training in business.

These people were active participants in a wide variety of activities, both in their seniors centre and the community at large. Activities included:

<u>Activity</u>	<u>Number participating</u>
Leadership role at the Town Centre	4
Member of Advisory Board at Dogwood	4
Instructor role at Dogwood	4
Active in church group	3
RC Hospital Auxiliary volunteer	3
Kitchen/coffee garden volunteer	3
Seniors information line	2
Dogwood Songsters	2
O.A.P.O. executive member	2
Leadership role at T.O.P.S.	2

One man listed his activities as:

- Director on the Advisory Board
- Chair of the Computer Group
- Secretary of the Royal Canadian Legion
- Vice-chair and Secretary of the New Horizons Board
- Active square dancer

One woman listed her leadership roles as:
 Chair of the Tri-city Wellness Group
 Chair of the Seniors information line
 Co-chair of the Elder abuse Committee
 Board member and canvasser for the United Way
 Member of the Social Development Council
 Hostess at Dogwood Pavilion

There were also two people whose current activities were strictly recreational who were looking for an opportunity to become more involved in something that would be meaningful to them.

Self-assessment of Leadership Skills. When people were asked to identify their leadership skills in the pre-test, organizational skills were mentioned most frequently, as well as willingness to work, punctuality, determination to get things done, ability to take control and to encourage others. One person said she didn't know if she had any leadership skills and had come to the training program to find out.

The posttest questionnaire indicated that people had become aware that they had a much wider range of leadership skills which included: willingness to speak up, listening skills, humour, enthusiasm, ability to motivate others, willingness to share leadership, interest in others, willingness to help a group grow, confidence, spirit, knowledge of procedures, curiosity, caring approachability, valuable experience in other groups, ability to create a harmonious atmosphere, ability to get along with people, and consideration for others.

What People Wanted from the Training. Generally, what people wanted fell into three categories:

- (1) wanting more confidence (9)
- (2) wanting to be able to communicate more clearly (6)
- (3) wanting to improve their leadership (5)

What People Gained from the Training Program. They said they gained confidence (4), a new concept of leadership (5), and a greater awareness of what they have to contribute (3). Specific benefits were:

- *In the mock meetings, I gained insight into different leadership styles and I am not so afraid to be just myself as chairperson - thank you.*

- *I have gained the confidence to sort through the various volunteer services and pick the ones I feel comfortable and satisfied with at this time.*
- *I am important; I have skills to share and should be sharing them; confidence*
- *I have learned a more effective and constructive way of running a meeting.*
- *I have gained an increased confidence in myself as a leader; I learned new leadership skills and reaffirmed my past skills.*
- *ability to take a risk; to accept criticism*
- *I have a better image of myself.*

Suggestions to Improve the Training Program.

- *I would like more practical demonstrations, rather than discussions.*
- *Provide an internship in an active group setting.*
- *I would like to see another opportunity to do mock or model meetings and to take different roles at these model meetings.*
- *More practice setting up meetings.*
- *The program just barely touched the surface; I feel it could be longer or another program offered*
- *The program could be extended to 12 weeks. I have learned so many things. I am going to miss this course*
- *Follow up with workshops.*
- *This program is fine but to know that there is a second part or ongoing courses to continue what we have started here would be encouraging. It is so easy to slip back into old habits*
- *Have a communications course prior to the leadership course so we are more versed in short, concise presentations*

ADDENDUM

During the course of the training, a reporter from a local newspaper visited the class and arranged to interview two women and on the the leadership training consultants. Two articles subsequently appeared in the Coquitlam NOW—one based on the interviews with the two female participants and the other based on the interview with the consultant. The article about seniors and education was determined to be an inaccurate and inadequate representation of the leadership initiative undertaken by Dogwood Pavilion and a press release was prepared that would convey a better understanding of this important work to the residents of Coquitlam.

PRESS RELEASE: January 1993

Champagne was served on December 14th to a group of 25 senior leaders at Dogwood Pavilion to celebrate their graduation from an intensive 9-week leadership training program. The program was sponsored by the Seniors Leadership Initiative, funded by the New Horizons Program, Health & Welfare Canada, and facilitated by Wendy Thompson, author of Canada's bestselling resource book on aging, Aging is a Family Affair, and co-author of the leadership training manual, Flying High (Thompson & Cusack, 1990).

Why the champagne? The concept of recreation is changing, and members of Dogwood Pavilion are playing a major part in that process. Recreation means recreating your life in whatever way is challenging and personally meaningful, and helping others to do likewise. With the freedom from work and family responsibilities to choose activities for their own sake, the third-age or retirement phase of life can be primetime for many seniors in Coquitlam.

Dogwood Pavilion, like many seniors centres across Canada, is becoming a "big business", and the key to effectively serving the increasing population of healthier and better-educated retired people is a supply of committed and able senior leaders who can play a major role in the operations of the centre. Recognizing the growing need for senior volunteer leaders and searching for ways to tap the wealth of knowledge and experience in the membership, Coordinator Jill Rowledge, President Ed Cross, and Past President Crosby Johnston have worked with the Coquitlam Seniors Leadership Initiative Committee to devise a plan and a training program to develop the leadership potential of the membership.

Two leadership training consultants from Simon Fraser University were hired in September and following a period of discussions, consultations, a survey of the membership, and interviews, a leadership and personal development program was developed to meet the expressed needs of the membership. The program was designed for those who are presently serving the centre in voluntary leadership roles and those would-be leaders who may lack confidence and skills to take on some of the responsibilities. It was also intended for members who simply wanted to improve their ability to express themselves and participate more comfortably in group activities. The series of weekly workshops included the following topics:

- Communication skills
- Motivating, encouraging, and supporting others
- How to speak and think more clearly
- Confidence building
- Developing confidence to speak out in a group
- Dealing with difficult people
- Listening skills: Getting others to listen to you
- Leadership skills and styles
- How to run an effective and enjoyable meeting

You may well ask, *Why would anyone in retirement want to take on more responsibilities when they could be dancing and playing golf?* Participants in the training program said they want more than social and physical activity in their retirement years. They want to be able to sink their teeth into something challenging—and volunteering gives meaning to their lives. It offers an opportunity to put knowledge and experience of a lifetime to use for the benefit of others, and provides a sense of achievement. Everyone, regardless of age, wants to feel needed and useful, and society urgently needs the contribution of its senior citizens. In January, the Seniors Leadership Initiative Board will be evaluating and reviewing this first phase of senior leadership and proposing some new directions for 1993. If you are over 50 and are looking for a challenge or a change, you may want to contact Dogwood Pavilion (936 1737), or drop by the Centre at 624 Poirier Street, and find out more.

RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Leadership and Personal Development

- (1) That a program in effective communication at the grass roots be developed and offered to all members
- (2) That a Speaking with Confidence course be offered to all members
- (3) That a leadership training program, phase II, be offered to those who have completed phase 1
- (4) That a leadership training program be offered every second September following the election of the new advisory board, and that all members of the board be encouraged to attend
- (5) That a program in group facilitation skills be developed for those who are or would like to be involved in teaching roles
- (6) That a community leadership training program be developed in collaboration with Centennial High School for senior leaders and student leaders that draws on the experience of senior leaders.

B. Volunteer Recognition

- (1) That a concerted effort be made to recognize and reward all volunteers
- (2) That all advisory board members have complimentary coffee and tea at the centre (not limited to one cup per day)
- (3) That the volunteer recognition plaque in the back of the country kitchen be moved to a prominent place in the front entrance.

C. Organizational Development

- (1) That a new sign be designed for the centre, similar to the sign identifying the Rose Garden, which clearly identifies Dogwood as a centre for the retired.
- (2) That the entrance to the centre be examined in order to make new and prospective members feel welcome (n.b., the mastercard sign in the front entrance and the line-up for the desk).
- (3) That the association publish a history of Dogwood Pavilion available to members at a small cost.
- (4) That the association publish a brief policies and procedures manual that explains simply and clearly how the organization works and

members rights and responsibilities; and that this publication be provided at no charge upon purchase of membership.

