

# Neighbourhood Change Research Partnership

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## Ageing in Changing Places: Vancouver's Red Oak Place and Kits House

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Community Partner/s	Association of Neighbourhood Houses BC and Kitsilano Neighbourhood House

### 1. Rationale & Potential Policy Relevance

Low income older adults face significant barriers to aging in place on the Westside of Vancouver in the neighbourhoods they are socially embedded in. Given the documented connection between one's neighbourhood and perceptions of well-being, it is crucial to explore initiatives that assist older adults in aging in place (Ellaway et al, 2001; Forrest & Kearns, 2001; Murdie & Ghosh, 2010). Having identified the "core community need of affordable seniors housing on the Westside of Vancouver," Kitsilano Neighbourhood House developed 15 subsidized seniors units as an alternative independent living arrangement for older adults in December 2015 (Kitsilano Neighbourhood House, 2013). These units (called 'Red Oak Place') are built right into the upper levels of Kitsilano Neighbourhood House ('Kits House'). Residents regularly pass through Kits House to access their units. Residents also volunteer a minimum of five hours per month in Kits House programs and have access to a variety of programs and services for older adults.

Seniors housing within a neighbourhood house is a new and understudied arrangement. Neighbourhood houses have a governing structure that is unique to many other forms of seniors' assistance, since they are place-based, locally-governed, and community-oriented (Lauer & Reisz, 2012). Much existing research regarding housing for older adults is based upon assisted living facilities or in-home care (Diamond, 1992; Johnson, Jackson, Arnette, & Koffman, 2005; Martin-Matthews, Tong & Sims-Gould, 2013). Additionally, empirical scholarship suggests that support services for older adults often operate based on homogenizing assumptions about seniors' needs (Cronin & King, 2010; Dickerson & Rousseau, 2009; Heaphy, 2007). Our goal is to examine how Kitsilano Neighbourhood House is organized to influence the well-being of the diversity of older adults who live at the neighbourhood house.

### 2. Research Questions

1. What aspects of well-being do seniors living at Kits House self-identify as important? How are these aspects of well-being met through Red Oak Place and Kits House?
2. How does living at Red Oak Place (physically connected to Kits House) versus Linden Tree Place (physically separate from Kits House) shape seniors' perceptions of well-being?
3. What organizations, funding sources, and external policies are Red Oak Place and Kits House connected (e.g.: to BC Housing), and how do these connections contribute to the functioning of this housing?
4. What capacity building support does Kits House require in maintaining this local affordable housing initiative?

### 3. Specific Fit with the NCRP Objectives & Research Questions

This research most clearly contributes to research questions 2 and 3 concerning the impact of interventions at the neighbourhood level. Red Oak and Linden Tree Place were designed with an eye towards the active aging of older adults in urban centers, including seniors' participation, health, security and independence, as outlined in the World Health Organization's Age Friendly Cities movement (World Health Organization, 2015). As people age, it can become difficult to continue residing in the

neighbourhoods they have built their life within. Given the documented connection between one's neighbourhood and perceptions of well-being, economic displacement can be detrimental to older adults (Ellaway et al, 2001). Red Oak Place provides a unique opportunity for seniors with ties to Kitsilano to remain within their neighbourhood as they age. We therefore plan to explore how Kitsilano Neighbourhood House's initiative contributes to making Vancouver an age-friendly city.

Our close collaboration with Kits House management and staff also assists us in engaging with the following questions: How do community-based housing initiatives such as Red Oak Place have the potential to reduce socio-spatial inequalities? How can we, as NCRP researchers, contribute to capacity-building at Kits House and similar community-based organizations developing affordable seniors housing?

It is important to recognize the context within which these initiatives are taking place. By putting these initiatives in a macro-level context, we can take steps towards addressing questions surrounding neighbourhood restructuring. Here our goals are mostly descriptive with reference to neighbourhood level changes in age structures, and similarities and differences across Metro Vancouver. This description will put our research in context and provide a starting point for other neighbourhood level projects.

#### **4. Research Design & Methods**

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We will provide a CMA profile of Vancouver with a focus on seniors using census and tax filer data. This macro level work will provide the context for the core project described below. SPARC BC and United Way BC have agreed to provide the support for this macro level work.

The core research is a mixed methods project with five components: participant observation, analysis of policy documents, survey research, and semi-structured interviews. In this proposal we are requesting support for the semi-structured interviews and survey research portion of the project. The goal is to gain a rich understanding of how Kits House and the seniors' residences built into this neighbourhood house ('Red Oak Place') function to meet the interpersonal needs of older adults.

