


HOW TO
INFLUENCE
DECISION-
MAKERS



By

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For

Urban Safety and Women
Surrey, British Columbia
March, 1994

This report was funded by a grant from
The Department of the Secretary of State of Canada



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Urban Safety and Women would like to recognize those individuals who assisted by participating in an in-depth interview process: Gay Allingham, Jean Brown, Cynthia Davis, Mavis Dumont, Pat Gilchrist, Sharon Goldberg, Penny Handford, Kathy Hill, Judy Kilcup, Walter Lidster, Beth Nielsen, Diane Phillips.

The author extends gratitude to the interviewees, and to the many other people who provided help with the research and preparation of this report. To name just a few: Wendy Boyle, Susan Broadfoot, Dr. Barbara Crisp, Lorna Dysart, Diana Ellis, K.C. Gilroy, Paul Griffin, Kim Heatherington, Linda Hepner, Judy Higginbotham, Mike Ingles, Tami Lundy, Pat Nathan, Beth Nielsen, Patti Pearcey, Diane Phillips, Deb Pryor, Sandi Schenstead, Sergeant Garry Wade, Donna Weatherson, Cathy Welch, Alex Wirszilas, Gem Wirszilas, Eva Zitka.

A special thank you to USAW's Chairperson, Patreece Starr, for her dedication to the vision of a community that is safe for women and children.

Thanks to Violette Clark, who provided the cartoons used on the title pages, and to Caitlin, Scott, and Aaron Gilroy, who created the flow chart.

Organizing the information for *How To Influence Decision-Makers* was a monumental task and it would never have been finished without Margaret Fogg, who helped the author bring this project to life in a way which was empowering and useful. Thanks, Margaret.

How To Influence Decision-Makers was made possible with funding from the Department of the Secretary of State. Thank you to Marjorie Schurman, Program Officer, for her guidance and encouragement.

DEDICATION

How To Influence Decision-Makers is dedicated to the memory of Mary Ozolins, who was Vice Chairperson of Urban Safety and Women who passed away on August 31, 1993.

The following is from a eulogy for Mary Ozolins, presented by her dear friend, Samantha Camp.

These are Mary's words: "I'm a little colour deaf. I don't say it. I don't hear it. And I don't allow it."

This was Mary's touchstone for longer than I've known her. To Mary, colour was not necessarily the hue of a person's skin. It was any act of discrimination toward those who could not or would not protect themselves. As she said, "I am working for my granddaughter and for all children to come."

Mary was a strong advocate for those who needed to be heard. She spoke out for human concerns and needs. When citizens had their own voice, she made sure they were heard. When they had difficulty in speaking, she provided help. When they had no opportunity to speak for themselves, she spoke on their behalf.

Mary was an excellent example of someone who successfully applied her skills toward influencing decision-makers. She was able to bring together many different people of the Surrey community, and link them to provincial and national politics.

On behalf of Urban Safety and Women, we would like to acknowledge the Mary's commitment and contribution. She is dearly missed by USAW members.

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INTRODUCTION

How to Influence Decision-Makers is an extension of the work of **Urban Safety and Women (USAW)**, formed in Surrey in 1989. USAW is a community coalition of service organizations, residents, professional and business groups, and it has a Surrey RCMP liaison. USAW researches, from a women's perspective, crime and fear of victimization, and stress generated by an unsafe physical environment.

In USAW's work to improve urban safety for women in the City of Surrey, influencing decision-makers was found to be a critical component of achieving positive change. It was felt the combined learning of USAW and other community members who had been successful influencing decision-makers, would be a valuable community resource. Thus, the **How To Influence Decision-Makers** project was initiated.

This report is based upon information USAW obtained from people who are involved in ongoing work in the community: people who know how to ask for what they want, people who have vision, and people who have carried through with a project.

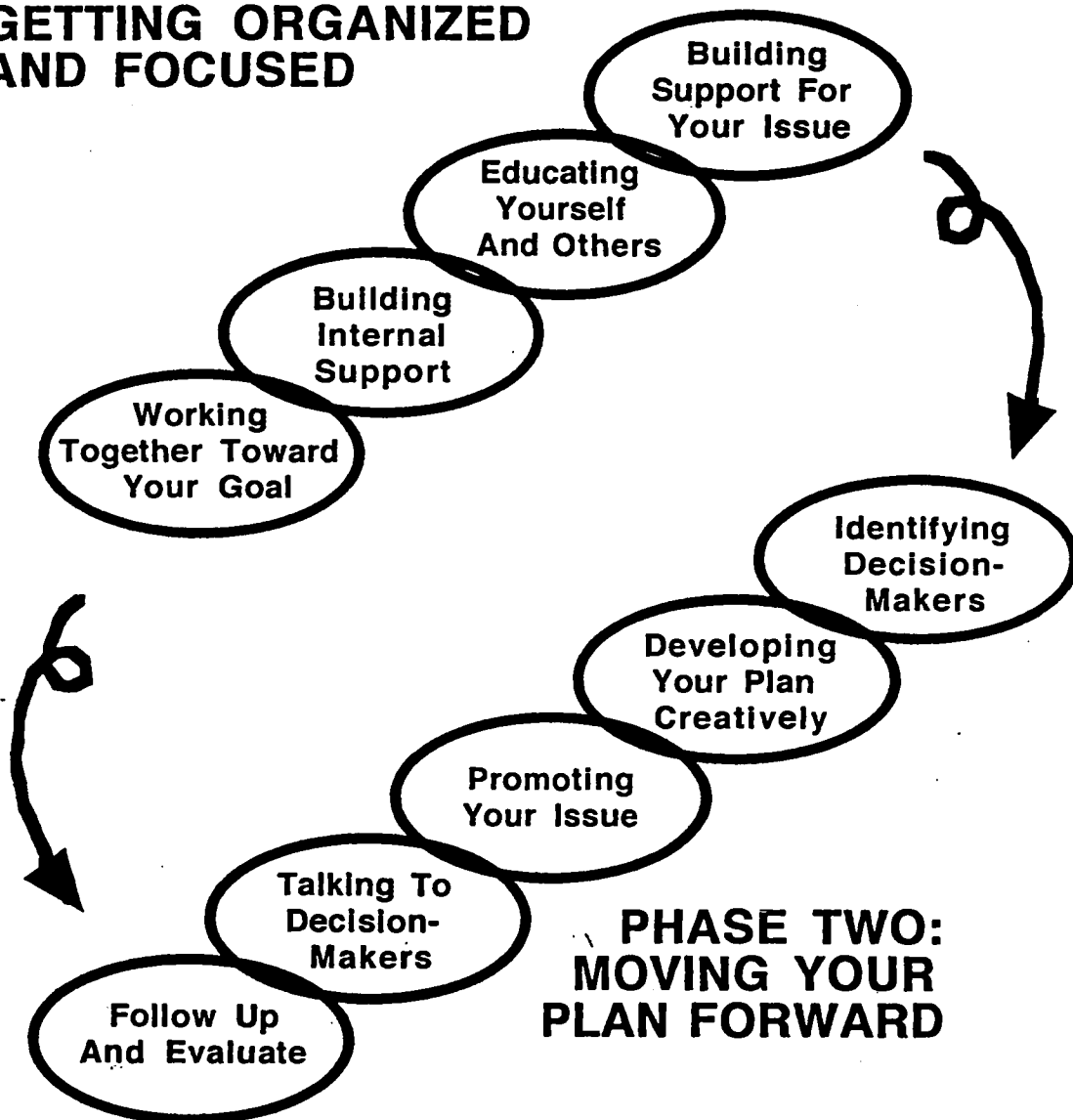
The interviewees (listed in Acknowledgments) were asked to concentrate on a time during the past when they successfully influenced a decision-maker. In this report, you will find direct quotes from them, which appear indented and in italics. While no two situations are exactly alike, it is possible to learn from the experiences of others.

How To Influence Decision-Makers is presented in two interconnected phases. **Phase One: Getting Organized and Focused** moves you from identifying the issue to gaining support and building a working group. **Phase Two: Moving Your Plan Forward** gives you tips on how to identify and talk to decision-makers, and helps you present your ideas in a way that will convince a decision-maker to consider the priorities of your group.

You can start at the phase appropriate to the status of your issue. The computer graphic on the following page shows that influencing decision-makers is not a linear, but an evolving process. You may be at one or several stages simultaneously.

HOW TO INFLUENCE DECISION-MAKERS

PHASE ONE: GETTING ORGANIZED AND FOCUSED



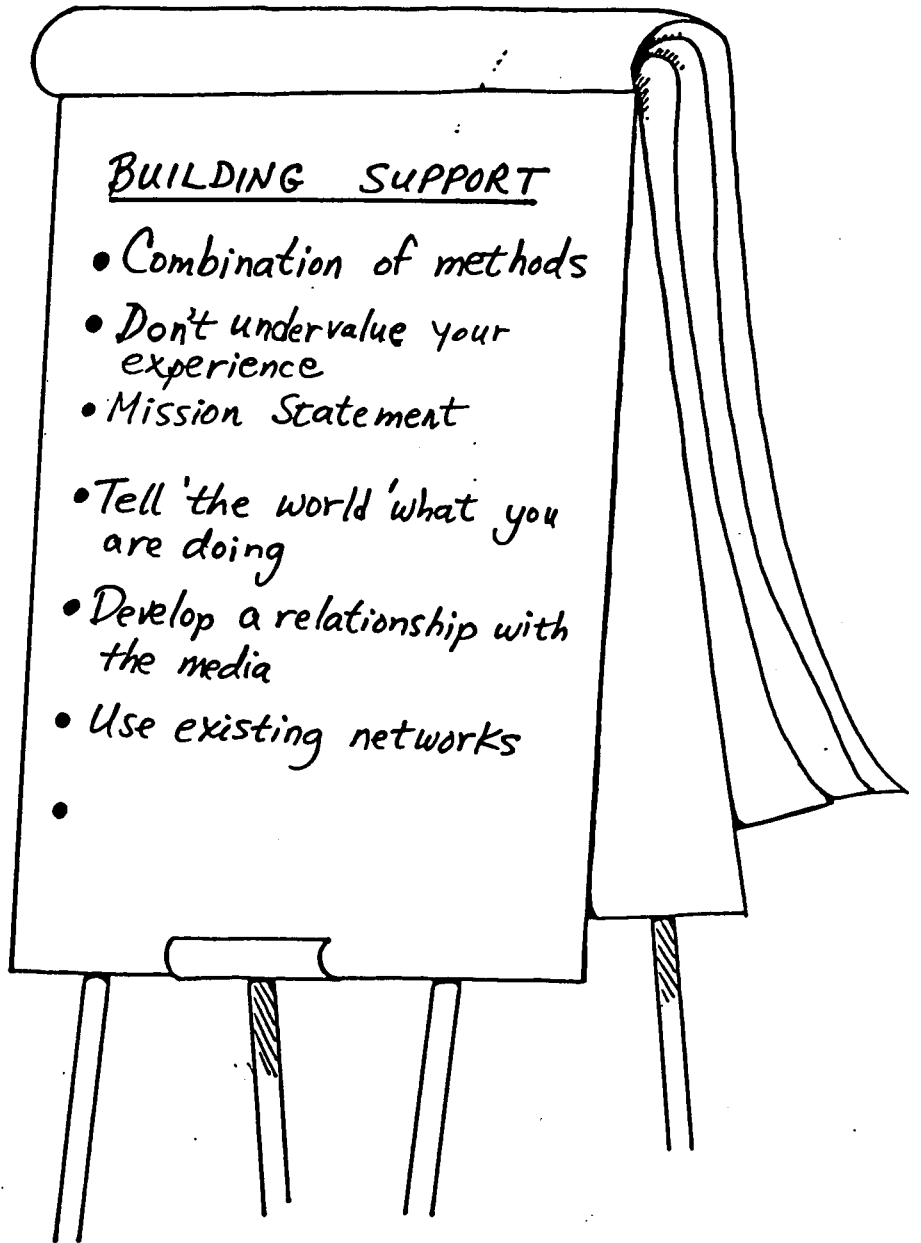
PHASE ONE:

GETTING

ORGANIZED

AND

FOCUSED



BUILDING SUPPORT

- Combination of methods
- Don't undervalue your experience
- Mission Statement
- Tell 'the world' what you are doing
- Develop a relationship with the media
- Use existing networks
-

BUILDING SUPPORT FOR YOUR ISSUE

A COMBINATION OF METHODS IS REQUIRED

No single method of building support for an issue is likely to be sufficient on its own. A combination is usually required:

- Discuss the issue with friends.
- Reach out to others who you think might share your interest or be affected by the issue.
- Draw these people together to a meeting.