- (5) That the "green book" which outlines details of the constitution and is given to board members, be altered so as to make it more clear, to remove redundancy, and to add under objectives: to develop the leadership potential of all members by providing leadership training and support.
- (6) That the title, Advisory Board, be changed to Executive Board, a title which reflects a stronger role for seniors in decision-making processes in the centre.
- (7) That the title, Coordinator, be changed to Director, a title more accurately reflecting the leadership and administrative function of that position.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS IN LEADERSHIP

FOR THE DOGWOOD PAVILION ASSOCIATION AND THE TOWN CENTRE SENIORS GROUP

An invitation was extended to the members of the Dogwood Advisory Board, members of the Seniors' Leadership Initiative, and participants who completed the leadership training program to attend a Focus Group discussion on January 11, 1993. The purpose of the meeting was to establish future directions in leadership at Dogwood Pavilion. A formal report was presented on the results of our investigations and the evaluation of the leadership training program and discussion focussed on the recommendations of the two leadership training consultants.

Participants in the Focus Group Discussion

Six men and 12 women attended the focussed group discussion. More specifically, the following leadership roles were represented:

- Members of the Advisory Board—President, Past President, Vice-President, Financial Director, Sports Director, Educational and Social Director
- Other Leadership Affiliations—Secretary of the Songsters, Chair of the Drama Club, Variety Crafts, R.V. Club, Instructors of the Computing Group and Sewing Class, O.A.P.O., New Horizons' Board, gift shop, Hostess program.

Discussion of the Consultants' Recommendations

Discussion focussed on how to get more willing and able volunteers in the centre. This involved attention to three major areas addressed by the recommendations:

- (1) educational/training opportunities
- (2) volunteer recognition
- (3) consideration of changes in the organizational structure and designated leadership roles

Leadership Training Programs

People were particularly interested in sessions where they had a chance to actually practice leadership. It was suggested that there should be a communications course before the leadership training course—in particular, a Speaking with Confidence course should be offered prior to a leadership training. Another person suggested that they would like to see a session on problem-solving to which people might bring real problems from the group and there should also be a session that deals with conflict resolution which would include both conflicts around issues (e.g., smoking) and personality conflicts. The idea of a practicum [as an option] appealed to the group, and it was suggested that groups to which people belonged might offer them an opportunity to take on a new leadership role, thus providing practical experience with a training program.

It was suggested that the centre offer another phase I, followed by a more advanced phase II, to participants from the two phase I programs. Concern was expressed that by the time the centre was able to offer another phase I and then go to a phase II, people would be lost. However, someone suggested the possibility of combining with another centre and sharing expenses (e.g., Wilson and Town Centre)

Organizational Development:

- Plans are already in the works for a new Dogwood sign.
- It was felt that the entrance need not be altered, that it was necessary to accommodate large numbers of people while registering for programs, that Mastercard was a fact of life that people needed to know about and were generally comfortable with.
- *Decisions regarding changes of job titles are decisions the Board cannot make.*
- The name "Coordinator" is a standard title which does not reflect Jill's role.
- In summary, someone commented that
Some of this opens up a can of worms and I would rather have a cup of coffee than a can of worms.

Volunteer Recognition:

Kitchen volunteers ought to get extra perks, but one of the problems is that food services has to cover all costs. Recruiting and recognizing volunteers is a big job

and a request has gone in for a Volunteer Coordinator for Dogwood, but there has been no response from Parks and Recreation to date. Some comments were:

- *We need a definition of who is a volunteer.*
- *Every volunteer needs to be recognized.*
- *Is the reason kitchen volunteers aren't recognized because it's women's work?*
- *Every volunteer needs to be perceived and treated as a potential leader.*
- *We need to listen to people at the grass roots and to listen to each other.*
- *We need to talk to people and find out their volunteer interests (People don't always fill out the volunteer part of their membership)*

It was suggested that a Volunteer Recruitment and Recognition Committee be struck and that everyone who took the leadership training be invited to be part of such a committee. To begin, it was suggested that interested people meet with Jill and identify volunteer jobs and job descriptions more clearly. Volunteers need to be told exactly what is expected of them with no attempt to sell them on an idea, just an open invitation to contribute. Job descriptions need to be more specific (e.g., in the pool room, if there are jobs to be done in running the pool room, then the people who play should be doing the work). **The main task is to change the attitude toward volunteering—volunteering needs to be perceived as an opportunity for personal development and to make a meaningful contribution.**

Often when people first join the centre, they have had it with the workforce and want to enjoy the freedom to participate in social and leisure activities. Everyone needs to be allowed the freedom to choose activities that are relaxing and enjoyable. Many are doing volunteer work in the community [e.g., hospital auxiliary, for their church], others are supporting ailing spouses and parents or helping with grandchildren. For people who are already contributing to community and family, Dogwood Pavilion may provide support, relaxation, and rejuvenation. Once people have time to contribute, they come to their own realization that there is more to life than just fun and games. Grateful for what they have received from the centre, they may come to want more meaningful involvement—it is then that volunteering can provide a sense of fulfillment and personal satisfaction, and an opportunity for personal growth and developing leadership potential.

APPENDIX A

THE CULTURE OF DOGWOOD PAVILION

It is 8:40 a.m. as Alice approaches Dogwood Pavilion, which lies at the heart of a maze of community services—a skating rink, public library, track, tennis courts, lawn bowling green, public health clinic, social recreation centre, swimming pool, and a senior secondary school are within a 3-block radius. This is Alice's first visit to Dogwood Pavilion and she drives cautiously to avoid teenagers, dressed in jeans and black t-shirts, spilling out of the school, onto the road, and into the parking lot across the street. She passes two one-way streets that exit from the parking lot, but confused by the proliferation of buildings, cars, buses, school children, and signs, she misses the entrance to the centre. Approaching once again from the other direction, she notes a large sign,

<p>DISTRICT OF COQUITLAM RECREATION AND LEISURE SERVICES Social Recreation Centre Chimo Pool Dogwood Pavilion The Rose Garden The Lawn Bowling Green</p>
--

and enters a parking lot identified by a number of inconspicuous signs in various locations that say, "Parking is reserved for patrons of the leisure services and the public library." There is nothing, however, that specifically identifies a seniors centre.

On her way to the main entrance of a modern, one-story building, Alice passes a large immaculately-groomed lawn bowling green. The grass is so short and green she assumes it must be artificial turf, and can hardly believe, on closer inspection, that it is real grass. Freshly-painted white benches at the edge of a circular path surround the green, with a traditional green clubhouse trimmed in white, on the far side. A rose garden lies between the green and the centre, with

numerous varieties marked with their proper names, arbors, and winding paths leading to a dias with a side-entrance to the centre. A handsome, well-dressed middle-aged couple wander among the roses, speaking in a foreign language. They pause now and then to admire the view, and the woman poses to have her picture taken among the roses. On a grassy knoll beside the entrance to DP, a flag on a tall pole ripples in the breeze above a bronze plaque. . . "in appreciation of participants and volunteers of the Seniors Summer Games, 1991."

Alice checks the time. It is 8:50 a.m. as she approaches the double-wide glass doors to Dogwood Pavilion. With a burst of air, doors fly open automatically, and she finds herself, like Alice-through-the-looking-glass, in a large atrium with athletic trophies in a long glass case down the left side. A display of photographs mounted on cardboard runs the full length of the glass case, announcing "Congratulations to all Centennial's B.C. Senior Games Competitors" with a list of all those competitors from DP who came home with silver, bronze, and gold medals.

Opposite the trophies, hangs a brightly-patterned, old-fashioned commemorative quilt made by the Centennial quilters.

