SFU Public Square 2012 Community Summit

Alone Together: Connecting in the City

Final Report

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

On September 18 to 23, 2012, the SFU Public Square, in partnership with the Vancouver Foundation, hosted its inaugural Community Summit, **Alone Together: Connecting in the City**. The goals of the Community Summit were to disseminate the Vancouver Foundation’s research highlighting social isolation as a problem in Metro Vancouver, explore strategies for change, and profile exemplary stories of individual, organizational and civic connectedness.

The Community Summit, involving eleven events in six days, brought together a cross-section of citizens, including young people, artists, librarians and representatives from civil society, business and government to discuss strategies for building a more connected and vibrant city. The deliberations generated options for strengthening engagement across community and cultural divides which were captured in public reports, now available online.

This report provides an overview of the Community Summit theme and purpose, an evaluation of its success in terms of progress meeting predefined objectives, and a summary of each event, including outcomes, strengths, shortcomings and lessons going forward.
2.0 BACKGROUND

WHAT IS THE SFU PUBLIC SQUARE?

SFU will be BC’s public square for enlightenment and dialogue on key public issues, and will be known as the institution to which the community looks for education, discussion and solutions. – SFU Strategic Vision, February 2012

According to SFU’s Strategic Vision, developed in response to a broad based engagement process, Simon Fraser University seeks to be the leading engaged university defined by its dynamic integration of innovative education, cutting-edge research and far-reaching community engagement. The success of these goals depends not just on their individual attainment but on their integration - on the degree to which each contributes to the others. The SFU Public Square will act as a signature program to advance the university’s community engagement strategy. Its aim is to become the “go-to” convener for serious and productive dialogues on important public issues, working to diffuse polarization and promote community building and sustainable development for the province. There are three program centres within the SFU Public Square:

1. ANNUAL COMMUNITY SUMMITS

Each year, the SFU Public Square convenes a Community Summit focused on an issue of public concern. By offering a series of thematic programs, Community Summits help create the space for citizens, the university, and community partners to jointly research, discuss, identify solutions and consider action on emerging issues of public concern. Our Community Summits are intended to amplify the reach and impact of important research (undertaken by SFU and/or community partners), provide opportunities for volunteerism and other forms of student engagement, promote social knowledge and civic understanding, and provide opportunities for solution-oriented dialogue on key issues.

2. RESPONSIVE SERVICES

SFU Public Square personnel are available to convene, facilitate, and moderate dialogues and information exchanges relating to public policy issues. Our facilitators respond to requests on a fee-for-service basis from government, businesses and community organizations to create dynamic and effective dialogue sessions tailored to client needs.

2. SFU PUBLIC SQUARE BRAND ACTIVITIES

SFU Public Square supports university events and dialogues that enhance knowledge mobilization and sustained interaction between the university and the communities it serves.
SFU PUBLIC SQUARE INAUGURAL COMMUNITY SUMMIT

2012 COMMUNITY SUMMIT – THEME

The themes of isolation, community connectedness and belonging have taken on increased importance and significance in Metro Vancouver. According to the results of a wide-ranging public consultation performed by the Vancouver Foundation in 2011, “the issue people said concerned them the most was isolation and disconnection; the feeling that we increasingly live in silos, separated by race, language, income, age, and even geography. They said we are becoming less engaged with each other and in the life of our community.”

This discovery led the foundation to commission research examining Metro Vancouverites’ sense of "connection" (our relationships with others and the strength of those relationships) and "engagement" (our commitment to community and the willingness to take actions to solve problems or to participate in activities that make our community better). Their research produced a number of interesting findings, including: neighbourhood connections in Metro Vancouver are cordial but weak; there are limits to how people see diversity as an opportunity to forge meaningful connections; and weaker neighbourhood connections are linked to lower levels of trust, negative attitudes toward community, and lower levels of participation in neighbourhood and community activities.

The Vancouver Foundation’s findings were supported by the results of research conducted by the SFU Public Square. In October 2011, SFU Public Square launched a six-month consultative program to identify the issues, structure and format to best inform the structure and content of the 2012 Community Summit. Staff conducted over 100 interviews and seven focus groups. Similar to the Foundation’s research, key themes that emerged were those of disconnectedness and isolation in the urban environment.

The symptoms of isolation are significant. They can be seen across Metro Vancouver in the form of decreased levels of trust, caring, volunteerism and altruism; lack of time and interest in engaging with others outside of our close social networks - even our neighbours; and deflated engagement in our democratic processes, alongside an adverse dependency on our governments and charities to provide the necessary services to maintain our quality of life (Our Community, Vancouver Foundation, 2011).