The first two components of the project have already begun. The co-investigator (Katherine Lyon) is engaged in participant observation as a volunteer with various Kits House seniors programs. This allows us to examine and document the informal operation of Kits House as well as the day-to-day activities of staff and seniors at Kits House. The policy documents will give us a window into how the decisions and activities of individuals at Kits House (whether residents, staff or management) are enabled or constrained through written regulations and procedures. The policy documents will also allow us to trace the connections between the various organizations, such as BC Housing, that allow Red Oak Place to function.

##### *Survey Research*

We will conduct two waves of survey data collection with the seniors who reside at Red Oak Place as well as the seniors who reside nearby at Linden Tree Place. Linden Tree Place and Red Oak Place are both run by Kitsilano Neighbourhood House, with the mandate of providing affordable housing for older adults. Red Oak Place is physically connected to Kits House and Linden Tree Place is not. This difference provides an opportunity for us to examine how living within a neighbourhood house shapes seniors' experiences. This survey data will be used to make three different comparisons.

- 1) First, we will consider seniors' perceptions of living at Red Oak Place in comparison to seniors' at Linden Tree Place, taking into account their different proximity to and use of Kits House.
- 2) Next, we will analyze seniors' experiences over time. The building of Red Oak Place was completed in late 2014, therefore residents are still adapting to their new living environment. We propose conducting two waves of data collection with a 12 month interval in order to capture change over time. The first wave will also include some retrospective questions about time before entering the new housing arrangement.
- 3) Lastly, we will compare seniors' survey responses at Red Oak Place and Linden Tree Place with survey responses from a larger existing data set. When designing our survey, we incorporated several questions from the previous survey "The Possibilities and Challenges of a Place-Based Approach to

Strengthening Urban Communities: A Case Study of Neighbourhood Houses in Metro Vancouver” (Lauer & Yan, 2013). This survey was conducted with respondents from 15 different neighbourhood houses across Metro Vancouver. We will therefore also be able to compare the responses of seniors at Red Oak Place and Linden Tree Place to the responses of people who participate in neighbourhood houses across Vancouver.

### *Semi-Structured Interviews*

We will conduct semi-structured, in-depth interviews with the seniors who live at Red Oak Place and Linden Tree Place (approximately 20 seniors), the staff who help run the residence (5-10 staff), and members of management and the board of directors (5-10 directors). The semi-structured interviews with seniors in residence will be an opportunity for seniors to identify and discuss their needs and experiences in their own words. The interviews with staff will enable us to consider how staff members perceive their work with seniors, what challenges and successes they encounter in this work, and what kinds of additional support they may find helpful. The interviews with management and the board of directors will provide insight into the decision-making processes and inter-institutional connections involved in the development and maintenance of this unique form of housing for older adults.

## **5. Role of Community Partner**

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We will be working directly with Kitsilano Neighbourhood House for all aspects of the project. Building on past collaborations, since January 2015 we have been working with Catherine Leach, the Executive Director of Kits House, in designing the project. We have incorporated Catherine’s research interests in the design of the survey in particular.

We will also contribute to Kits House capacity building by working with Emily Palmer, Director of Community Programs, to incorporate a Kits House staff member into the project. As outlined in the budget below, we will use part of the funds to support a staff member in developing their research skills through involvement with the survey and/or interview components of the project. This collaboration will be invaluable given the familiarity that staff members already have with the seniors at Kits House.

## **6. Role of Students / Research Assistants and Contributions to Training**

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Co-investigator Katherine Lyon is a PhD candidate in UBC Sociology. She will be carrying out the fieldwork for this research in collaboration with and mentored by Dr. Sean Lauer.

We are also working with Emily Palmer, Kits House Director of Community Programs, to place a student from UBC’s Urban Ethnographic Field School at Kits House for the summer of 2015. With supervision and mentorship from Sean and Katherine, the student will volunteer with a Kits House seniors program and will gain research skills by helping with various project components (such as assisting with surveys).

## **7. Schedule**

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March 2015:	BREB approval granted for participant observation and interviews at KNH
March 15 <sup>th</sup> onward:	Volunteering and Participant Observation at Kits House seniors programs. Continue collaborating with Kits House management
April:	Design interview schedule Design questionnaire and seek ethics approval for survey research.
May:	Make contact with potential interview participants Train Field School student & Kits House staff member
May 18 <sup>th</sup> – June 20 <sup>th</sup> :	Conduct interviews with seniors (17), staff (10-12) and management (5-10) Seek ethics approval for survey component with UBC Research Service Make contact with potential survey participants
June 22 <sup>nd</sup> – August 28 <sup>th</sup> :	Conduct first round of surveys with seniors Transcribe interviews and begin interview analysis. Build maps and macro level analysis with SPARC BC

Sept 7<sup>th</sup> – Nov 13<sup>th</sup>: Analyze survey data and make necessary modifications for second wave  
Prepare interview report and integrate findings with survey research  
June – July 2016: Conduct second wave of surveys with seniors  
Analyze both waves of survey data in relation to interview data  
Sept: Submit findings in a written report to NCRP and KNH

## 8. Outcomes / Deliverables

One or more research briefs will be distributed along with a presentation of the findings for a community audience. One short report will be produced for our community partner, Kits House. At least one academic article will be written.