Coquitlam 1891 - 1991 100 Years

The sign on a small desk just beyond the quilt says, "Today's host is Ethel: A sign below the desk says, "Men Needed for the Tea Dance", and another says: "Weight Training", with details provided in smaller print. In the centre, two strands of soft rope mark the line-up (like the kind at the bank) to a high desk that runs full-length along the wall directly ahead, and a sign reads:

<p>Please! One customer at a time at the front desk. Stay in line and you will be helped next. Thank you.</p>
--

Behind the desk two young women speak in hushed voices. Alice smiles in anticipation, waiting for someone to acknowledge her presence.

Hearing Difficulty?
Please ask for a Williams Sound
Personal PA Receiver

MASTERCARD

When a woman behind the desk looks up, Alice straightens her body and clears her throat. "My name is Alice and I want to become a member. I'm new in Coquitlam, and I'd like to know what kinds of programs and activities you have to offer."

The woman pauses, and then calls in a loud voice . . . "Is Charles here? . . . Charles, are you there?" Feeling uncomfortable and wanting to be invisible, Alice wanders in the direction of the lounge. She passes the Coordinator, who is speaking on the telephone in her office behind a glass wall in full view.

The Coordinator is much more than a coordinator of activities. Her role includes managing a staff of nine, as well as supervising and budgeting for the overall operations of a centre serving a diverse membership of over 3,000 people. She defines the primary function of the centre to be social and her primary role to be facilitating of socialization—"recreation and activities are just the vehicles for socialization." She also admits that the centre is a big business, although she had never thought of it in that way, until the President brought it to her attention.

The President always puts the business function up front, but I wouldn't. We are in the business of meeting the leisure needs of the senior population within an allocated budget. But it really isn't big business—it is a people place. But, of course, somebody does have to look after the business end of it. I hate statistics, because they are misleading, even with the membership. Our membership has not gone up since last year, but we have increased the daily use of the centre by 20 percent. That is very positive and suggests that people

are using the centre more often. Up until now council has always justified raising expenses in terms of actual membership numbers. My boss is always telling me to 'check my revenues'.

Although she is described as a "powerful woman," she does not like the term "power".

Seniors use various terms here that bother me—for example, I am often introduced to people as 'the boss'. I very quickly say something like, 'oh, we all work together here'. I don't like being pegged as the boss, because it implies that I am the power . . . though I do have power.

She describes herself as somewhat laissez-faire, although she seldom thinks about what it is that she does.

What I do is intrinsic—I am not aware of how I do things. It is not my style to tell staff and seniors what to do. I try to take a work-with approach with staff. If somebody makes a suggestion, I try to do the matchmaking between staff and seniors. Before I used to do things all myself and that was fun. I guess I am probably like some of the seniors, in that I miss the old days. I did everything myself and I miss the direct "doing it", but it is also a challenge to inspire and motivate staff to do it as well as I like to see it done. That is a real challenge—every staff person is different and you have to look at how you handle each person in terms of what they will value. They need to have their needs met, just like the seniors.

She is often frustrated by the amount of time that she spends managing and supervising staff. She is also frustrated with district politics and the many administrative details, but tries to "put those to bed as things I can't control" and focus on the centre and creating a positive atmosphere. "It is such a beautiful place to work."

She believes that leadership is different in retirement. The major difference, she feels, is in the approach to getting things done and the way in which work is delegated.

You just don't delegate seniors to do things. As a woman, I don't like that kind of supervision, and I suppose my staff don't either. So I like to have a team approach, working together on different committees toward the same goals and objectives.

Involving seniors is different; they are volunteers and using volunteer resources is different than supervising paid staff.

You have to know what motivates people, what interests them, and where their strengths lie. I ask people and I like to kind of lead them along the path that they don't know they want to go until they have had a chance to talk about it. You need the personal approach.

She finds it a challenge to try to engage people in a retirement setting, and is creative in her approach to making use of people's skills and talents to meet the needs of the centre. For example,

We need to get more of an ethnic understanding here, because the ethnic mix in the community is only going to increase. We have a new member from Hong Kong who is a cartographer. She told me about the various places around the world that she has lived and worked, and she said she could bring a multi-ethnic perspective to the centre. And I immediately thought, 'how am I going to tap into her?'

The Coordinator is pleased, although puzzled, that there are so many people who have signed up for the leadership training program who are not in formal leadership roles at the centre, some of whom are people she does not know.

The lounge at DP is a quietly elegant room. A large picture window looks out on the rose garden and the bowling green beyond. Inside, the decor is soft and modern—pale turquoise and pink floral patterns, modern white wicker chairs, tables with glass tops. A bookshelf covers an entire wall and a collection of magazines is artfully arranged on a large coffee table. The focal point is a television with a huge screen—an entertainment centre, like a movie screen. Sitting in a chair placed directly in front and two feet from the picture, a frail elderly woman with snowy-white hair tunes into "Days of our Lives." Opposite the picture window, behind another glass wall, volunteers are setting up the computers for the class which is scheduled to begin at 9: 30 a.m.

Alice is startled by the small, wirey man with white hair and a beard who breezes in from around the corner, extends his hand, and introduces himself as 'Charles'. "Do you have a card"? he asks. Alice is confused. Card? Should she have brought a card?

"What kind of card?" she asks.

"Business card," he says, "I collect them."

Alice takes her cue and asks him what his business is. He explains that he was the director of a 300-bed hospital in California for many years, and retired in 1979. Since then he has been active in various organizations, and most recently as president of DP, which he informs her has 3000 members. "We have too many members and it is just impossible to serve them all." When she expresses an interest in taking tap dancing lessons, Charles immediately responds:

We used to offer tap dancing lessons, but that's kind of gone out of style. 'Clogging' is the new rage with the seniors. It involves a lot of stomping, and is much more vigorous. We have a clogging class starting next month, and if you're interested, you better sign up for it because the classes get filled up pretty fast.

Charles is proud of the centre and has dedicated himself to making it the best of its kind. He joined DP to find an outlet for his ambitions—he did not come for the athletic programs and is not interested in recreational pursuits. He had climbed to the top of the ladder in medical administration and he wanted to see if he might have an interest in climbing the ladder in a seniors centre. When he finally got the opportunity to become president, he took it on because,

I enjoy being with people and creating things, looking at problems, and seeing if they can be resolved. That's why I am a seniors' counsellor too, I help people with their problems.

As a family physician, Charles has always been motivated by a desire to help others. Following the war, he contracted TB, spent some time in a sanatorium, and became curious about how the place ran. He completed a Masters degree in Healthcare Management, and worked as a healthcare administrator, where he dealt with all kinds of people. He finds chairing a hospital board no different than being president of a seniors centre.

You may be dealing with different kinds of problems, but how people react as individuals and in groups is all pretty much the same. Basically, it isn't any different.

In the role of DP president, Charles has enjoyed meeting new people and he has had an opportunity to achieve some of his goals in improving the operations of the organization.

It's a challenge. Like this morning—I heard about the snooker meeting after I got here. I asked the snooker people if it was published, and they said there was a notice on the board in the snooker room, and I said, well, supposing I don't go into the snooker room because I don't belong to the snooker club, how would I know about it? And he said, 'don't ask me' and I said, 'well, I am asking you'. You need to put a notice up where everybody can see it. These kinds of things go on and they shouldn't because it's half-baked. This whole place is a challenge because it is this funny mixture of different things happening and different people who are all set in their ways like me because they are aging.

In reflecting on his leadership qualities, Charles says he is critical of himself and others, honest, consistent, and has a passion for resolving problems even when he gains no personal benefit. Confidence was never an issue for Charles: he admits that "probably I am too bold."

Annual General Meeting

The first days of the summer of '92 in Coquitlam are hot and steamy. On one of these days, approximately 225 members of assemble in the comfort of an air-conditioned gymnasium for the Annual General Meeting. The most common code of dress is "California North"—casual clothes and sneakers—staff and advisory board members are distinguished by their business-like attire. With advisory board members seated at a long table across the stage, the meeting begins promptly at 1 p.m.