When you are at a meeting, if there are even two people who agree with you that there is a lack of service, get together and identify others who will support your cause.

We started by operating as a network of volunteers, using our home telephones to provide information to clients.

It is important not to work in isolation when building a core group around an issue. The greater the support you generate, the greater your potential for influencing a decision-maker.

We used our first funds (from Secretary of State) to hold lobbying workshops in order to educate ourselves, then we took our new found brazenness out into the community.

DON'T UNDERVALUE YOUR EXPERIENCE

You may undervalue your skills and think you do not have the ability to influence someone, but it may be all in how you define your experience. For example, a nurse practitioner may say she has no experience doing *community development*, put off by the terminology. However, she has a host of community contacts, has done problem solving with groups, and knows a lot about the needs of the people around her. Every one of these skills is about *community development*.

You may already have powerful allies. Identify and make contact with organizations and government departments that share your concerns. Work with individuals who may be able to exert influence or keep you informed of developments.

Before we received our funding, we had no sense that decision-makers could turn into real allies for our plans, but it was our Ministry contact who said, "I am available to help you through this process," and gave us information about a new source of funding for grass-roots advocacy.

Ask influential people if you can use their names when trying to get support, or ask if they will write letters of support for you. When you are successful, publicly acknowledge their contribution.

Supporters were on record because of public meetings. We met with a coalition of organizations who supported safety issues, and asked them to show support for us by writing letters.

We did research and found there were 30 agencies and 30 private therapists already working in the area of substance abuse and sexual assault. We used the names of six of these key players, who agreed further service was needed, and then "influence peddled" by dropping these six names when calling others for support.

MISSION STATEMENT

How do you know if you have found your voice? One clue is if your group can get clear enough about why it exists to agree on a mission statement. To begin, you may find it useful to list the verbs and other words that describe what your program does. In the end, you should have one sentence, two at the most, outlining why your groups exists, who it serves, and what it does that is unique.

TELL THE WORLD WHAT YOU ARE DOING

Informing people about your concern is a key element in developing a climate supportive of your group's goals.

The Surrey Teachers' Status of Women Committee postered 87 schools in the area to see how much interest there was in attending a video showing of "Not A Love Story." We invited teachers, Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) members, who are support staff (We believed strongly in having good relations and working with them), and the public. Six months later, the provincial association bolstered a picket line that was up around Red Hot Video. Our members were invited to join their line on a particular day.

You can build awareness of, and support for, your issue by holding conferences, public meetings, or workshops. Through these initiatives you encourage the support and input of the public.

We held a conference on the subject of family violence, elder abuse, the effects of residential schools and sexual abuse, reasons why men batter, the effects of society on the native population and why natives are having difficult times, etc. We invited staff from all the Ministry offices, Victim Services, anyone involved in dealing with trauma-related situations. We then exchanged ideas. The Surrey Fire Department was very supportive because, since they often get called before the ambulance, many times they walk into a situation where they are unprepared to see the effects of battering and elder abuse.

Public meetings are designed to present issues, to hear different points of view, or to give information. However, they can take time and cost money to organize, and they can raise the public's expectations for action. You should be prepared to deal with these raised expectations. The meetings are often mistaken as an end in themselves. They are really just the beginning of a public education process.

There was a wasteland provincially. There was no Minister of Women's Equality, so we applied to the federal government and used the first money from them for education. We ran workshops, held public meetings on women and poverty, and co-sponsored events with End Legislated Poverty.

Workshops engage participants in a more intense discussion of the issue and problem-solving. They may also involve reviewing information or plans, or developing a specific skill.

We sponsored and co-sponsored six workshops. Some of the skills explored were: communication, assertiveness and self-esteem, skills and information for the client to incorporate into daily life. Over 150 people came and showed an interest in becoming more informed. Some of them went on to be self-advocates.

DEVELOP A RELATIONSHIP WITH THE MEDIA

Your group should discuss when you want the media involved. Media coverage can be useful at many stages: publicity, initial community attention, public education, intervention at a crisis point, or acknowledgement.

Developing a good working relationship with members of the media is a crucial part of any serious attempt at raising public awareness of your issue and creating support for political change. Publicity via local newspapers, radio, or cable television helps to educate a wider audience on the benefits of your issue and the importance of your goals.

Media attention can draw participation and support for the issue from those people who might otherwise not have become involved. This publicity can lead to including a wider array of people in the project as it progresses. One attempt to accomplish this had an unexpected result:

Don't be afraid to state your needs and take advantage. Be an opportunist. For example, when The Leader gave us a one-page spread, our purpose was to appeal for volunteers. What happened was that we recruited a few new volunteers, and many more clients who needed our assistance. We were swamped with people having problems with the system. The media coverage and the resulting increased client load helped us demonstrate our urgent need for core funding.

Relationships with individuals in the media are like any other relationships. They take ongoing work and energy. You could also network with established community groups, requesting names of local media who may be receptive to your cause.

Knowing who to trust and how much to disclose is a process of trial and error. When you bare all, you might be quoted if your story is exciting or newsworthy. You should be careful to specify when certain things you are saying are *off the record*.

Clarify what kind of media attention will help your cause. For example, USAW has to consider whether media reports on violence are not just seen as entertainment.

Media violence differs from real-life violence in fundamental ways. First, there is much more of it, and second, it reaches many, many more people. Media preoccupation with violent acts and their perpetrators creates public fear that actual violence is

*everywhere, that it is unavoidable and overwhelming. By the time children leave elementary school, they will have witnessed 8,000 murders and more than 100,000 other acts of violence (From the article, *Images of Violence and Children* in Teacher, Newsmagazine of the B.C. Teachers' Federation, May/June 1993, Volume 5, No.7).*

When sensationalism is removed, what image is there for crime prevention? Crime prevention stories do not have the same drama, nor is it as easy to report on as violence. It is up to groups like USAW to participate and strategize with the media to come up with the stories they want told. You need to assist in creating your own media news.

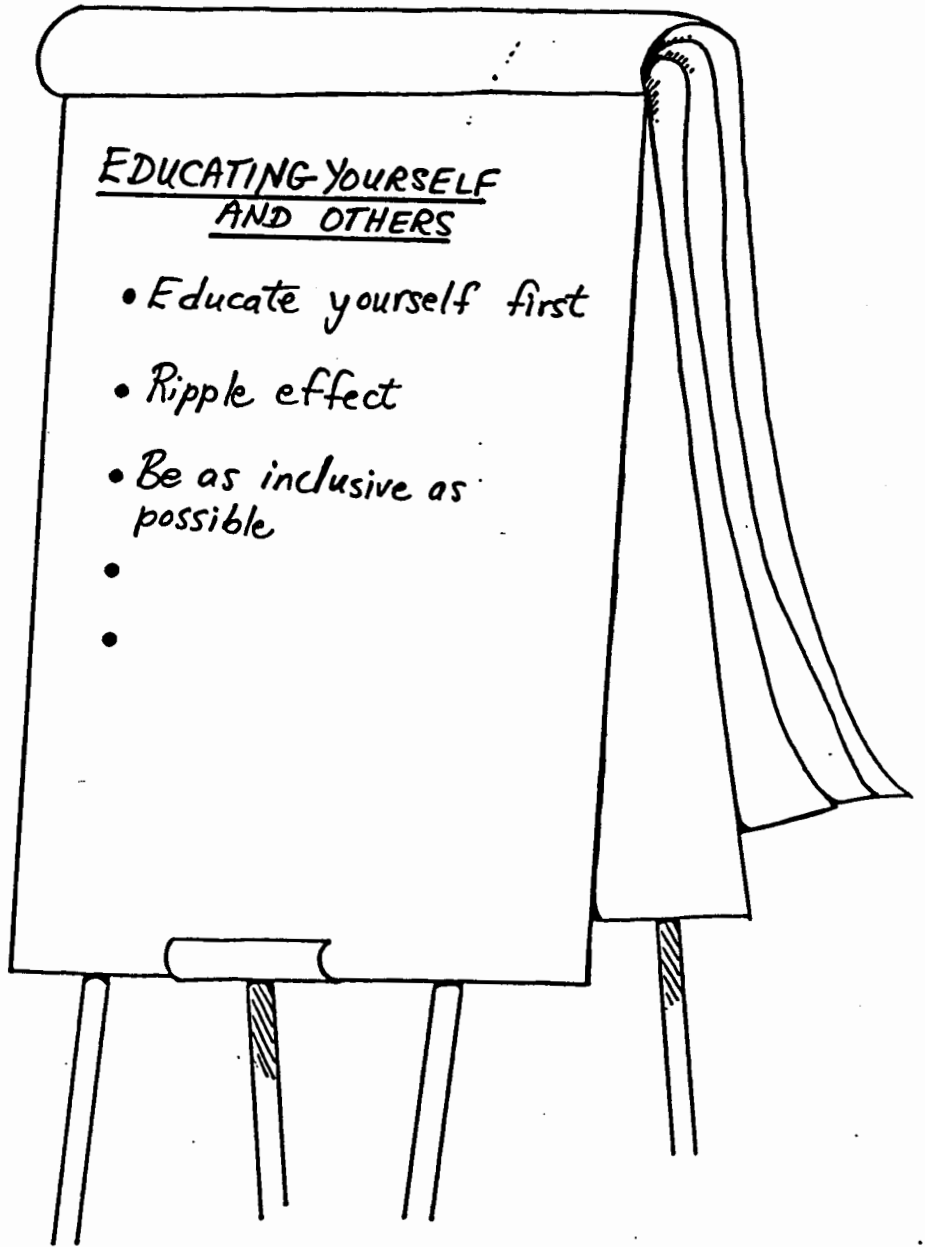
The Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women has published a comprehensive guide called *Sharing the Power*. It includes tips on how to work with the press and how to work with electronic media. For a copy, write them at 63 Spark Street, Box 1541, Station B, Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5R5.

USE EXISTING NETWORKS

Groups can use existing networks and public gatherings to make announcements and presentations about their issue. Find out where or when an activity is scheduled that seems to have a common goal or message.

I found networking invaluable in finding out what was actually going on in the community and what was being planned. The more I became aware of issues, the easier it was for me to find the meetings addressing them.

Surrey Community Services keeps a bulletin board for their staff, listing all community meetings taking place in the area they serve. This is to ensure that their own managers and staff are able to represent the society at relevant meetings, but it also operates as a clearing house for information about other meetings. You can reach them at 594-5811 for referrals and information.