## 9. Budget Explanation

Katherine Lyon, a PhD candidate in UBC Sociology, will carry out the fieldwork for this research.

**Wave 1:** 15 weeks x 35 hrs x \$28. For the qualitative component, Katherine will draft the interview questions, host one or more informational sessions for potential participants, work closely with residents and staff to schedule and conduct interviews, and coordinate and mentor a team of student transcribers. For the quantitative component, Katherine will draft the well-being questionnaire and adapt it to electronic format in Fluid Surveys, facilitate information sessions with residents about the survey, and host survey completion workshops with iPads available for use. All administrative and data storage responsibilities are included in these hours. Katherine will begin the analysis of interview data in August. In September, Katherine will complete the analysis of interview data and prepare a report integrating results of the interviews and survey data. She will write a Ph.D. thesis informed by this research.

**Wave 2:** 4 weeks x 10 hrs x \$28. Adapt the questionnaire for Wave 2, facilitate information sessions and promote the research with residents, and host survey completion workshops with iPads available for use. All administrative and data storage responsibilities are included in these hours. Katherine will contribute to writing a final report based on the research.

Interview transcription costs have been calculated based on the following: Approx. 35 1.5 hour long interviews (52.5 hours of audio recording). With 1 hour recording taking 5 hours of transcription, we require 262.5 hours of transcription service, at a rate of \$20/hr. We use local student transcribers. Although student transcribers may be less efficient than a formal transcription service, we feel that this limitation is outweighed by the significant benefits students will acquire through hands on mentorship and experience working as a research assistant with the project.

We have allotted \$3,600 for Kits House capacity building through staff involvement. These funds will be used to support a Kits House staff member in their training to be involved with the project, and for their time spent contributing to the project in a research and administrative capacity. A portion of these funds will also be allocated for Kits House to purchase \$5.00 gift cards from a vendor that they have an established relationship with. These gift cards will be given to participants to thank them for their time and contribution to the project.

UBC Social Work is donating in-kind the use of their research tablets (\$3000) through which we can administer the questionnaire. Some seniors may be resistant to using the tablets so we will also need use print questionnaires. We estimate a total cost of \$1000 for contacting respondents, printing questionnaires, and programming the digital questionnaire.

Two in-kind contributions: 1) Kits House will contribute the use of their rental rooms (\$50/hour) for conducting the project info session (1.5 hours), the interviews (70 hours including set up and wrap up), and the survey help sessions (4 hours) for a total of \$3775. SPARC BC and United Way BC will contribute the labor for macro analysis and building four different maps (\$2000).

☐ Sent to the NCRP's Research Advisory Board for comment: date June 2015 deadline: \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ Funding approved by the NCRP's Board: \$ \$25,670 date June 2015

*4 Dail Halchanski*

## SSHRC Budget Worksheet

	Amount requested from NCRP	Contributions (In-Kind / Cash)	Contribution source	Total Project Cost
<b>Personnel costs</b>				
<b>Student salaries and benefits/Stipends</b>				
Undergraduate *				
Masters *				
Doctorate *	14,700 + 1,120 = 15,820			
<b>Non-student salaries and benefits/Stipends</b>				
Postdoctoral				
Other				
<b>Travel and subsistence costs</b>				
<b>Applicant/Team member(s)</b>				
Canadian travel				
Foreign travel				
<b>Students</b>				
Canadian travel				
Foreign travel				
<b>Other expenses</b>				
<b>Non-disposable equipment</b> (specify)				
<b>Professional / technical services</b> (specify: includes partner staff time contributed to or paid for by project, translation, editing, etc.)				
Interview transcription	5,250			
Kits House capacity building through staff training and research involvement	3,600			
<b>Other expenses</b> (specify: includes honoraria, data purchase, field costs, printing, supplies, etc.)				
IPad Survey Tool Programming and/or survey printing	1,000			
Macro level of analysis and Map building		2000 in kind	SPARC BC and United Way BC	
IPad Survey Tool		3,000 in kind	UBC Social Work	
Rooms rental for conducting interviews, and holding introductory and survey help sessions		3,775 in kind	Kits House	
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$25,670</b>	<b>\$8,775</b>		<b>\$34,445</b>

\* Please indicate hourly rates for students and estimated number of students: 1 PhD student at \$28/hr

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