This meeting is Charles's "swan song", his last official duty as president of the DP Association, and he is comfortable, articulate, and fully in-charge of the proceedings. He brings the meeting to order with a moment's silence for "people we have lost in the last while", followed by the welcome and an outline of the agenda. The Coordinator of the centre is then introduced and presents highlights of the year.

COORDINATOR - We have a new relationship that epitomizes the spirit of cooperation here at [DP]. Our beautiful rose garden is a joint effort between the district and the centre: the district planted the rose garden and a group of our members who are "rose enthusiasts" look after the maintenance. Because our centre is getting larger and staff are busier, we are taking steps to maintain a warm and friendly atmosphere. With this in mind, we have two new programs, the hostess program and Operation Friendship, that are

designed to help new members feel welcome. We have also formed a New Horizon's board which has hired two leadership training consultants, and you will be hearing more about that following our business meeting.

Constitutional Resolutions: An important item of business is the official amalgamation of the Funding Society and the Advisory Board, which must be ratified by the membership. This item is chaired by the Vice-president and he begins with the legal details.

VICE-PRESIDENT - Ladies and gentlemen, this is all legalese for the amalgamation of the Funding Society and the Advisory Board. Very briefly, we had two organizations going after the same buck. But it's not up to me. Could we have a motion?

Advisory Board Reports: Each Member of the Advisory Board presents their report for the year. The Vice-president begins and his report includes an important issue of great concern to all.

VICE-PRESIDENT - Ladies and gentlemen, we have a parking problem. Students who attend the senior secondary school across the street are using our parking lot. We have applied to council for a permit to prevent the students from parking here. I will be here at 7:30 in the morning on the first day of school in September taking a list of students parked here. The students are going to learn the hard way that they can't park in our parking lot (loud cheering and clapping).

SPORTS DIRECTOR - I have two minutes to report on seventeen activities. We had a total of 650 participants in the following activities: slo-pitch, snooker, tennis, table tennis, golf, bocce, lawnbowling, carpet bowling, five-pin bowling, roller skating, ice skating, walking, hiking, biking. There is something for everyone, so let's get out there. Besides being fun, it's good for you.

CRAFTS DIRECTOR - I don't like speaking in public, so please bear with me. I'm going to start off with the opposite gender. The boys in the woodworking shop have helped us a lot in the craft shop. Last year, they made all the horseshoes for the senior games. This is a quote that I can't pass up: One of the boys in the shop said, 'The carpenter's shop is the most beautiful place in town—it's full of good-looking sexy old men'. The craft room is also a wonderful place, we meet twice a week and we produce some lovely items. I want to give special thanks to Mabel for her beautiful work. The gift shop is very successful this year. We sold both summer and seniors games shirts and hats and we got ten percent of the proceeds. The spring fair was the best ever and we made over \$1,000. We now have our very own [DP] t-shirts, also crests and caps. It would be nice to see you all wearing them and promoting our centre. There is something very rewarding about volunteering—I have really enjoyed it.

PRESIDENT - My position has been made easier by all these people up here. We have tried to serve everyone. It isn't always easy. My years as president have

been very enjoyable in spite of some personal problems, and this last year has been the best. I can't name any one person—everyone who works and volunteers is special. Things don't just happen here, they occur because of the hard work of volunteers. Last year the summer games and the senior games were made possible because of the people who were willing to work.

Special Recognitions:

PRESIDENT - I would ask the Coordinator and staff to step out here and get snowed under with flowers and affection. VP, are you good at hugging? (Nine young women step onto the stage, each receiving a bouquet of flowers and a kiss from the VP). We love you all. We need you. We hope you are here for a long time.

Elections: This year a new member has been nominated for president, challenging the vice-president for the position. Both candidates address the assembly briefly:

VICE-PRESIDENT - I joined [DP] to play snooker and I got interested and helped in the kitchen. I got a new table for the snooker club. I brought ideas for making improvements to the kitchen and they were defeated, but that's democracy. Anything I have done, I have done for the good of the people of [DP].

CHALLENGE CANDIDATE - I have been a member less than a year and since nominated, I have prepared a brief resume of my qualifications. I have been married for 50 years, have children and grandchildren. I have been a business administrator, self-employed in business 1986-87. I was chair of the Heart Foundation. In 1988-89 I was president of a large seniors centre in Alberta with a membership of over 4,000. When I moved to Coquitlam this year, I joined [DP] and I urge you to vote for me.

Someone from the floor calls for a secret ballot. While the ballots are being counted, a professional consultant provides information about a leadership training program scheduled for the Fall. In due course, the Vice-president is declared the new president of DP and the meeting concludes with his acceptance speech, and final words,

NEW PRESIDENT - Thank you for the confidence in me. I will say this: as of the 3rd week in September, the parking problem will be solved (cheers).

It is a 8:30 a.m. on a warm and sunny September morning. Registration for the fall program is underway and the parking lot in front of DP is full of cars and

people. In the furthest corner of the lot, three teenage boys in cutoffs with baseball caps on backwards are skateboarding. Two other teenagers squat on the curb, their heads together, smoking.

From a chair strategically tucked in the corner just inside the glass doors to the seniors centre, the new president in a DP sports cap and t-shirt with nose pressed against the glass scrutinizes the parking lot, checking for incoming teens in cars. Behind him, a sign announces the upcoming "Constitutional Discussion," to be held at DP at the end of the month. Special guest will be the local MP who will defend the "yes" position.

The new President of DP (Lorne) retired at 55 from the federal government, and has "never looked back". He joined DP to

get out of my wife's hair. I was interested in snooker and I knew there was a very active snooker group. Through snooker, I found out how the Board worked. I wasn't really satisfied with the way the kitchen was being run, especially over the Christmas period. When I asked what I could do about these problems, it was suggested that if I really wanted to implement change, I should join the advisory group.

But he did not join the Advisory Board right away; he became active in the Funding Society, and then got involved in the B.C. Seniors Games that the centre hosted for the province. When he was asked to run for president, he declined because Charles was running, and he felt Charles would make a good president. He did, however, agree to run for vice-president.

It is almost a given that the vice is going to go on to be president. When the time came, I gave it a lot of thought. The wife and I used to go down to California for the winter. Now I don't want to be boastful but I am the kind of guy that when I take something on, I do it right. And I knew that would mean we couldn't go south. And so I had to ask myself, 'Do I want to go south or do I want to be president'? And I decided there wasn't anybody better than me to be president. And I am glad I did, because I am enjoying it immensely.

Lorne gets satisfaction out of "taking the bull by the horns and deciding on things that have to be decided upon". He is not interested in physical sports; he gets enjoyment out of sitting in a meeting for two or three hours, sinking his teeth

into a problem, and finding solutions. He finds it somewhat frustrating, however, that the Board does not have more power.

Not that I am on a power trip, but if people have enough confidence in me to elect me to a position and they say, we want you to make some decisions for us, then I should have more power to carry them out. The Board can make decisions, but they can be overruled. Of course, that's the way it should be, I guess, because the district is paying the bills. I wouldn't want to pay the bills and have somebody else decide how the money was going to be spent.

He describes himself as

not really dogmatic, but I like to run what I call a straight and narrow meeting. If people have something to say, they raise their hands, and I recognize them. As far as I am concerned, if you have the floor, everybody should listen. I like to run a meeting where business is attended to—the odd bit of humour is okay, but I like order. If two or three people are chatting, I would say, 'hey, let's attend to business.' Nobody can say [Lorne] doesn't give people equal opportunity.

While he was never in a leadership role as a civil servant, he became involved in a large non-profit society in mid-life, where he was first appointed to a committee, then he got onto the Board of that society, became vice-president and eventually president. It took him nine years to get to the top, and by that time he was confident he could do the job of president of the Board of Directors. A similar on-the-job learning process gave him the confidence to take on the job as president of the DP Advisory Board. "If I wasn't confident that I could do the job, I never would have run for president."