EDUCATING YOURSELF
AND OTHERS

- Educate yourself first
- Ripple effect
- Be as inclusive as possible
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-

EDUCATING YOURSELF AND OTHERS

EDUCATE YOURSELF FIRST

As you participate in a public education process, your own vision might change or expand. Ideas may be added to your original framework, making it more relevant.

Collect all the studies, reports, newsletters, and press releases currently available on the issues that concern you. Clip relevant newspaper articles and keep a file. Communicate with other individuals and groups working on similar issues.

Call and get on the mailing list of appropriate government departments. Identify and use government systems at all levels which are sympathetic to your group. Send them briefs; write them letters; ask for information. Part of your job is to educate these people.

Study your own community. Conduct research, formally or informally, that looks at the lives and problems of the women in your community. Document your results. Use them to help determine what needs to be changed in the present situation and what needs to be included in future development plans.

EDUCATION HAS A RIPPLE OR SPREADING EFFECT

If you put up posters, for example, some people will just look at them. Some will attend your educational sessions. Some of these people will go out and involve others in post-session discussions. This can result in increased awareness and behavioral changes in a wider population.

Public education can be used as a way to influence many people, from government decision-makers, to parents and teachers who make both public and private decisions. In the case of USAW, education can give community members a deeper understanding of violence against women as a social issue with a major impact.

Education is a long-term process.

In our initial contact with Ministry staff, it took determined effort on the part of our advocacy network to remain client-centered and non-adversarial. Gradually, we were perceived as less threatening. Once we had built some positive rapport, we arranged to meet with the Ministry staff at each office. We are committed to educating staff and building relationships with them day to day.

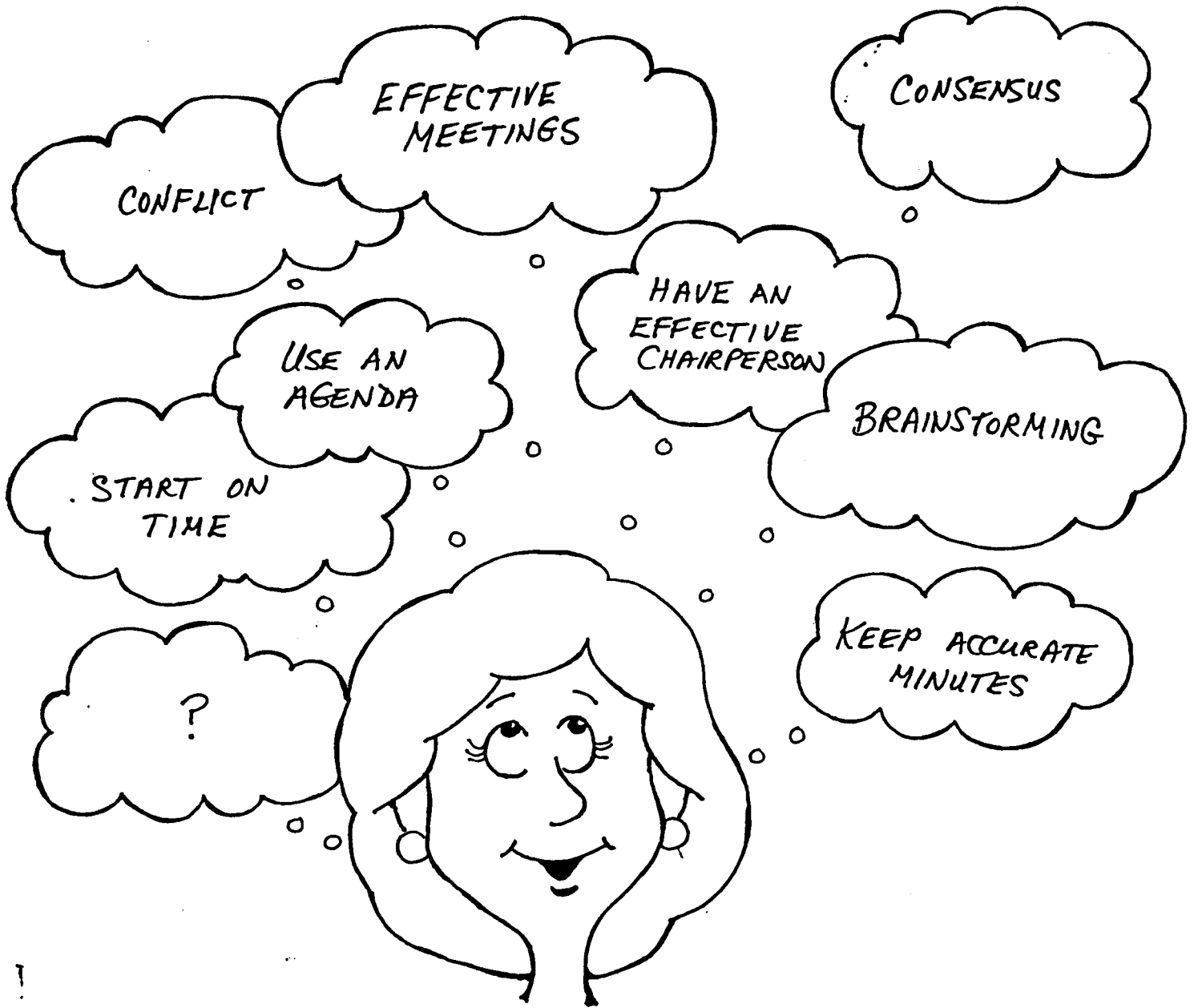
BE AS INCLUSIVE AS POSSIBLE

You cannot reach all of the community all of the time. Of course you want everybody affected by your issue to be represented. Unfortunately, in some cases, this can be such a huge task, it holds up the process of starting action. Make an effort to reach out and be inclusive, then let a reasonable time period pass. If you still have not included everybody, but have a clear goal and a solid core of supporters, start moving forward.

I have an office in an elementary school. I work with staff, parents, and a parent board advisory committee called the Holly Community School Society, a non-profit society involved in fundraising. These are parents and consumers, school counsellors, staff, and friends. They know what is needed. This is a huge collaborative effort. We identify the gaps in services and they raise the funds. I also serve as an educator to other service providers on what can work, and on the process of community development.

We gather information on all cultures, to better serve the women in our community. For example, Indo-Canadian women are discouraged by their culture from asking for outside help. We assist these women by hiring a counsellor who is culturally sensitive to their needs.

You need to work with women of different ethno-cultural backgrounds. Otherwise, you become ethno-centric (In an ethno-centric community, individuals believe that the only issues needing to be dealt with are those of their own ethnic group).



BUILDING INTERNAL SUPPORT

CONFLICT

All groups have conflict. It is not a sign of a group's failure, but a necessary and potentially healthy aspect of its growth. By discussing differing opinions, needs can be balanced, changes can be made, and new directions forged. Conflict can help each person in the group become more aware of their own needs and priorities.

Creative conflicts often surface in groups in times of transition. When the group is confused or uncertain about its primary purpose, or when that purpose is changing, people may be pulled toward different goals.

Most important is finding your voice and speaking consistently. If you have not found your voice and are not grounded in what you are saying, you may end up doing tasks that others want you to do, but that are irrelevant to your goals.

BRAINSTORMING

The idea behind brainstorming is to generate new ideas and not to immediately come up with a perfect answer or workable solution. The basic rules are:

- Every idea is a good idea.
- It is okay to *piggyback*, to take someone else's idea and continue the thought.
- It is okay to *freewheel*, to expand in any direction.
- Be wild and crazy. Form new associations.

One person is designated as a recorder. All ideas are recorded as stated. No comments or judgments of others' ideas are made during the actual brainstorming. At the end, the resulting list is looked at by everybody and examined for possible useful ideas.

CONSENSUS

Consensus is a decision making and group working process. It is a way to determine a course of action. Consensus as a tool can be used or abused. Problems can arise with consensus, because groups often do not clearly understand it.

The stronger a group is as an entity in itself, the better consensus works. Starhawk, in her book *Truth or Dare*, says:

People either love or hate consensus. I have seen large groups run entirely on consensus in which each member felt empowered by the process, and I have seen consensus meetings become long, boring, frustrating, and nasty, and the process used to keep a group from wrestling with real conflicts or moving forward with controversial actions.

When using consensus, a topic or issue is discussed by a group, and the opinion of everyone is sought. Eventually, someone suggests a plan of action. People are asked to state their concerns. The plan is gradually modified until everyone agrees that it best meets the needs of the group. This means consensus has been reached. The resulting plan should be formally stated or written down. Otherwise, people tend to forget their agreements.

When consensus works well, it is a creative process. The group examines all facets of an issue, without becoming polarized into opposing positions. Aspects of an idea that one person might miss are seen by others. Proposals draw together previous discussion, and then are further refined until the best possible plan is made.

Of course, people do not always reach total agreement. Individuals may express reservations or not participate. An individual who has a strong objection can actually block the group from carrying out a plan.

There may be situations in which consensus is not always the most effective or appropriate process to use:

- When your group is first forming and still needs to be drawn together into a cohesive group.
- When there are no good choices.
- When the group has insufficient information.
- When opinions are so extreme that there is no middle ground.
- In emergencies or situations where urgent and immediate action is necessary, appointing a temporary leader may be the wisest course of action.
- When the issue is trivial--a group could devote half an hour to trying to decide by consensus whether to spend forty minutes or a full hour at lunch. Remember, consensus is a *thinking* process. When there is nothing to think about, flip a coin.

EFFECTIVE MEETINGS

The key ingredients when working with a group are interest, patience, and perseverance.

If you've never worked with a group before, it's not always a pretty sight. People sometimes walk away saying, "We talked for two hours and never accomplished anything, except setting another meeting date." "People did not hear those who spoke before them, and discussed the same thing over and over."

If this sounds familiar, it is time to change your approach. You want people to leave your meetings saying, "Wow! We really accomplished a lot."

- **HAVE AN EFFECTIVE CHAIRPERSON**

The number one key to keeping group members coming back is to have an effective chairperson.

The practice of having a co-chair or rotating chairperson, popular because it is seen as inclusive, can have both positive and negative consequences. You may get so caught up in adjusting to different styles, your meeting is over before anything is accomplished. Some committee members may have more skills than others in leading your group.

While your group is forming, it is essential to use the skills of your members wisely. When you have a chairperson who is able to manage conflict, then feedback and comments are more actively encouraged.

• USE AN AGENDA

An agenda should be typed and distributed to all members prior to your meeting. Although the chairperson is responsible for setting the agenda, other committee members may contribute by forwarding items for possible inclusion. This will ensure that you meet for a specific purpose and not just because "It is the second Tuesday of the month and we always meet then."

The agenda assigns responsibility for different parts of the meeting. It may list the time that will be devoted to each item, and it is usually accompanied by copies of any material that will be discussed.

• START ON TIME

Always start on time. When meetings consistently start late, it is disrespectful to the members who are there on time, and it gives members the message that it does not matter what time they arrive. There is only one way to solve this problem. Agree on a time that works for the majority of your members, and begin promptly.

• KEEP ACCURATE MINUTES

Keep accurate minutes. A formal set of minutes is important and documents the history of your group. Minutes can be useful if you apply for funding, or to clarify group decisions. They may be used as a recruiting tool for new members. Reviewing previous minutes at the beginning of each meeting updates those who were absent and helps ensure accuracy.