The Vancouver Foundation’s research on isolation also indicates that weak community connections have adverse social and health-related consequences, such as: increased rates of suicide, cancer, heart attacks, and a decreased ability to recover from illness; increased propensity to experience depression; higher crime rates and teenage pregnancies; child and drug abuse; lower high school graduation rates; less productive workers and consequently less prosperous nations (Our Community, Vancouver Foundation, 2011).
There are many potential causes underlying the decay of our social connections, including:

- Lack of affordable housing (which has pushed people further away from their places of employment and their families)
- Growing social inequity and social segregation (characterized by the emergence of gated communities or, conversely, zones like the downtown eastside where most of the residency hotels or SROs and mental health facilities are located)
- Increased diversity in our communities (which has led to the emergence of ethnocultural enclaves)
- The decline of churches (which often played a role in bridging social capital)
- Dramatic increases in the cost of living (and the consequent need to have both parents working)
- Shifts in our attitudes about aging (which have ushered seniors out of the public and “productive” spheres of life and into isolated communities)
- Increased density (high-rise living, without adequate community amenities like schools, parks and pedestrian-friendly neighbourhood centres).

As these and other trends increasingly affect the citizens of Metro Vancouver, the need to identify the drivers of change and ignite belief in our ability to find connection becomes increasingly crucial. A lack of social cohesion will cause greater and more negative impacts on our community ecosystems, and as this sense of disconnection is experienced by more generations and our feelings of isolation become increasingly ingrained, the harder it may become to build bridges of trust and cooperation across social divides.

Recognizing the urgency of addressing the problems of isolation and disconnection, SFU Public Square and the Vancouver Foundation sought to raise awareness, promote informed dialogue and profile creative responses to the issue by making it the focus of our first Community Summit. In doing so, we generated a groundswell of conversation and inspired concrete actions to address Metro Vancouver residents’ decreasing sense of belonging and encouraged a more cohesive civic life.
3.0 COMMUNITY SUMMIT OBJECTIVES

In this section, we reflect on the success of our first Community Summit in the context of our original Summit objectives.

OBJECTIVE ONE

Work in partnership with key organizations that act as thought leaders and agents of change in this field, building upon and day-lighting the work that is underway.

COMMUNITY SUMMIT PARTNERS

VANCOUVER FOUNDATION – MARQUEE SUMMIT PARTNER

As noted in the previous section, we chose the issues of isolation and disconnection in the urban environment as the theme for our first Community Summit. Rather than duplicating the Vancouver Foundation’s comprehensive research of the issues, SFU Public Square negotiated to work in collaboration with the Foundation. This partnership enabled us to amplify the research and findings of SFU and the Foundation, and to jointly explore strategies for change with other community partners and the public. The Foundation’s reach, reputation, and $150,000 contribution in financial and in-kind support enabled the SFU Public Square to extend its programming to a wider audience throughout the Lower Mainland.

The Vancouver Foundation was a full partner in the design and delivery of the Community Summit. SFU Public Square and the Foundation worked jointly in designing each of the program activities and the overall Summit program. Integrated online communications strategies were developed, individuals for media opportunities were collectively nominated, and marketing and outreach strategies were aligned. Principal Vancouver Foundation staff and board members were featured as keynote speakers at the Community Summit’s Opening Night, the Business Luncheon, the Mayors’ Roundtable, and at City Conversations. Vancouver Foundation community partners participated as members of the Youth Advisory Committee, were featured at the youth conference, and were featured as presenters at Rain City Chronicles and at the Urban Conspiracy Cabaret.

The Vancouver Foundation staff organized and ran a series of public engagement activities at the Orpheum and Rain City Chronicles events with the help and support of 16 Foundation volunteers. Volunteers ran a quiz station that challenged people’s knowledge of their survey results. One roaming team engaged people sitting in the theatre or standing in line at the refreshments counter. In another activity, volunteers asked people “What makes you feel connected to your community?” Respondents wrote their answers on a white board, the volunteers took photos and posted them to Facebook, letting people know to come to the Foundation’s Facebook page and look for their pictures.
By all accounts, the Vancouver Foundation was very satisfied with the Summit partnership. They were proud to be associated with the first SFU Public Square Community Summit and they garnered considerable community, political and media attention for their research on social isolation as a result of the affiliation. Based on their positive experience, they are interested in pursuing other opportunities for collaboration. According to Faye Wightman, President and CEO of the Vancouver Foundation:

“The partnership with SFU Public Square far exceeded our expectations and allowed us to have an impact we couldn’t have had in the community. Any organization should jump at the chance of partnering with SFU. This was one of our best experiences in partnership and collaboration.”

Outcomes:

The Vancouver Foundation indicated they achieved measurable results from their volunteer activity during the Summit, including:

- 53 new subscribers to the Connections and Engagement mailing list
- Approximately 80 participants in the photo project
- Distribution of approximately 50 Connections and Engagement reports and close to 100 magazines

As a result of a positive working experience with the SFU Public Square, the Vancouver Foundation has agreed to partner with the City of Surrey in their delivery of a Community Summit in Surrey, April 2013. NOTE: The Surrey 2013 Community Summit is being designed with the support of the SFU Public Square Facilitation Team.