Lorne sees no real difference between leading 20-year-olds and leading 60-year-olds, although he is "sorry to say" that he was never in a leadership role and did not attend business meetings in his working days. From his experience at DP, he feels that men tend to make better leaders because

they seem to grasp the problem, look at it, and say 'this is what has to be done'. Some of the women I have worked with tended to be less decisive and they don't always speak up in meetings—though I have also worked with some very competent ladies and some men who were real bummers.

Lorne describes his relationship with the Coordinator as open, friendly, and honest, although he admits that was not always the case. In the beginning, they

disagreed on some issues, but since have come to an "understanding". While he feels respected by staff, he does not always feel respected by members because of certain controversial decisions. He is frustrated with people who spend time in the centre and do not make a contribution, and he cites the "snooker people" as an example. He is going to try to change that by encouraging people in the snooker room to take the leadership training program, so they will take a broader view and feel more committed to the organization as a whole. He feels there is leadership potential that needs to be channeled, and he expects the leadership training program to bring results.

It is 8:50 a.m. and the monthly Advisory Board meeting is scheduled to begin at nine o'clock. It is the first meeting of the new Board which has now amalgamated with the Funding Society. Lorne is in charge, and he extends a particularly warm welcome to the new vice-president, Theresa, who is the former president of the Funding Society.

Theresa worked for 10 years after her husband retired, because there were still children at home. She started working parttime, which gradually became full-time office work. When her husband became ill, she was forced to give up work. She then joined DP (15 years ago) because her husband was "unhappy and complaining a lot", and the doctor told him to "get over to DP." She considers joining DP "a godsend for both of us." She started with the exercise classes, then volunteered to help with the Funding Society when it started in 1983. Since then she has served in various offices with the Funding Society, being president for two years. She is also on the Board of Directors for the B.C.O.A.P.O. and works as a volunteer in the computer classes.

As vice-president my job is just to support the president and be prepared to fill in if he is away. If he needs any help I should be there to do it. I'm new at it and I haven't had any real duties yet. I'm not sure if there is any literature on it. I think they just tell me if they want anything done.

She agreed to take on the role of vice-president because

they said, 'you really should'. They didn't know who else they were going to get, and because I felt duty-bound. I felt I owed DP—it really

saved my husband and me, too. Don't misunderstand me, I'm more than glad to help.

She never knows what she is really going to get out of it when she assumes a responsible role, but she does know that she always gets more out of things than she puts in.

She describes herself as confident, and attributes her confidence to working out of the home.

My confidence has grown as I get older—it comes from experience over the years. These last few years I feel much more confident than I have ever been. I used to be scared to death to talk to the mayor, and now he's a good friend of mine.

She feels that being a leader in retirement is much different than leading younger groups:

it doesn't matter so much how well you do it. It's a case of, 'I will do the best I can and so what'. I used to be terrified to make mistakes and I just laugh it off now.

While an effective leader has to be tolerant and understanding of people, regardless of the age group involved, she knows from experience that many seniors are self-conscious and lack confidence. Many are desperate to join in, but they may stand back, and wait to be invited and encouraged.

I think women, in general, tend to be a little more tolerant and sympathetic than men. Women don't have to be tough, whereas some of the men think they have to put on sort of a macho front.

But she is not prepared to say that women at DP would necessarily make the best leaders. It would depend on the personality of the individual.

I think a leader has to be kind and friendly, and understand where the other person is coming from. Leaders must truly feel they are serving others, rather than being served in their leadership role.

Power has a negative connotation for Theresa, and she is not interested in having any of it.

Power means that somebody feels they are above other people. It is an unpleasant thing and refers to control over people. I

guess in some places, and in some cases, power can be used effectively, but I don't think it is effective in a seniors centre.

She admits that the Coordinator is powerful, but also kind and tolerant. While she has observed that the Coordinator can stand her ground when needed, Theresa doesn't think the Coordinator enjoys having to use that power. "You can see it on her face."

Theresa is frustrated by people who complain a lot and try to stir up trouble. She tries to get people who complain about things to participate in the decision-making process and to work toward consensus.

Like this no-smoking thing. One lady came to me and said there were many people who were unhappy. So I told her we had tried everything to make everybody happy, and I suggested she and her group might like to work with the Board to make a decision we can all live with. But of course, we didn't hear from her. Sometimes people go on power trips, and you just have to laugh it off.

Generally, issues are resolved and people are asked to settle down or leave.

It is a real challenge to get volunteers. She finds that everywhere she goes, it is always the same people who are involved. Theresa claims that whether or not people volunteer to help depends to some extent on the way they were brought up.

I was brought up in a home where my mother was always involved in the church and doing things in the community. I grew up in the Depression years and things were tough, but people helped each other. Of course, there weren't the things then that needed to be done by volunteers.

Volunteers need the desire to become involved and the skills, which vary depending on the task. The centre's responsibility is to provide the opportunity to those skills, with some fun and enjoyment built in. Theresa admits that some jobs just are not any fun, but somebody has to do them. One way to get people to work in the kitchen is to say 'we'll close it down if nobody volunteers'. Sometimes that works.

But people don't want to commit themselves to working two hours in the kitchen or the tea garden. What would be the payoff? Maybe it would be talking to people and meeting new people. There has to be an incentive, maybe a free lunch or a free coffee. We charge a lot for coffee here, and every volunteer gets a free coffee.

One of the biggest reasons people are reluctant to take on responsibilities, in Theresa's view, has to do with lack of confidence. There needs to be a way for people to build their self-confidence and she hopes that the leadership training program will help.

It's 9:03 a.m. when the advisory board meeting is brought to order.

Advisory Board Meeting

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY - Does everyone have a copy of the agenda? Do you have a copy of the minutes of the special Executive Board meeting on July 30th.

PRESIDENT - Can we have a motion re agenda? re minutes?

Business Arising from the Minutes:

PRESIDENT - What about the question of the no-smoking policy?

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY - Well, we were acting [in enforcing a no-smoking policy at DP] in good faith. Council set a district no-smoking policy for public buildings three years ago and so we moved to make [DP] a smoke-free building effective Sept. 14th. Now district council has done an about-face and said we can't enforce it without council's approval.

PRESIDENT - At [DP] there has been a campaign from members who smoke and councillors are getting phone calls (actually it is headed up by a lady). The mayor is livid. He asked that we postpone policy change from the 14th to the 22nd. I informed him that if council didn't back us on this, I would personally take it as a vote of non-confidence in me and my board.

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY - Even if it goes through I expect we are going to have a real problem with smokers. We're going to have to get tough. Same as we are doing with the kids out there in our parking lot next week.

PRESIDENT - We have a policy—if members break a rule, they get a letter, then we rescind their membership.

PAST PRESIDENT - I say we uphold the bylaw and enforce it on the 14th.

SOCIAL/EDUCATION DIRECTOR - I'm new and I have a lot to learn. I'm going to be asking lots of questions about things you people already know. Who are the members of the Parks and Rec Committee? Who is our Coordinator's supervisor? Who is at the top?

As social/educational director, Michael is a new member on the Advisory Board, and he has a lot of questions about how business is conducted and who is in charge of what. He first got involved in the computer group because of an interest in computers; when the program grew and became instituted as an activity group,

he was elected as chair after which he was elected to serve on the Board as the "spokesperson" (i.e., director) for all the educational and social groups.

Michael retired six years ago. He and his wife planned for their retirement and wanted to enjoy life, travel, and volunteer.

But I'm taking on too much now. I don't have enough time. I get talked into things too easily, and I have trouble saying, 'no.' I'm interested in computers, so I was kind of pushed into chairing the computer group. The last thing I got roped into doing was serving on the board. Nobody else would do it. One of the staff called and asked me, and I couldn't say no.

Michael feels that a lot of people don't get involved when they retire because they do not want more responsibilities. Whether or not people deserve to sit back, they can choose not to volunteer.

He is also aware that a lot of women who have never been in the public are afraid they will "embarrass themselves if they put themselves forward". Michael notes there are two or three volunteers in the computer classes who are very knowledgeable, but they will not teach. The question is how to build their confidence.