If finding a minute-taker is becoming difficult, have a group discussion about possible reasons and solutions. It may be that you need to institute the practice of formally stating a motion and having it seconded prior to discussion. This makes it clear to everyone exactly what is being discussed, and clear to the minute-taker what needs to be recorded.

→ End your meeting with a summary of agreed-upon actions. Specify who is to do what and when. Record this in the minutes.

Consistent minute-taking is a process that can assist your group in maintaining its focus. Many resources are available for those unclear about formal meeting structure. Your local library has information on different meeting formats, including *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised*.



**WORKING TOGETHER
TOWARD YOUR GOAL**

WHAT IS YOUR LEVEL OF COMMITMENT?

It is essential to clarify the level of your group's commitment. You have to make sure your group really has the commitment and ability to reach its goals and that you are all in agreement. Do not say we when it is really I.

Make sure you have done your homework within your own group. When our committee made a decision on a contentious issue, we encountered some opposition from others outside our group. This caused us to look again at our original decision and develop a much deeper understanding and respect for our issue.

Check that other group members agree with what you say. Is there room for varying levels of support? Ask them, "Are you prepared to declare your support if this is challenged?"

I have a superb working relationship with my co-workers. When we get a hot issue and the first brush is, "This doesn't fit the government's priorities," we work together to strategize. "Which piece might they go for? How can we market it?" If our reaction is, "Don't touch it. It's no win," we file it away to look at another day. We don't give up on it, if we believe in it.

HOW CAN YOU MAXIMIZE CONTRIBUTION?

Work to develop an internal structure which will allow for the full and best use of your members' energies and skills. The single most helpful thing toward accomplishing effective teamwork is to choose a project consistent with the values of your group.

Some members will happily commit many hours of involvement. Others will choose not to be involved in activities that demand a lot of their time, but they will still want to have a say. Tami Lundy, in a June, 1992, Draft Report from the Community Health Councils, talks about how we can try to maximize the contribution of all members.

Lundy says one approach is to ensure a variety of opportunities for involvement. She calls this a *continuum of participation*. It includes thinking about both time and intensity of involvement.

Time--Can you provide opportunities for *one time only* participation? Perhaps someone would like to attend a community workshop, have her say, and leave the decision to others. Is there a choice to get involved in as many activities as someone likes? Are the entry points clear? Does someone have to get involved at the beginning, or can she join a committee that has been active for six months?

Intensity of Involvement--Can someone choose the level of participation that feels comfortable? For example, contribute by attending a focus group that addresses one specific aspect of the issue.

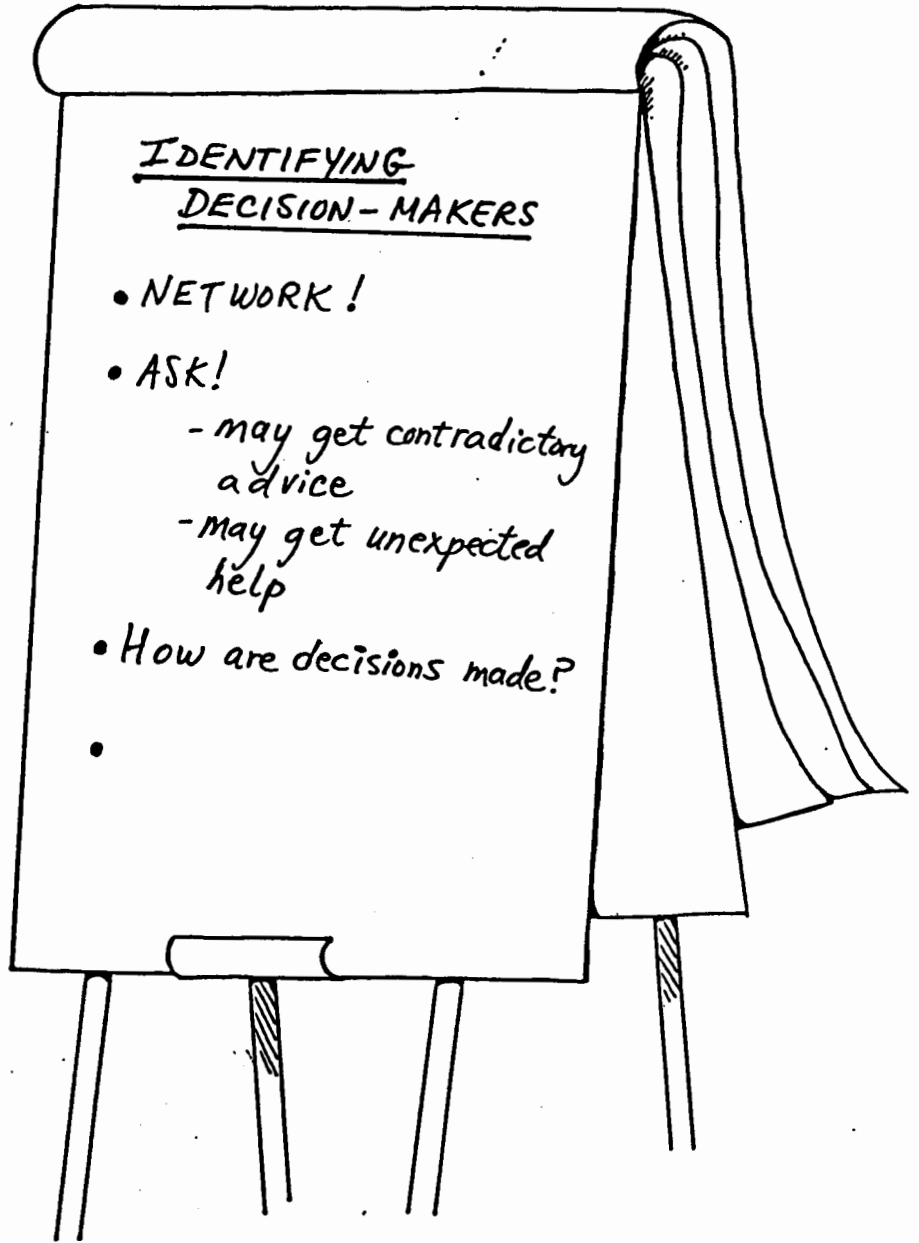
Remember also the *continuum of learning*. People who are action-oriented only need a package of seeds and they will start planting a garden. Ideas-oriented people want to employ a landscaper. Both types are useful and have to work together.

WHO ELSE DO YOU NEED?

Get to know who is in your group and explore each person's strengths, abilities, and availability. Consider who else would be useful to assist with your issue. There may be someone who does not want to commit full time to your organization, but who will act as an advisory member.

There is a point in time when you actually look at your group's composition to increase its credibility. For example, do you need a lawyer? an accountant? These people do not have to become a part of your committee. They could be asked to serve as advisors, or come on board to form an ad hoc committee for the purpose of completing one short-term task, defined by your group.

Gather together the appropriate people to form an advisory committee. Think: "What is the project about, and who needs to give input?" For a project on family violence, we used representatives from corrections, social services, therapists who delivered the kind of service we wanted, and consumers. Assign short term projects to get the program off the ground. The job description of any committee should continually change and move along. A job may be as basic as introducing you to someone else.



IDENTIFYING DECISION-MAKERS

NETWORK!

Networking is one way to identify decision-makers. Formal networks enable people to exchange information, contacts, and experience for professional or social purposes. Everyone you know makes up part of your own personal network.

We had such large personal networks, there was usually someone who knew the right person, or knew who to call. It was exciting to discover the hugeness of our resource network. Our personal, collective experience was vast.

Networking is not done only from your desk. You do it all the time. For example, you might be in a foursome in golf, meet somebody, and get a lead. Follow it through later and present your case.

I have been in the social advocacy area for twenty years. I have a personal knowledge base, and people in my life have incredible networks. I have a philosophy that I don't need to do it alone.

ASK!

Becoming comfortable with learning to ask for information is an important skill. Approach a relevant group and ASK for its organization chart. ASK what are the relevant departments at City Hall that deal with your issue. ASK who's who in the Ministry with which you are dealing. ASK for a staff person to come in and explain the decision-makers' roles and areas of responsibility. Demystify the hierarchical structure.

Politicking is an art form. I asked people, "Who have you talked to? Have you ever had this experience? Do you have any suggestions for me?" I explained my project and asked, "Any ideas where I can get money?"

Start with the people you can access directly. A useful question, especially if the person you reach has limited time for you, is: "Is there someone else I need to talk to? Who is in the best position to do something about this?"

I researched which women on council were very vocal on women's safety, fears, and realities. I approached one of the councillors to ask, "Who can mobilize the party in power? Who is the person who cares a lot about this issue? Who else might be willing to take on a support role, maybe write a letter?"

We asked our clients who referred them.

You may receive contradictory advice. One person suggested it is not always the people with the title who make the decisions, while another person wanted to go straight to the top. Another person added that the contact you choose needs to be supportive and a decision-maker.

Sometimes it is the assistants who make the decisions. Who are the power brokers? Who are the change-makers? Do not assume that because a certain person has the

title, he is making the decisions without input from others. In some cases, a decision may be based on the depth of advice that a senior official is getting.

I like going straight to the top. I talk to the person who turned me down and say, "Got any ideas for funds?" They always have suggestions, if they believe in the project. If they believe in the project, they can assist you.

The more senior the contact you are going for, the more difficult the process. Sometimes it is useful to develop support from those with lower and mid-influence, who can pass the support up. Let's not start at the top and get kicked down.

Find out who is both sympathetic to your cause and a decision-maker. Sometimes you end up spending a lot of time developing a link with someone, and they turn out to be a "small fish."

You may receive unexpected help. Don't rule out serendipitous events that happen and can lead to quick solutions.

At a meeting where corporate community leaders and social service agencies were gathered to learn how to develop financial planning ability, one agency raised their current need for a leaky roof to be fixed. A corporate person was genuinely interested in replacing the roof, and was prepared to call a meeting with his senior staff and the agency person. Unfortunately, his offer was dismissed by the meeting's facilitator because it did not follow the agenda.

My group had submitted a funding request through the channels advised by the system. Coincidentally, we attended a meeting where the Minister was guest speaker. We complained to him that our group's request was being ignored, and we were referred to his second-in-command, also at the meeting. When the latter was approached, he was unaware of our proposal and he asked where it had been sent. When told, he said, "Don't follow protocol. Send it to me directly." This was done, and the project was funded.

IDENTIFY THE WAY DECISIONS ARE MADE

Knowing how decisions are made internally may give you the edge for getting action on an issue or in some cases, funding approval.

Don't write a letter and wait. Do your research and figure out within whose domain this type of decision falls. I talk to associates, employees, and colleagues at my own level.

Don't use the scatter-gun approach, sending your proposal to five different ministries with your request buried on the second page.

Networking and asking can help you learn how decisions are made in your community.

In some communities (e.g. Victoria), a decision cannot have legitimacy unless it involves the long-time residents, the old families. In others (e.g. Surrey), the power brokers are incredibly numerous. There are natural leaders in every community.



DEVELOPING YOUR PLAN CREATIVELY

ESCAPE THE STATE OF EMERGENCY

Often you do not find out about a proposal or funding deadline until the last minute. Consequently, you may have developed your proposal in a hurry, reacting under pressure rather than doing it thoughtfully.

We made our decisions to fit the money available. We moulded ourselves to fit the funding agency's criteria and timeline, creating our project accordingly. This is not necessarily the best way, but it was our reality.

Is there a way to escape the state of emergency that submitting proposals tends to generate? Sometimes you have to be willing to wait or perhaps you could share resources with another group. Alternately, some groups choose to bite off a small piece first.