Michael developed his confidence to speak in front of a group when he started work as an engineer. The company gave all its employees a public speaking course. The first day, they just picked people "out of the blue", and they had to get up and talk for two minutes about anything. He feels that public speaking is much more difficult when people are older.

When you're older, you are more set in your ways and reluctant to take chances—you are less-prepared to take risks. Like, I'm not going to go bungee jumping at my age—you don't see many people over 60 doing that. Do you?

While Michael is confident about speaking in a group, he does not enjoy leading a group. He finds it frustrating dealing with volunteers, because one cannot delegate in the same way.

I'm not really a very good manager, because I tend to be too soft. When you are dealing with volunteers, you have to be persuasive and that is one of the reasons I am taking the leadership training course.

He does admit that he is having fun, because he is interested in computers and he enjoys taking courses.

I'd like to take the philosophy course again and I can't, but for the most part, I do what I enjoy. Some people have a more civic attitude, and they do their duty first, rather than what gives them pleasure. At our age, we've served our time and, in a sense, we deserve to do what we enjoy.

Michael doesn't see himself as a leader, more as a "plodder" who follows written guidelines. He sees leaders as visionary people who come up with great ideas all the time, and Michael is not very happy that he may be expected to become such a "visionary". He feels everybody has good ideas, but they are often too shy to express them.

Maybe they haven't thought out the idea sufficiently to where they have the confidence to speak up. Maybe that has something to do with the leader. Maybe the leader needs to set up the right atmosphere. I don't know how to handle people in that respect. Part of it is that I have never done it. Maybe if I take the leadership training course, I can get better at it. I would like to be able to do it, but I am not sure that I can change.

Leadership in retirement is different, in Michael's view, because in business the goal is to make money. In the business world, you hire employees that you know are capable, you tell them what to do, and they do it.

In retirement, you don't have a choice of the best people for the job, they volunteer. The first question is, are they willing? The next is, can they do the job? If they can't, you have to train them.

Power, to an engineer such as Michael, suggests electrical energy. In the human context, he feels that politicians have too much of it, although it is "okay" provided power is used for the public good.

I have some power over what happens in the computer room. As the chair, I have power in that I will make suggestions and we make joint decisions. I am both leading and sharing the power.

Generally, Michael also feels he is respected at DP, because people know they can come to him if they have a problem.

I have a mug here that says, 'volunteers are special', and we have a volunteers' tea. We don't get paid, but we do get a free cup of coffee

every day. I feel respected by members and staff . . . but the kids at the school across the street don't respect us.

The Advisory Board meeting continues with . . .

The Parking Problem:

PRESIDENT - [Alderman Byrne] from council informed me that we needed two people to issue tickets to kids who are parking in our lot. We got here yesterday at 7:30 a.m. and lo and behold there was a staff member from the Parks Department handing out tickets too. Who was this person?

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY - Fifteen staff members were trained to hand out tickets this week. As of Monday students' cars will be ticketed and towed away.

VICE-PRESIDENT - Does this have to be passed in the school?

PRESIDENT - Well, I can't make a motion, but I suggest an ad be placed in the student newspaper. The ad could read the same as the notice handed out with tickets.

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY - Parks and Recreation may already have done that.

PRESIDENT - The reason they are ticketing Monday is on advice of council—I would have ticketed today but they said no we have to wait. I have a message for the Coordinator: If it is going the way I think, I suggest you be here at 7 a.m. tomorrow to hand out tickets. And I'll be here to help you, dear.

Reports from Activities/Groups:

CULTURAL DIRECTOR - People in the drama group are planning on resigning. It seems there is a lack of interest. Can we stimulate interest?

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY - I've recognized they have had their day and we need to let it go. Sometimes groups die and they come back with new blood.

CULTURAL DIRECTOR - It seems to me there should be more room for culture - this place seems to have become a massive sports facility.

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY - Maybe it is time to visit the drama teacher at the high school again.

CULTURAL DIRECTOR - Do you take the chair of the drama group with you?

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY - Good idea - let's take [Frieda] and maybe [Mary].

CULTURAL DIRECTOR - I think they feel left out. Why not put it in their lap?

SOCIAL/EDUCATION DIRECTOR - Maybe the drama group could be in a play with them.

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY - What about they do a play - we do a play?

SOCIAL/EDUCATION DIRECTOR - Why not get seniors and students together in a play.

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY - Good idea—ask the drama teacher if he'd like some grey-haired students . . . and some bald-headed ones. Students might as well get used to it. They'll soon be graduating, and people of all ages go to university now.

The Lunch Room

The lunch room at DP is located at the back of the building. Alice passes the craft shop with its display of items for sale, produced by the membership—including the traditional crafts one finds in any bazaar or hospital auxiliary shop, trendy jewelry made in the lapidary shop, and woodcarvings made in the woodworking shop. Winding her way through the tea garden and around the corner, Alice observes a man outside a glass door demonstrating his golf swing with an imaginary club to another who sits silently watching and smoking. The snooker room is crowded and noisy—men stretched across tables with the sound of balls smacking sharply and dropping in muffled tones into side pockets. Down the long hall beyond the snooker room, straight-backed chairs in a row line the outside of an office with its wooden door closed. Peeking through the small window, Alice can see the last patient in the blood pressure clinic. A buzz saw announces the woodworking room behind closed doors across from the lunch room.

Standard fare is soup and sandwiches, with a variety of tempting desserts—today there is fresh blackberry strudel fresh from the oven. Alice is tempted by the "English trifle"—a bargain at \$.85 a serving. The lunch room crowd is markedly diverse. A tall, gaunt man, in his late 60's, shouts in a strained and raspy voice to his dinner partner—a well-dressed, relaxed, and tanned man with white hair and a white cane. A couple in their 50's in matching athletic jackets and sneakers sit under the clock silently sipping their soup. A tall middle-aged Indo-Canadian man enters somewhat apprehensively past a trim young woman in tights and sneakers who sits near the door, munching on carrot sticks from a tupperware container. A pale, blonde woman in her early 40's, wearing a white nurse's uniform and a sad expression, sits silently chewing. A group of older women chatter amicably over soup and sandwiches, heads bobbing up and down, back and forth. Two staff members enter with trays, smiling, nodding, and acknowledging by name each person they pass enroute to their table.

On one end of the wall, hidden behind a hanging plant, an honour roll recognizes "the many outstanding volunteers who have contributed to [DP] and the [District of Coquitlam]." Theresa and Charles are among those listed. Beneath the plaque, two middle-aged women in business suits and carrying brief cases, share a joke and a hearty laugh that seems too loud. Behind them, through the glass wall, the President of DP in business suit, white shirt and tie, briefcase in hand, strides across a lush and expansive lawn and past the tennis courts with

one ear to the ground and nose to the wind—a man with a job to do and no time to waste.

APPENDIX B

**DEVELOPING SENIORS AS LEADERS
IN COQUITLAM**

**A SURVEY OF LEADERSHIP NEEDS AND INTERESTS
OF THE MEMBERS OF
DOGWOOD PAVILION AND THE TOWN CENTRE,
COQUITLAM, BRITISH COLUMBIA**

**Submitted to the:
Seniors Leadership Initiative Board
A New Horizons Project at Dogwood Pavilion**

**By:
Sandra Cusack and Wendy Thompson,
Leadership Consultants**

July 1992

DEVELOPING SENIORS AS LEADERS IN COQUITLAM

Assessing Leadership Needs and Interests

As a first step in the development of seniors as leaders in Coquitlam, a survey was conducted to get a sense of the leadership needs and interests of the membership, as well as to generate interest in a leadership training program to be offered in the Fall. A questionnaire was developed (see Appendix A) and distributed with the agenda to all members of Dogwood and the Town Centre attending the Annual General Meeting of the Dogwood Pavilion Association. Additional surveys were made available to members of the Town Centre in order to insure that the needs of both the Town Centre and Dogwood Pavilion were represented.