Initially, we went to any activity, sat on any Board, that was related to our cause. We worked long hours and got burnt out. So we stopped bandaiding. We started acknowledging we could not do everything, and focused on stating clearly what we could provide and what we couldn't.

Think about how resources might be reallocated. Sometimes groups can share resources, including staff time. For example, half a person-year for each group. Or staff time may be donated by several organizations that agree on one priority. If this is chosen as a course of action, be clear on who is going to lead the group and how the rest will support this.

We thought we could establish credibility by doing a smaller project and doing a really good job, with the plan of designing another project for long-term funding.

Sometimes you can get funding for a basic piece or platform for your program, then later go elsewhere after other money.

Stay open to small amounts of money. \$1000 might be enough to kick off your program and get you clear enough to have brochures printed. Be creative in fundraising and be flexible. If you are truly committed, get rid of your preconceived paper ideas of what your project will look like.

IN AN EMERGENCY

In an emergency, you may have to go ahead and submit a proposal on a crisis timeline. However, be sure to do your homework with your own group, getting everyone on board, even if it is after the fact.

To get a sustained action plan, all of your group have to be involved, not just a few solo performers. Don't just put a name on a funding proposal in order to fill in some blanks (You be the treasurer, fundraiser, whatever). If you have not agreed on your issue and expressed it in common language, your group will come unravelled, no matter how much money you get.

If you honestly cannot tell how long your project will take, guess and admit it. Define the timeline based on your availability. Give yourself an out so, if you are wrong, you can come back and say you were wrong.

ASK SOMEONE WHO KNOWS THE ROUTE

If you know someone who has developed a similar strategy or proposal, you may want to ask them to help you. You can also visit resource people. The Executive Assistant to the Surrey City Manager, provided the following advice:

An individual or a delegation can speak directly to members of City Council, or write a letter to Council in care of the City Clerk's Office. A correspondence task force, comprised of city staff, provides comments to Council within one week, making either a recommendation for further study or commenting on actions already taken. Your correspondence and the staff comments are forwarded to Council at the same time. Both are included in City Council's correspondence each Monday.

Depending on the nature of your issue, it can go one of two routes:

Route A: If the matter is of a practical nature, not requiring policy and practice decisions, it will be referred to the appropriate department for comment.

Route B: If it is of a technical nature, e.g. bicycle paths, it may have to be referred to several departments for comment, and the process could be much longer.

If you can answer some of your own concerns prior to contacting the City Clerk's Office, you can be further ahead. Find the right department for your issue and deal with the Department Head.

In the case of Urban Safety and Women, the appropriate departments included Planning and Development (Policy and Urban Design Division), Engineering (Roads and Transportation), and Parks and Recreation (Recreation Services and Research Planning Design). Ask the Department Heads, "Do you know of any working committees? Who should I be in touch with? Who is the Project Supervisor on this subject?"

There may be an in-house committee in place dealing with your issue. If so, ask to be included in their meetings at the early stages.

Be specific about what results you want, or what your expectations are. It will then be clear which department or group can respond. The resolution of some issues has to include a lot of people. While it sounds cumbersome, it is important to get these groups or individuals together so they can reach a consensual decision.

WRITE THE PROPOSAL

Details on how to write a funding proposal are readily available. Call the funding agency you want to approach. Many have their own guidelines or specific application forms. Some will even offer the assistance of one of their staff to see if your information is complete before the final submission is made.

Your local library and organizations like the United Way can also provide you with pamphlets or books on methods of writing proposals.

THE BASIC ELEMENTS OF AN EFFECTIVE PROPOSAL USUALLY INCLUDE:

Cover letter. Summarize your proposal and include the title of your project.
Table of contents
Information about your group
Statement of the need or problem
Objectives of your project, long and short-term
Describe the proposed project activities, their duration and phasing.
Explain how the project will be evaluated.
Budget, if applicable
Future funding prospects
Appendices. These might include letters of support, a financial statement for your organization, a list of the current members of your Board of Directors, etc.

GATHER SPECIFIC INFORMATION

The specific information to be gathered for your proposal will vary, depending upon your purpose, objectives, and resources. You may need to describe who lives and works in your community, and/or what services are already available.

Local governments and Statistics Canada have available demographic information including income levels, ages, ethnic backgrounds, occupations, and household sizes of families in your community. Local agencies, such as the United Way, social planning councils, community organizations, educational institutions, social service agencies, public health units, and police departments, may also have statistical information you can use.

There are different ways to collect information besides traditional research. If your project has been running for some time, you may be able to use personal testimonials as to the project's value. Another valid method is to interview individuals from your target group. For example, you may gather together women who have been sexually assaulted and ask about their experience. What helped them, and what may have helped them even more? An excellent reference about this method is *Strategies for Change--From Women's Experience To A Plan For Action*, from the Women's Research Centre (Refer to Appendix C for details).

In the Surrey area, there were absolutely no services available to counsel the aboriginal (Metis/Native) women who were victims of violence. The Judith Dumont (Née Parenteau) Metis/Native Women Society was able to prove with testimonials from our own people that we could deliver quality services by aboriginal women to aboriginal women, restoring self-image through using smudging, drumming, and other aboriginal cultural healing methods.

CHOOSE DRAMATIC STATISTICS

Statistics can be helpful to show the urgency of, or rationale for, your issue or funding proposal.

Within a two month period, we had 44 walk-ins and 76 enquiries. The women just kept coming and coming to our centre. We couldn't shut our doors.

Pornography is not a small issue, not something off in a corner. When we did our research, the information astounded us. For example, there is more gross revenue generated from the legal pornography industry than from the gross sales of McDonald's restaurants.

Here are some statistics from the July, 1993, B.C. Ministry of the Attorney General, Draft Document: Community Coordination To Stop Violence Against Women in Relationships: A Framework.

- 60 per cent to 80 per cent of abused women require medical care;
- One out of five visits to emergency medical services by women are the result of wife assault. Injuries include fractures, head and face injuries, internal bleeding, burns, and miscarriage;
- Victims of wife assault are rich or poor, urban or rural, educated or uneducated, and from all cultural backgrounds;
- Women are beaten an average of 35 times before reporting to police; they return an average of six times before leaving the relationship for good.

When there are children living in the home, 80 per cent of them are present during incidents of wife assault. Among the effects of wife assault on children are:

- 75 per cent of men who abuse their wives observed violence against their mothers;
- 36 per cent of men who abuse their wives also abuse children living in the home;
- Children who are exposed to wife assault have the same problems of adjustment as children who are themselves physically abused.

As these facts show, violence against women in relationships is so widespread, and so damaging in its physical, psychological, and social effects, that virtually everyone who works with women, children, and men in a helping capacity deals with potential, current, or past victims and perpetrators of wife assault.

CITE A SIMILAR PROJECT

Sometimes you may be able to cite a similar project that has already worked elsewhere. This may reduce the number of questions about whether your proposal will work.

When the Surrey Memorial Hospital needed to influence decision-makers to fund their Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners' program, they were able to cite a similar successful program at the Health Sciences Centre in Winnipeg. Dr. Urbain Ip, Head of the Department of Emergency Medicine, introduced the concept of the Nurse Examiners' Program to the Surrey community as a pilot project.

DO YOUR HOMEWORK

Do not expect your decision-maker to do your homework. If your request leads to many unanswered questions, it is not going to be favourably looked upon. You have to be clear that your proposal fills a need or gap in service. Be thorough and pro-active. Try to anticipate questions and areas requiring clarification, and be prepared with answers.

Be as accurate as possible with cost estimates for funding proposals. If the funding process is lengthy and time elapses after the submission of your proposal, you may have to communicate how this has affected your costs.

Pay attention to the business-person nature of most committees dealing with money. Be close in terms of your numbers. Don't try to bluff them. Do your homework. For example, on comparable salaries, cite actual figures and names of agencies. Call people and ask for advice. Don't be scared to ask for the information you need.

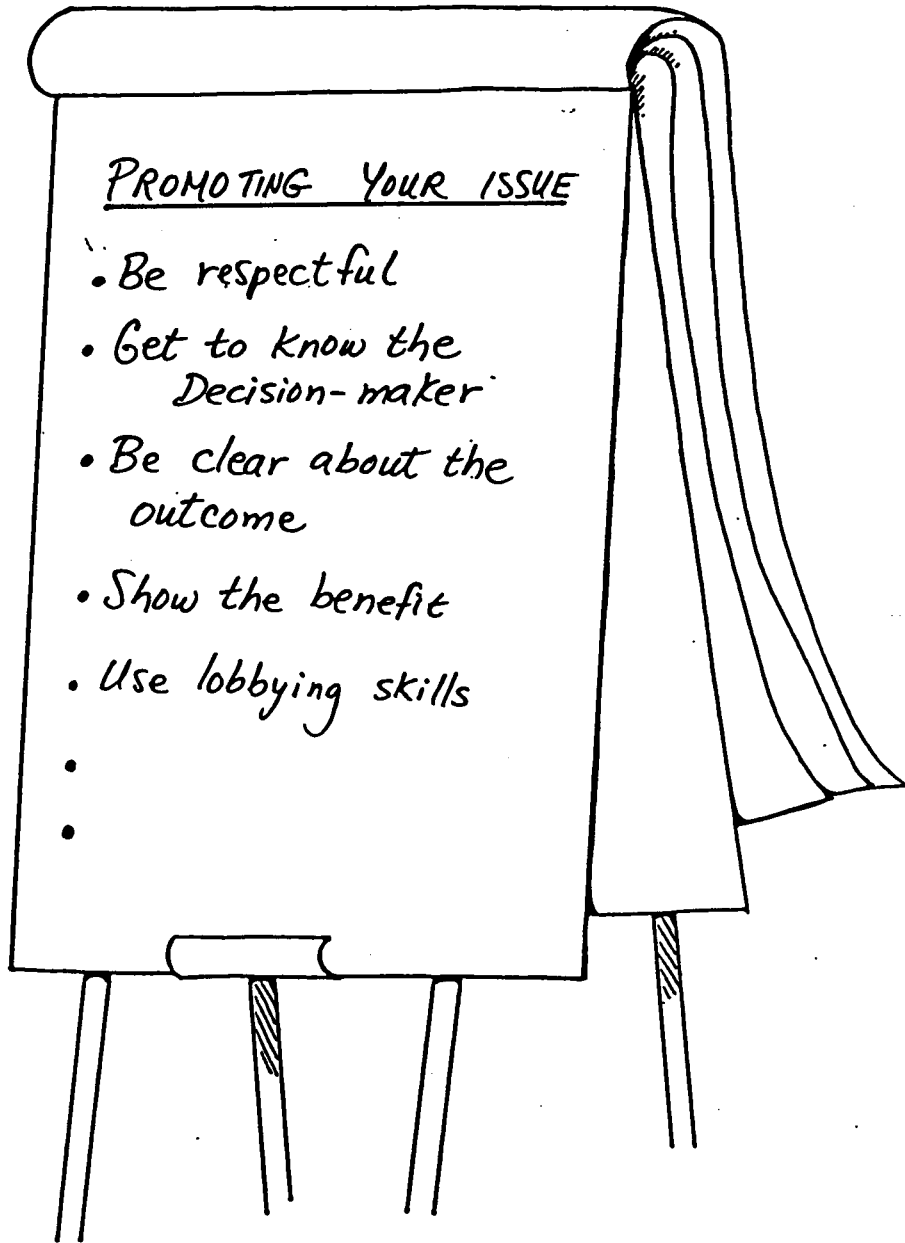
Know who is competing for resources.