Survey Respondents

From a total of approximately 225 people in attendance at the AGM and surveys distributed to members of the Town Centre, 63 people completed the survey: 55 were members of Dogwood Pavilion and 8 were from the Town Centre. The number returned represents approximately 25% of those who received a copy of the survey, and a little more than 2% of the total membership (given an estimated total of 3000 members).

When asked if they would be interested in taking the training,

- 21 people said, *Count me in.*
- 16 people said, *Tell me more.*
- 8 people said, *Maybe next time.*
- 18 did not sign their name.

The responses are encouraging, and suggest there are already 37 people who are interested in taking the training. (Names and addresses of all respondents are included as Appendix B)

Age. Ages ranged from 46 to 85 years with an average age of about 69. While some people did not put down their age, the following ages were recorded: 46, 53, 56, 57, 58, 59, 59, 59, 60, 62, 63, 63, 63, 64, 65+, 65+, 65, 66, 67, 67, 67, 67, 68, 70, 70, 70, 70+, 71, 71, 71, 71, 72, 72, 73, 74, 74, 75+, 76, 76, 77, 77, 78, 79, 79, 80, 85. Such a wide range of ages suggests a great diversity of needs and interests, and no doubt accounts for some of the difficulty in meeting the needs of everyone.

Sex. In comparison to other seniors centres in the lower mainland, Dogwood has an unusually high proportion of men. It is interesting, therefore, that more than twice as many women as men filled out the surveys (i.e., 44 women and 19 men). Given the ratio of women to men is 3/2, this suggests women are either more interested in training or more willing to fill out surveys.

Marital status. There were almost 3 times as many married people as single people who filled out surveys. (35 indicated they were married; 13 widowed; 2 single; 2 people added the category "divorced" and 1 added the category "alone.") It is our experience that single and widowed people do have more time to spend, tend to get more involved in seniors centre activities and are more willing to take on leadership responsibilities.

Primary occupations. Seniors in Coquitlam have very diverse occupational/professional backgrounds, from housewives, nurses, teachers to clerks, bankers, supervisors, and people who have managed their own businesses. Given that Coquitlam is a suburban community, it is not surprising to find the largest occupation being that of housewife/homemaker.

Specific occupations are listed below:

housewife (8), sales (6), nurse, RN (5), teacher (4), homemaker (3) farmer, engineer, school board receptionist, cafeteria cook, school secretary, painter, crane operator, clerk (2), psychiatric health worker, bank collector, customs inspector, apartment manager, office manager (2), bookkeeper, shipper, banking, supervisor, cashier, heating, legal secretary, postal clerk, transportation, painting and drywalling contractor, electrician, bank secretary, health care administrator, pet shop owner, manager, hairdresser, accounting clerk, manager of a condo, food services supervisor. [One person listed all of the following occupations: clerk, TV and Radio, guard dog trainer for RCMP, city police, security]

Participation and Involvement

People who filled out the survey were largely those who played a volunteer role at the centre or were committed to a particular group (e.g., workshop, crafts, choir) or sport. It was interesting that 4 people came to the AGM who had no group affiliation whatsoever. The actual breakdown of involvement was:

- (1) recreation/sport club member (22)
- (2) leadership role (chair/treas./advisory) (14)
- (3) crafts or workshop (10)
- (4) volunteer (hostess/kitchen etc.) (9)
- (5) choir (3)
- (6) nil (4)

Examples of individual participation were:

- *mainly bridge - I teach beginning bridge*
- *member of seniors housing committee*
- *as a kitchen volunteer, I was called once in 2 years*
- *chair of 5-pin bowling, hostess committee, country kitchen helper*
- *member of croquet and tennis clubs, bowling, exercises, swimming, computers, Dogwood Roamers, rose society*
- *member of craft group, chair of bocce, vice chair of ice-skating, CCB group, volunteer phoner*

Reasons for Joining a Seniors Centre

People join a seniors centre for many different reasons, sometimes just because they are "old enough" or are new to a community. The largest number of people (33) said they joined for social reasons or to meet people. Many mentioned an interest in a particular recreational activity or sport (14). There were also a considerable number of people (7) who said they joined because they wanted to be useful and wanted an opportunity to get involved in volunteering. Some (4) sought new learning. Others (4) mentioned time on their hands following retirement from work. They said things like:

- *I became a widow and needed something to do*
- *I lost my husband and there was a need to fill a void in my life*
- *I wanted to make new friends and get involved in volunteering*

It seems that an increasing number of younger and healthier seniors are joining seniors centres not just for the social reasons, but because they want to sink their teeth into something that is productive and satisfying. With people retiring younger—and many people being laid off or on disability—there seem to be more "willing workers" out there who just need the right kinds of opportunities.

The Main Function of the Seniors Centre

When people were asked their opinion regarding the main function of their seniors' centre, there was again a wide range of opinions. Many (17) felt that it was to provide a social meeting place for seniors, to provide recreation programs/activities (11), for fun/relaxation/pleasure (7). Six said its function was "to help seniors" and three mentioned providing a "friendly lunch."

Individual people felt the function of their seniors centre was:

- *helping seniors enjoy life more*
- *to promote healthy aging/keep seniors active (4)*
- *to provide volunteer opportunities/chance to help others (3)*
- *to provide learning opportunities (2)*
- *to provide a place for seniors to gather, and enjoy each other and take part in programs*
- *to provide mental and physical stimulation*
- *to encourage a healthy outlook for aging citizens*
- *to provide a place for seniors to participate in whatever they enjoy*
- *to lead the way to becoming more involved*
- *to enhance everyday living for seniors*
- *to bring people together for the benefit of all*
- *to provide facilities to fulfill the needs of all seniors*
- *to make seniors aware of their opportunities*
- *to keep seniors active in the community*
- *to fill a void in many lives*
- *to remove loneliness*

Clearly, people expect a seniors centre to serve a wide range of functions from purely social to providing mental and physical stimulation, and volunteer opportunities. The role of seniors centres is changing. As one person noted, *Years ago, the function of the centre was helping seniors with everything.* There is a new breed of senior out there who has, not just needs associated with aging, but desires and expectations of being meaningfully involved and contributing to community life. Some people are even looking for a challenge!

What Influenced Them to Get Involved?

There many reasons people get more involved and take on a leadership role. Many people said it was because they retired and had time to spend (10). Others said they got involved because they wanted to meet people (9) or because of an interest in a specific group or sport (8). One person took on the role of treasurer because she *moved to Coquitlam and I have a computer.* Other reasons for getting involved were:

- *I needed to fill the void of retirement.*
- *I have always been a motivated person.*
- *I like to be with people—to meet and to serve.*
- *I love working with people.*

- *Because I love the game of bridge so much, I wanted others to be able to play too.*
- *I wanted to help create a more fulfilling life for all seniors.*
- *I enjoyed my past experience as a board member immensely and wanted to continue to play a leadership role.*
- *I feel there is a great need for housing for seniors that is adequate and affordable.*
- *I reached 50.*
- *I wanted to become active within the community.*
- *I received a membership gift from a friend.*
- *I had a heart attack as I was about to retire so came for the exercise which has also helped with my arthritis.*
- *I thought I should be giving more.*
- *I wanted to be busy and involved in the community.*
- *I got involved to relieve the boredom.*

Many of the reasons for joining a seniors centre in the first place were the same reasons people became committed and involved and took on a leadership role—e.g., liking and wanting to be with people and to remain active in the community. More than that, they spoke of a need to be give to others and to help others to enjoy more satisfying and fulfilling retirement years.