Keep in mind the decision-maker's point of view. There is only so much money and there is competition for it. Sometimes if one group is funded, it means another goes "unfunded" or that funds get realigned.

The Surrey Women's Centre Society is now part of the Women's Caucus: "We don't ask for funding as individual groups. We get a consensus decision on specific issues or services that compete for government funding, and make recommendations about how the money that is available from the funders should be spent."

Keep records and copies of documents in case you need to give proof of what you have done. Prevent the scenario of having to say to a funder, "I don't know anything about that. It was done by somebody before me."

You should be able to document the history of your group from minutes, correspondence, etc. Be sure that you are able to show a clear rationale for the course of action you have chosen. You must show this is a good way to proceed.



PROMOTING YOUR ISSUE

- Be respectful
- Get to know the Decision-maker
- Be clear about the outcome
- Show the benefit
- Use lobbying skills
-
-

PROMOTING YOUR ISSUE

BE RESPECTFUL

You need to believe that by electing politicians and paying taxes, combined with having a commitment to your community's needs, you have the right to be heard. At the same time, when you are trying to get an appointment with a decision-maker, be respectful and realistic about the time they have available.

Recognize their busy-ness. Be respectful. If you go in with an attitude (e.g. "I'm a volunteer and you're a paid bureaucrat, and you owe me"), You may hammer your way in once, but you have not paved the way for future relations and effectiveness.

What if you do not get the appointment you request, if you are told, "Mr. X is too busy, never meets with groups"? One strategy is to solicit the help of a colleague or an employee of the decision-maker to help you get an appointment. Another strategy is called five minutes, two specific questions. Before calling, prepare two questions which would most assist you in moving forward. If you are told you cannot have an appointment, then say, "I have two questions. I need five minutes," and wait for a response.

GET TO KNOW DECISION-MAKERS

Some groups have the privilege of knowing the decision-maker with whom they will be dealing, or the opportunity to gain useful insight.

We knew who had pet causes, and we prepared our information so that it was tailored to the whole audience. "This part will influence Mr. X, this part, Ms. Y."

Find a scenario that is relevant to them and touches them. It can be something as basic as, "How would you feel if your wife, daughter, or son...?"

If you can, find someone who is familiar with relevant policies and who can give you information to support your request.

I did reading and research on the decision-makers' backgrounds. I thought about what objections they might have, and built arguments to counter them and to sell my rationale. I thought about how they had made decisions in the past. Who had they listened to? I went to two people who had successfully convinced them and asked what had worked for them and what had not. Because I am constantly working with new Deputy and Assistant Deputy Ministers, this is important for me to do.

I chose the meeting where I presented my proposal, so the meeting's agenda did not conflict with my purpose. I had my proposal placed on the agenda just before the break. I selected the audience who would be around the table, keeping in mind the chemistry of the people. Some people are talkers, some leaders. Then there are the people who express what the group is really thinking.

BE CLEAR ABOUT THE OUTCOME YOU WANT

Before attending a meeting with a decision-maker, have a pre-meeting strategy session. Most group members will attend action meetings, but fewer members may be interested in strategy sessions. If this means the only time available for a pre-meeting strategy session is immediately preceding the meeting, do it then. You must be clear about the outcome you want before you ever meet with a decision-maker.

Have a fall-back position. I always have three options in a decision: I have a position, a fall-back, and another fall-back.

I met with the City Manager to remind him of my concerns and to outline my strategy. I also met individually with councillors to solicit their support and to specify what I needed them to do. I let them know I was starting to push for recommendations in the Task Force Report to actually be implemented. City Council adopting the report was not enough.

You have to have a blueprint. But, you may not follow your plan exactly because it may change to fit new developments and information. For example, the move to establish a women's centre in Surrey started in 1988 as Surrey Women For Action (SWFA). The Surrey Women's Centre Society was formed in 1991 to make funding applications toward that goal. The funds we received were not for core funding, but specifically for counselling to provide support to women who have been sexually assaulted, including helping them through the justice process. We have gone on a huge detour, but we have not really lost our focus.

SHOW THE BENEFIT

Decision-makers have to see that the action you are seeking is beneficial to their work or to the people they serve. People promoting a cause need to be opportunists.

Show how this particular decision fits into a long-term plan. If you can, show that the decision would be compatible with a Ministry's goals and important to them as bureaucrats. You need to speak about the positive and negative impacts their decision, or lack of decision, might have.

What are the interests and priorities of the funder? Be able to agree to make the funders look good. For example, mention them favourably in the material you publish. Give funders the sense that the project will save money. For example, if funding is given for counselling, clients will not proceed to hospitals or the jail system.

In dealing with elected officials, remember their base motivation. They want credit, if they can get it. They want to stay out of trouble, to avoid criticism, to advance themselves, and to get re-elected.

SOME INFORMATION ABOUT LOBBYING

Lobbying is an effective way to convince decision-makers

A lobby is an organized attempt by members of a group to influence decision-makers. It is a slow process in which friendly, business-like persistence appears to be the most important virtue. It can be either long or short-term. Often it is good to plan a long-term strategy, such as: "First we'll visit, then we'll write, then we'll do a media story, then we'll visit again."

One lobby technique is presenting a brief

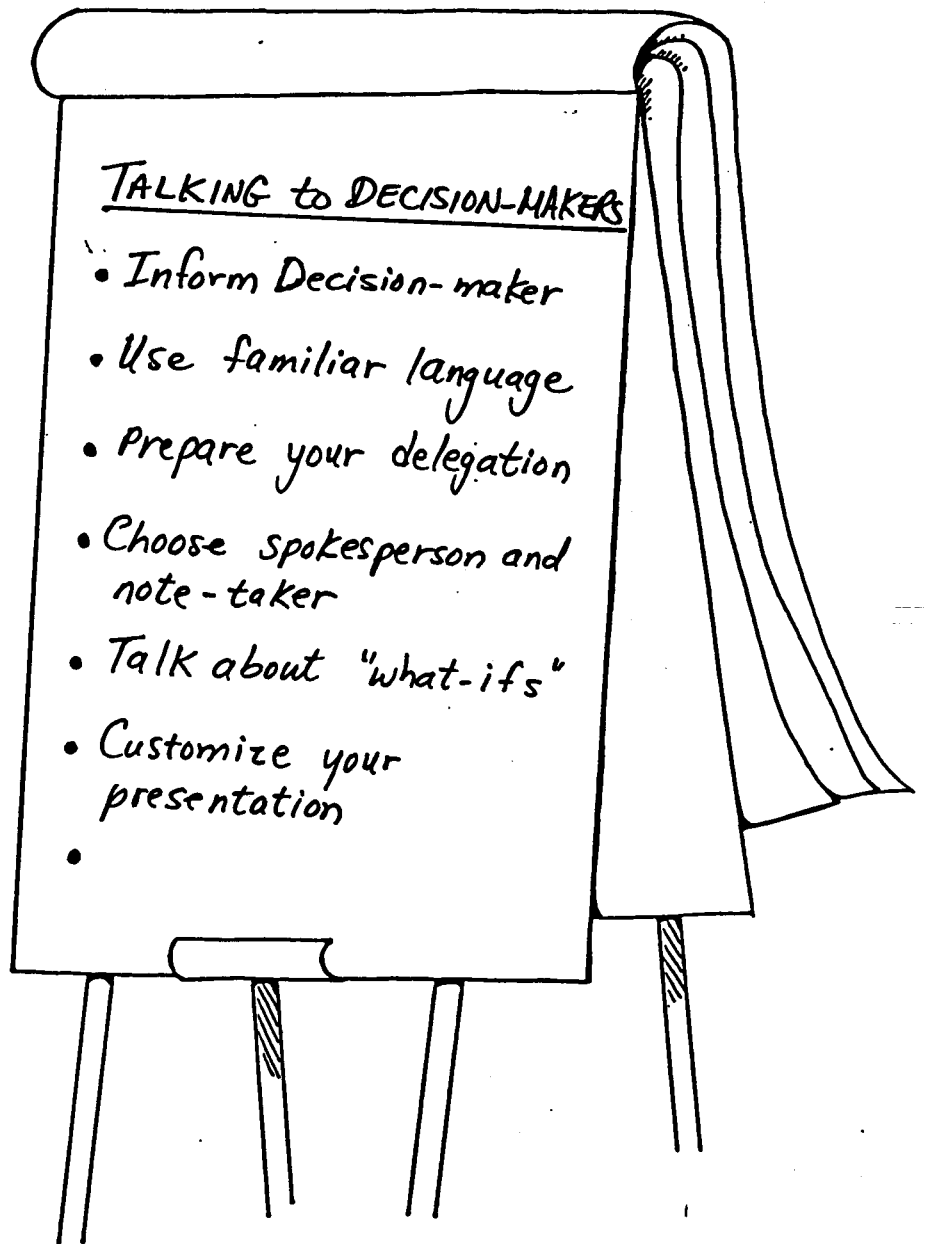
A brief is intensive. It is presented in person and is formal. It should always contain hard data, demonstrating a logical argument. Cost-saving details should be precise and prominent. Have a table of contents and accompany your brief with a one-page summary. Make copies for each person present.

Make your presentation look professional. It must be typed, with no handwritten notes.

Notes on the letter lobby

A letter lobby is usually a long-term tactic to show numbers and get things on the record. It can have quite an impact, i.e. stopping funds or getting them through. Personally written letters are considered to be *the voice of the real people out there*. Mailing large numbers of photocopied letters of concern is less effective. Make sure the letter-writer has the correct name and title of the recipient. Request a direct, specific action from the decision-maker.

Based on unpublished workshop material on lobbying skills, provided by Diana Ellis, Vancouver, September, 1989.



TALKING to DECISION-MAKERS

- Inform Decision-maker
- Use familiar language
- Prepare your delegation
- Choose spokesperson and note-taker
- Talk about "what-ifs"
- Customize your presentation
-

TALKING TO DECISION-MAKERS

There are several techniques for getting decision-makers to hear your point of view. All of them require prior preparation. Some you will use before you get in the door, and others while you are in the room.

INFORM YOUR DECISION-MAKER

Inform your decision-maker about the issue as much as possible prior to your visit, especially if you want to avoid the *Thank you, but I must read this information first* syndrome. A local M.L.A. offers this advice:

Be clear and fax the background for your request prior to the meeting. A fax gets a response more quickly than a letter or a telephone call.

Once you find out who has influence, make sure that you stay in contact. Keep the decision-maker involved, informed. Initiate contact formally and informally. Stay in touch.

If there are support staff (a secretary, an Assistant Deputy Minister, others), find out who they are and inform them as well. Never underestimate the importance of having them your side.

CHECK OUT FAMILIAR LANGUAGE

Check out the terminology the decision-maker prefers by contacting someone who is part of the system.

Perhaps they don't like the word "counselling," but if you call it "education," they will fund it. Or the words "family violence" might be more attractive to some decision-makers than "transition-house views on sexual assault."

After you have done a few funding applications, you get to know what decision-makers want to see and hear. It is helpful to have someone experienced to coach you through the process. Find out what is the terminology/language in current use. Do research. Get advice.

PREPARE YOUR DELEGATION

Make sure your representatives are authorized to speak on behalf of your group, and that they are prepared. Presentation strategy can be modelled by observation. When you are at a key gathering, observe what works for others and what you might use when it is your turn.