What They Get Out of Participating

It seems that people get a great deal of pleasure out of participating in a volunteer/leadership role that they often don't anticipate. They mentioned payoffs like *happiness, pleasure, satisfaction, better health new knowledge, learning, and growth*. One person said their involvement gave them on-the-job *leadership training*. Another said being involved *expanded my horizons*, and added . . . *You can do challenging jobs as a senior!* Eight people also said they got a lot of fun out of it. Some of the individual rewards mentioned were:

- *I get satisfaction, especially when the journal balances (this from a group treasurer).*
- *It makes me feel good doing things for others.*
- *I have the feeling of being needed (self-worth).*
- *I feel a sense of self-worth / value.*
- *Being involved helps my nerves.*
- *I have had many happy times.*
- *I enjoy the friendly people, social growth.*
- *I have the satisfaction of seeing many over the years come to enjoy the game of bridge*
- *I have a wonderful feeling of accomplishment*
- *I have the satisfaction of knowing I perhaps helped the seniors centre in a way which helped the members at large*
- *I receive training in leadership*
- *It plays a very important part of my life*
- *I get the feeling I have a place to belong to*
- *I get personal satisfaction in making others happy*
- *I enjoy happy times, helping others feel happier*

One person went so far as to say that his involvement at Dogwood was a *pivotal point of my week*. And another said, *I get a lot of happiness and pleasure . . . due to the hard work of Jill Rowledge and all staff members . . .* and added: *thankyou!* These are very strong words indeed, and suggest the key is in getting people *willing* to share the responsibilities—who then reap the rewards. Once involved they really seem to get hooked. One person did mention they loved to play cards on Thursday night, but were unable to enjoy it because of the smoking. [Smoking has been banned from the building since the study was undertaken].

How to Improve the Leadership

Leaders at Dogwood Pavilion must be doing a lot of things right! There were many people (15) who said you were *doing a great job*. It was also encouraging to find so many people who believed that education and training would improve the leadership. There were a number of insightful comments, with many people saying that more people need to be encouraged to get involved. Some specific suggestions for improving leadership were:

- *Workshops are a good idea! All members could benefit from further education in leadership and more effective communication.*
- *We need more emphasis on communication—i.e., more notices in the entrance of Dogwood and Town Centre.*
- *We need to recruit and train more volunteers, and provide support and encouragement so more people will try it out.*
- *We need more trained leaders—many people could benefit from training.*
- *We need organized seminars and programs to bring out the leadership qualities that we all have.*
- *We also need more of the membership to come out and support our leaders.*
- *If people are asked in person to volunteer, they are quite willing to help.*
- *If we had more space more activities could be arranged and it would make it more interesting for a greater number of people.*

One person had a critical comment—*I believe some of the staff have been here too long and they think they own the place*. You may recognize the comment as representing a particular personality or incident and therefore of no consequence. Or you may want to take a closer look at relationships between staff and senior volunteers. There was also someone who said they were a volunteer in the kitchen who was only called upon a couple of times a year—this person also suggested there were others who wanted to help but were seldom asked.

How to Get More Seniors Involved in Leadership

This is an important question and a problem common to many seniors groups and centres. Two people who filled out the questionnaire said, *I wish I knew*. Basically, there were three suggestions:

- provide leadership training
- give them volunteer opportunities/experiences
- encourage and invite them

Some specific responses were:

- *We need to offer incentives.*

- *We need to advertise for volunteers/leaders.*
- *I feel we have the opportunities if we so wish. The board is interesting but I feel I should earn that honour.*
- *We need more and better facilities.*
- *A leadership training program should stimulate many to improve themselves.*
- *Health and transportation tend to make people withdraw from commitment.*
- *Getting people to chair activity groups.*
- *We need to encourage members to join in more activities—encourage them to do volunteer work at our centre. They have many skills they may not realize.*
- *If all other means fail, to dare people to take on jobs and functions that they feel they could not do.*
- *Build up their confidence and make them feel they are capable.*
- *I am sure they are out there.*
- *Send letters of invitation to active seniors in the Tri-city area. Also hold special coffee/tea parties for seniors not involved and past members in past 3 years, also holding seminars on seniors affordable housing.*
- *Maybe if some of the leadership roles could be a joint responsibility - i.e., teams instead of one person, the commitment wouldn't be so overwhelming.*
- *A larger membership (at the Town Centre) might include more people who would be willing to accept a potions—if it were enjoyable and satisfying.*

It was interesting that one person thought we should, *Raise the age to 55 at least, so real seniors don't feel left out.* This is also something you may want to check out. Do you have a style of leadership and expectations about leadership that tend to exclude the older seniors from taking on a leadership role?

Workshop Topics of Interest

While there was some interest in all of the topics, results suggest that people tend to be more interested in communication skills, improving their ability to make their point and speak more clearly, rather than skills more associated with traditional leadership. These are the kinds of skills that are general, transfer to other areas of one's life, and would be useful to all members. Following are the workshop topics arranged in order of interest (nb., numbers indicate the number of respondents who checked them off):

- 26 Communication skills
- 26 Motivating, encouraging, and supporting others
- 25 How to make your point
- 23 How to speak and think more clearly
- 23 Confidence building
- 23 Giving and accepting criticism
- 22 Developing confidence to speak out in a group
- 22 Dealing with difficult people
- 20 Listening skills: Getting others to listen to you
- 20 Leadership and you (skills and styles)
- 16 How to run an effective and enjoyable meeting
- 15 Team building

OTHER:

- *Develop ESL and related programs for other ethnic groups.*
- *How to keep organized while busy.*
- *I do not feel that I personally need any of the above.*

The question remains, how to interest people who don't *think* they need the training—who are often the very people who need it most.

Conclusions and Recommendations

There seemed to be considerable interest in leadership training and personal development at Dogwood Pavilion and the Town Centre. Those who filled out the questionnaire also provided some thoughtful suggestions that will be helpful to the New Horizons Board in promoting seniors as leaders. The training program itself will be designed to emphasize the topics of greater interest to those who filled out the survey.

Based on the survey, we suggest:

- (1) That you send an invitation to the informational meeting, September 21st, to all those who filled out the questionnaire (see list in Appendix B), as well as all those involved in leadership roles at Dogwood and the Town Centre who were not in attendance at the AGM.

- (2) That you mention in your notice in the September newsletter that there are already 37 people who have expressed an interest in taking the training and therefore people ought to register well in advance in order to secure a position. Encourage anyone who is interested to attend the informational meeting September 21st at which time they may register.
- (3) That you thank all those who took the time to fill out the survey, and provide a brief summary of survey results. Let them know they have provided many good ideas about leadership, as well as an indication that people want a training program that focusses on personal development, developing self-confidence, and the ability to express themselves.
- (4) That you destroy the surveys to insure anonymity and reassure respondents that their confidentiality has been carefully protected.

APPENDIX C

LEADERSHIP NEEDS AND INTERESTS

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

We need your help. The Coquitlam Seniors Leadership Initiative at Dogwood Pavilion is working to serve the needs of retired people in Coquitlam more effectively. You can help by filling out the questionnaire below and giving us critical feedback on how well we are doing and how we can do it better. All information you provide will be held in confidence.

1. Primary occupation before you retired? _____
2. Reasons for joining a seniors centre? _____
3. In your opinion, what is the main function of your seniors centre?
4. What is your involvement/role? (e.g., member of craft group, treasurer of the board, member of the choir)
5. What influenced/motivated you to get involved?
6. What do you get out of it? _____
7. How could the leadership in your centre be improved?
8. In your opinion, how could we get more seniors committed and willing to take on leadership roles and share the responsibility?

9. Which of the following topics interests you? (please check 6)

- Communication skills
- How to run an effective and enjoyable meeting
- Listening skills: Getting others to listen to you
- How to make your point
- Dealing with difficult people
- Confidence building
- Motivating, encouraging, and supporting others
- Developing confidence to speak out in a group
- Team building
- How to speak and think more clearly
- Giving and accepting criticism
- Leadership and you (skills and styles)
- other (please specify) _____

10. Would you be interested in attending a series of workshops on the above topics in the Fall?

- Count me in Maybe next time
- Tell me more

The following information will help us in compiling the results of the survey and in providing the necessary training and support. Please sign your name at the bottom if you are interested in learning more, and we will keep you informed.

- (a) Membership: Town Centre Dogwood
- (b) Age: _____ (b) Sex: male female
- (c) Marital status: single widowed married