It is vital that counsellors and spokespeople (for example, members of the Board of Directors) who are going into the community have dealt with their own issues and have support systems in place. Otherwise, they may inappropriately express emotions that could be seen as representative of your group.

We held a pre-meeting strategy session before the B.C. Teachers' Federation Annual General Meeting. We met and asked who wanted to speak in favour of the motion against pornography. These people gathered, and decided which issues were most important. We did a whole analysis of what needed to be brought forward, including coming to an agreement on what was pornography and what was erotica. Then we decided how many people were needed to provide the information, and who was going to give the presentation. We assisted each other in writing three-minute speeches, developed floor strategy, even planned which microphones to speak from.

Take along a one-page handout that easily explains your work, a factual outline of the issue you want to address and the solutions you propose. Have a copy for everyone present in the room.

CHOOSE A SPOKESPERSON

Always plan who is going to speak to which point, and who is going to be back-up spokesperson. Define your roles ahead of time. Never have everyone talk. If possible, choose a spokesperson who has some rapport with your decision-maker.

Have one person take notes, otherwise you may not remember the exact words, dates, names, or directions given at the meeting. The decision-maker may support you at the meeting, but under other pressures may not remember a deadline or other details. You may request formal meeting minutes if they are taken.

TALK ABOUT "WHAT IF'S"

What if's sometimes come disguised as *Yes, but's*, which tend to stop the process of communication at a meeting. Try countering them with *Yes, and's*, which acknowledge what the person before you said, and may bring you closer to your goal.

Diana Ellis (a Vancouver consultant), in unpublished workshop material on lobbying skills, offers the following suggestions to deal with *What if...*

They say no? Get specifics as to why, and counter negotiate.

They say maybe? Find out if there are changes that might make them say yes.

Maybe can be a masked yes. Arrange to see them again.

They stall and refer to committee? Ask to meet with the committee.

They ask for more information? Get it to them.

There is an interruption and your time gets cut short? Always prearrange the length of your meeting. If an interruption occurs, make arrangements to see them again, later in the day or at another time.

They counter propose? suggest a different timeline? a different amount of money?

Know your group's bottom line. Never agree to anything without the backing of your group.

CUSTOMIZE YOUR PRESENTATION

Find the appropriate style of an approach for the person you are trying to influence. Some individuals appreciate a sales pitch while others prefer a detailed explanation of benefits. Customize your proposal. The styles of decision-makers vary as widely as the personalities of the general population. They may also be different as a collective than they are as individuals.

You may use different arguments if you are talking to an individual than to a group. There is a group dynamic that can supersede all the support in the world.

I watch others who can get their bosses to agree to what they want. I take note of what worked for them.

Pinpoint a gap in services. When asked, "How did you get the decision-maker to agree there was a gap in services or resources?" one respondent said:

Nobody said there wasn't a gap. Everyone was in agreement. No argument. The question was: "Who should service the gap?"

Sometimes the focus of your arguments has to be: "Whose responsibility is this issue?"

A newspaper ad offered a Social Services Contract for someone to run a shelter for homeless women and children. It seemed to us that they had omitted to consider the reasons behind the women's homelessness. We believed that a shelter should not be run like a hostel. We were able to make three proposals and specify that our proposals coordinated with the recommendations of the Ministry's own previously released report, "Hearing All the Women's Voices."

Do you tell the decision-maker what they want to hear? The following bits of advice are good, if contradictory:

Get to know decision-makers well enough to know what they want to hear. Work the system.

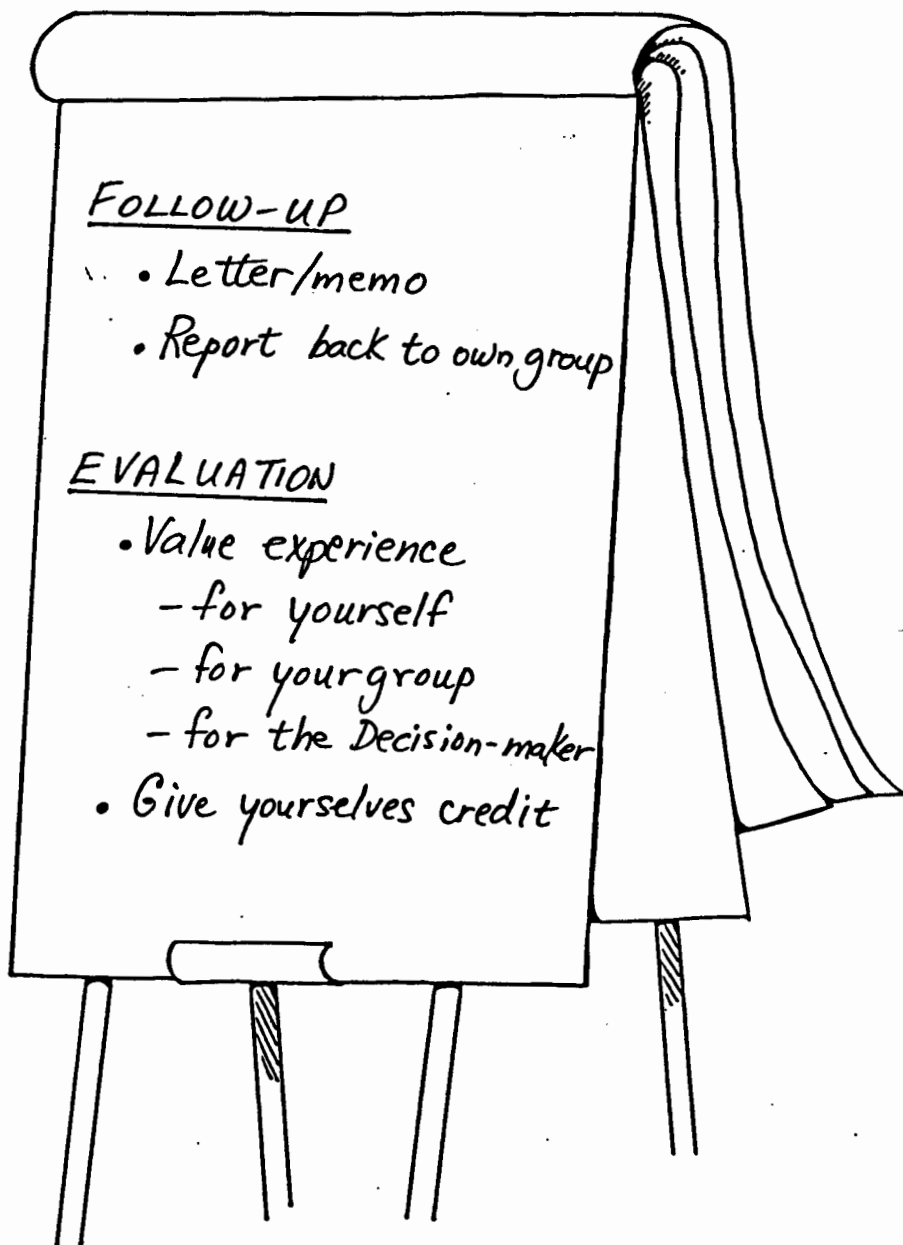
You do not necessarily have to tell a decision-maker only what they want to hear. Don't be a sycophant, a flatterer. Believe what you are saying.

Make your presentation real. Show them the depth of your commitment. Show how much support you have.

I gave anecdotal information, used stories from kids when the project was for kids. For example, there are homes where kids basic needs are not provided for because we have not been specific enough on policy or legislation.

I showed how I had support from the decision-maker's colleagues. I mentioned the results of conversations I had with other leaders.

Who do you know who can tell a decision-maker that you are a wonderful group? Any of your partners, friends, or relatives? Do you know anyone who worked with a particular decision-maker and liked him/her? Perhaps one of your committee members? Can you show support-in-kind, such as the number of people who showed up for a public demonstration about your cause?



FOLLOW-UP AND EVALUATION

FOLLOW-UP

Always write a letter or memo thanking those at the meeting for their time, and outlining what happened. For example, "I understand we agreed on the following points..." Follow up with whatever further information you promised to send, or meetings you were to set up. Report back to your own group about what happened and, based on what you learned, decide what strategy comes next.

EVALUATION

Set aside some time to evaluate your group's effectiveness in influencing the decision-maker. It is important to value the experience as an education for yourself, your group, and the decision-maker.

Measure your success by assessing how closely you met your objectives. Here are some questions you may find helpful:

Did you deliver your message as you wished? How did it change and why? Did you learn something more about the issue as a result? Did you learn something about other resources you could have used and did not?

Did you see who you needed to see? Why not? Did you learn about others you should see or write to?

What was the response to your issue? To your group? Is the door open for you to go back? Were you realistic in your expectations? What have you learned?

How was your timing? Has the issue run out of steam? Has your group run out of steam?

What action did you get on your issue? What were the achievements involved? How do you feel now? Intimidated, angry, pleased, anxious, curious, satisfied, eager to keep going...?

Remember to give yourselves credit for your efforts.

CONSULTANT'S REMARKS

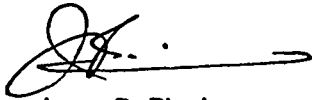
There is a great similarity between needing all the answers before beginning and not being able to stop because of not wanting to leave any part unsaid.

Writing **How To Influence Decision-Makers** reminded me that I am not alone in sometimes feeling confused about why I volunteer. It also helped me to acknowledge how patience and perseverance will move an idea along through the necessary routes to achieving your goal.

Even though I would like to see change happen next week, I honour change as a process and not an isolated event.

My hope is that you will be inspired to take a step toward the possibilities your community presents, that you will educate yourself on issues that matter to you, and that when you are in doubt, you will ask!

• May your endeavours be rich and empowering.



Janet P. Bianic
Consultant

- A History and Goals of Urban Safety and Women
- B Community-based Crime Prevention in Surrey
- C References
- D Interviewees

APPENDICES



APPENDIX A: HISTORY AND GOALS OF URBAN SAFETY AND WOMEN

Urban Safety and Women (USAW), The Beginning

In 1989, a conference was held in Montreal called The European and North American Conference on Urban Safety and Crime Prevention. Three Surrey Councillors attended, Judy Higginbotham, Judy Villeneuve, and Bonnie Schrenk, along with Patreace Starr, who had been working in the development and application of second stage transition housing for victims of violence. The conference's final declaration addressed Starr's concerns:

Municipal and other orders of government must make prevention of family violence, sexual assaults, and abuse of women and children an integral part of their policies and programs. Municipalities must take responsibilities for a unified strategy against violence and fear, which must be particularly sensitive to the perspectives of women and the elderly. (Surrey Leader, November 1, 1989)

Following the conference, Surrey Councillor Judy Higginbotham formed the Urban Safety Advisory Forum (USAF) to promote crime prevention through social development initiatives. Key concerns brought forward at USAF meetings were affordable and special needs housing, youth, drugs, and crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED). These concerns always seemed to relate back to the safety of women and children. *It was thought that if the safety needs of women and children are met, then the needs of everyone in the community would be better served.*

Subsequently, Patreace Starr became chair of a community committee, Urban Safety and Women (USAW), formed to identify and highlight the concerns and the solutions to a safer community for women and children.

The Goals of USAW are:

- To assess the reality of women's perceptions of safety and personal vulnerability.
- To provide input for the improvement of physical environments in order to reduce opportunities for sexual and hostile assaults.
- To foster an increased knowledge and awareness in Surrey residents of urban safety and crime prevention.
- To encourage active participation in creating a safer community through the collaborative efforts of community groups, urban and social planners, the RCMP, Municipal Council, other professionals, and Surrey residents and workers.

Initially USAW wanted to focus on the review of the design of buildings and their surroundings to reduce the opportunities for crime. Delving into this, however, brought to light the extent to which violence for women is a part of their every day lives. It was discovered that the issues of violence on the street and violence in the home could not be dealt with separately or in isolation.

Initiatives

One of the first activities of USAW was to develop a questionnaire to generate information from women on safety issues in Surrey. The questionnaire was published in the Surrey/North Delta NOW newspaper, February, 1992. Of the over one hundred and fifty respondents, the majority mentioned safety concerns originating in Whalley (now called Surrey City Centre). These concerns prompted USAW to select Surrey City Centre as a focus of a safety audit project in 1993.

Through funding support from the B.C. Ministry of Women's Equality, a group of citizens conducted a series of safety audits in Surrey City Centre during the later half of 1993. This safety audit project was coordinated by Surrey Community Resource Society. A report summarizing their results is due in 1994.

In USAW's work to improve urban safety for women in the City of Surrey, influencing decision-makers was found to be a critical component of achieving positive change. It was felt the combined learning of USAW and other community members who had been successful influencing decision-makers, would be a valuable community resource. Thus, the How To Influence Decision-Makers project was initiated with a grant from Secretary of State.

The purpose of the report is to provide a model of how the decision-making process works. It is about the total process of what is involved in influencing a decision-maker, from the initial investigation about an issue, to building support in the community, to organizing a strong working group.

USAW hopes that groups will be able to successfully apply these techniques to creating a safer environment for women and children.

APPENDIX B: COMMUNITY-BASED CRIME PREVENTION IN SURREY

Why focus on women's safety concerns in Surrey?

According to the Canadian Urban Victimization Survey (Solicitor General of Canada:1985), one in four women in Canada can expect to be sexually assaulted at some point in their lives, one half of them before the age of seventeen. In 1992, Surrey ranked behind 26 municipalities in British Columbia in crimes per 1,000 population, but the Uniform Crime Report, compiled by Statistics Canada, shows Surrey had the highest reported sexual assault rate in B.C.

According to B.C. Ministry of Health statistics in 1991, '92 and '93, the Surrey Memorial Hospital had the busiest emergency department in the province. Sandi Schenstead, Nurse Manager at the Emergency Department, told USAW that not long ago, sexual assault victims had to sit for five to six hours before being examined.

Part of the reason for the long wait was, in order not to break the chain of collecting forensic evidence, doctors had to wait until they had two full, uninterrupted hours before they could proceed with their examination. Forensic data is important for the successful criminal prosecution of sexual assault offenders.

Thanks to Dr. Joan Fujiwara and Dr. Barbara Crisp, who for six years tried to coordinate the physicians' side of the process, Surrey Memorial Hospital now has a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners' Program. For this program, nurses have been specially trained to deal with the multifaceted issues survivors face in dealing with sexual assault. This program is a role model for the province of B.C.

It is important to remember that the above statistics only reflect reported assaults against women and that there are other women victims, who for many reasons do not seek help. In addition, women's fear of being a victim of crime is far greater than that shown by reported crime statistics. This fear prevents women's equal participation in community life.

Community-based crime prevention is necessary

The 1992 figures of the City of Surrey Taxation Department show one of every five dollars of current city expenditure is spent on policing. 69 per cent of these policing dollars are collected in the form of property taxes. In spite of this huge expense, 75 per cent of Surrey residents polled by Angus Reid in the Spring of 1993 said crime is still their number one issue of concern, and they feel that crime is on the increase.

Citizens keeping the police informed is one way to keep track of the scope of the crime problem and consequently may help politicians to take appropriate action. The ultimate solution to crime, however, does not lie with the police but within our communities. There is no way police can do it alone. Society simply cannot arrest its way out of long-term crime problems.

There is no single solution to crime. A variety of strategies must be used.

B.C. alone is spending \$2.2 billion per year on police, courts, and jails, out of the total of \$7.7 billion spent in the nation. This figure does not include the amount of money Canadians spend on home security systems each year.

The Report of The Ad Hoc Advisory Committee for a National Strategy on Community Safety and Crime Prevention (released in October, 1993) suggested that spending even 1 per cent of the \$7.7 billion on police, courts, and jails on community-based crime prevention could make a difference. This report identifies some ways to make a community safer through the collective efforts of its citizens, and places emphasis on social development initiatives, such as:

- Job training for unemployed teenagers
- Family support programs, including adequate day care
- Training programs for criminal justice personnel, social workers, medical personnel, and other service providers who work with victims of violence
- Counselling services for women who are victims of violence
- Sexual assault centres
- New spaces in transition houses
- Neighbourhood clean-up programs
- Practical self-defense courses for women and children
- Public education about violence against women
- School curriculum development on conflict resolution

Those who allocate resources need to believe preventive measures can make a difference. Patti Pearcey, Coordinator of the B.C. Coalition for Safer Communities, says, "Part of it isn't just money, but an act of faith." People working in the community, who have first hand experience in crime prevention, need to continue communicating with funders. We have to build a philosophy that acknowledges a paradigm shift in thinking about what works.

Treating people as experts on the problems in their community generates new information and solutions. It also recognizes the value of the experiences of those who are most vulnerable: not only women, children and seniors, but also people with disabilities and those with low incomes. Without the views of those individuals who are most affected by fear of crime, an untrue picture of the problem is obtained.

Rather than dealing with individual complaints, processes can be set up whereby everyone can learn from the collective experience which should result in positive change:

What are some local crime prevention initiatives?

Some of the coordinated safer community efforts in Surrey include: Victim Services Unit, Block Watch, Community Policing Stations (CoPS), Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED), Safety Audits; and Transit Users' Group on Safety (TUGS).

Victim Services Unit

In 1983, the Surrey RCMP created a Victim Services Unit (VSU). Ten years later, they are moving in the direction of crisis intervention on a 24-hour-day, seven-day-a-week basis. As of June, 1994, VSU relies on 150 volunteers. Although the counselling they provide cannot eliminate the adverse effects of crime, it can offer victims support and understanding and direct them to other resources that may be useful in their recovery.

Block Watch

Block Watch creates networks within neighbourhoods and works on educating people about crime and how to help deter it. Often members of Block Watch can be more aware of which crimes have taken place in the immediate neighbourhood than the police.

Sergeant Garry Wade of the Surrey RCMP says:

Block Watch is an excellent tool to organize, share crime awareness messages, and educate neighbourhoods. The focus is to encourage participants to assist police in making their street safe by helping one another, updating security hardware, marking their property for identification, assisting in relaying crime messages, and meeting once a year.

The success of this program varies directly with involvement. Block Watch programs can reduce break-ins in participating residential areas by up to 50 per cent. Greater input results in greater safety. Less input, less safety.

In November, 1993, the Surrey RCMP had two full-time members and three secretaries spearheading a Block Watch program for 12,000 households. *Contact the Surrey RCMP Block Watch program at 599-7601 for more information, or to volunteer to become a Captain or Co-Captain in your neighbourhood or complex.*

Community Policing Stations (CoPS)

There is a national trend in policing to move toward community-based problem-solving techniques. One of the strategies being developed within many municipalities is Community Policing Stations (CoPS). These are store-front operations that provide crime prevention information to the public and engage in crime analysis and problem-solving. A CoPS can assist in setting up preventive programs, based on the needs identified by police and community members coming in to the station. Community Police Stations rely heavily on citizen volunteers.

There are three Community Policing Stations in Surrey, located in Cloverdale (574-0321), Newton (594-1200) and South Surrey (538-2777). The City Centre CoPS will open in 1994 at the Surrey Place SkyTrain Station.

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)

CPTED is a crime prevention strategy that encompasses things such as the installation of proper lighting in underground parking and walkway entries, the use of chain link fences to discourage hiding places, and ensuring that shrubbery does not obstruct a clear view of an area. CPTED involves the review of physical design and management of buildings and surrounding areas to reduce opportunities for crime. It can also be used in development plans by an architect.

In 1994, the City of Surrey Planning and Development Department intends to develop CPTED guidelines to be taken before Council for their approval. Hopefully, the adoption of these guidelines will result in improved safety in Surrey City Centre and in other future developments.

The City of Surrey has an Advisory Design Panel that meets every two weeks to evaluate the designs of most major projects in Surrey. Part of their role is to review projects for accessibility for people with disabilities, and to ensure CPTED principles have been incorporated.

It is in the interest of developers and architects that their projects be perceived to be as problem-free and safe as possible. Safety measures must be considered early in the planning process and should involve future users and relevant community groups.

In the case of Surrey City Centre, developers are progressive in dealing with ways to respond to safety issues. For instance, Intrawest Corporation is asking for input from representatives of the companies moving to their Gateway building development. They are considering such things as providing bicycle lock-ups, and security patrols inside their parkades.

Without the expertise of those who must use an environment on a daily basis, the planning process is incomplete.

Safety Audits

A safety audit is a evaluation tool which can be used by citizens to explore public spaces or buildings to identify safety concerns. An audit examines how a space is put together, and whether this enhances or takes away from safety. For example: what is the lighting like? is there good visibility? would anyone hear a call for help? what improvements can be suggested? The purpose of an audit is to identify and reduce the opportunities for harassment and assaults against those who are most vulnerable: women, children, seniors, and people with disabilities.

The safety audit was developed in Toronto by the Metro Action Committee on Public Violence Against Women and Children (METRAC) to bring attention to women's safety issues, especially safety on the Toronto Transit System. In 1992, the City of Vancouver Safer City Task Force promoted the safety audit as part of their community participation program. They created the Citizen's Safety Audit Guide, an adaption of the METRAC safety audit.

The Safer City Task Force also decided to organize a special transit safety audit project. This project involved thirty-three citizen volunteers who conducted safety audits on various transit bus loops, bus stops, and all SkyTrain stations (including Scott Road Station). Some of the audit members were from the Transit Users' Group on Safety (TUGS), a new citizens' initiative.

Recently, TUGS has played an important role in influencing B.C. Transit to adopt the recommendations of the transit safety audit project. (A comprehensive report on the results of the Vancouver Safer City Task Force is available through the City Clerk's Office, City of Vancouver. It includes a special report on the transit audit findings, *Safety Steps for Transit*.)

Through contact with Vancouver safety audit volunteers and other Canadian municipalities who had used the audit tool, a group of women in Surrey became interested in launching a safety audit project around Surrey City Centre. In 1993 a safety audit project was organized by Surrey Community Resource Society. The report summarizing their results is due in 1994. It is hoped that more safety audits will be conducted in other parts of Surrey and that the audit findings will be acted upon.

Transit Users' Group On Safety (TUGS)

Guildford resident, Lorna Dysart was instrumental in forming a group called Transit Users' Group On Safety (TUGS). TUGS is an organization that enables transit users to address their safety concerns, increase their awareness of transit security features, and to work with transit system personnel towards improved safety and security for all its passengers.

Because of their interest in transit security, TUGS met with SkyTrain officials to review the plans for and tour the \$127 million, 4.3 kilometre SkyTrain extension through Surrey City Centre. Members of TUGS provided suggestions about accessibility, signage, traffic patterns, lighting, and landscaping.

Showing their willingness to continue this kind of communication, B.C. Transit officials and members of Transit's Safer City Task Force Committee have toured the entire SkyTrain system with members of TUGS. On these tours, various safety concerns (lighting, signage, emergency response, accessibility, visibility, movement predictors, and isolation) from the City of Vancouver's report, Safety Steps for Transit, were brought to their attention.