VANCOUVER SUN

Working with the Vancouver Sun’s Editor and Chief – Fazil Milhar, the SFU Public Square arranged for the placement of 10 opinion editorial pieces related to the Summit theme, nine leading up to the Community Summit, and one wrap up piece written by Andrew Petter and Carole Taylor following the Summit. A variety of individuals were approached to write these pieces, reflecting the depth of our community outreach, including some of the individuals who presented at our Summit events.

Columnist Daphne Bramham participated in a panel during the City Conversations Summit event and wrote several columns on the Summit theme, and Tara Carmen, Vancouver Sun reporter, wrote a cover story and three additional pieces on the Community Summit.

The Sun also published four articles addressing the Summit theme from a youth perspective, covered a number of our events and hosted the live webcast of the Community Summit Opening Night at the Orpheum event on their website. They provided SFU with a substantial discount in advertising rates. In total, SFU Public Square ran banner ads for the Summit on five different days in the print version of the paper (including one on the front page) and a series of online ads.
The Vancouver Sun evaluated their experience highly. According to Fazil Milhar:

“This was a very strong partnership for us. The timing and preplanning was optimal. The pieces were well written and thoughtful and moved beyond the usual suspects. We saw an increase in our online activity. There was a sense through the week that we were building momentum and we were creating a critical mass of awareness about the issue.”

Outcome:

Based on their experience, the Vancouver Sun would like to partner with the SFU Public Square as we support the City of Surrey with their Community Summit event in April 2013 and will come on board as a partner for the next SFU Public Square Community Summit in the fall of 2013.

CITY OF VANCOUVER

The City of Vancouver was a natural partner for this initiative. The research underpinnings of the Community Summit built directly upon the Vancouver Foundation’s Vital Signs Report released in June 2011, which the City also supported. The City was also interested in the dialogue and consultation processes leading up to the Summit, particularly with young people, businesses, librarians and local government.

A variety of City staff and elected officials participated in Community Summit events. For example, Mayor Gregor Robertson attended the Mayors’ Roundtable and opened the Rain City Chronicles event. The Assistant Chief Engineer of Transportation, Jerry Dobrovolony, the Chair of the Vancouver School Board, Patti Baachus and Councillor Andrea Reimer participated as decision makers in the youth conference. Finally, Councillors Adriane Carr, Heather Deal and Andrea Reimer attended a number of the public events as participants.

Outcomes:

The week following our Community Summit, Vancouver City Council heard a motion to create a Mayor’s Engaged City Task Force to address many of the issues explored at our events. The motion passed, and 22 citizens have since been appointed to the Task Force, which according to the City “will identify ways to increase neighbourhood engagement and improve the ways in which the City interacts and connects with its residents.”

“We’ve seen from both the Vancouver Foundation’s research on social isolation and the success of last week’s SFU Community Summit, that there is a big appetite for people to be better connected, whether it’s on an individual level with their neighbours or how they engage with City Hall,” said Councillor Reimer. “Vancouver is a city that leads the world in many ways, and we can do more when it comes to building a more engaged city”.
VANCITY

Vancity is Canada’s largest credit union and is a strong supporter of community development in the region. They came on board as a community partner just one month before the Summit. Vancity provided financial support and in-kind assistance such as suggesting potential participants and speakers, leveraging their community and membership networks to promote events and awareness of the issues, and providing valuable programming advice.

Vancity’s experience partnering with the SFU Public Square, despite working with tight deadlines, was reported as being very positive, professional, responsive and collaborative. They felt the Summit was well orchestrated, and the thematic messaging was well conveyed and integrated into the programming. Vancity did raise the point that a 5-6 day Summit may not be the best approach, and suggested considering a more concentrated program moving forward. They also asked SFU Public Square to engage them much sooner in the process – ideally six months before the event.

SUMMIT EVENT SPONSORS

In addition to Summit Partners, SFU Public Square worked with a range of event sponsors to deliver the Community Summit. These included groups involved in designing and hosting Our Voices: Youth Building A Connected City, Lunch Poems @SFU, Big Ideas for Libraries in Communities Challenge, the Urban Conspiracy Cabaret, Creating A Connected City: The Role of Business, City Conversations and Rain City Chronicles. SFU Public Square formed these relationships to build upon the existing thought leadership and programming. By employing our resources as a convenor and working collaboratively with a variety of community organizations, SFU Public Square was able to further extend the impact and reach of the Community Summit.

Implementation

A joint working group of staff of the SFU Public Square and Vancouver Foundation coordinated all activities of the Community Summit. This group worked together to ensure the needs and interests of both organizations were advanced. Members of the core implementation group included:

SFU Public Square:
Shauna Sylvester, Executive Director, SFU Public Square
Janet Webber, Program Manager, SFU Public Square

Additional Student and Interns:
Jackie Pichette, Research and Communications Officer, SFU Public Square
Kamilah Charters-Gabenek, Assistant Communications Coordinator, SFU Public Square
Marissa Lawrence, Outreach Coordinator, SFU Public Square
Lindsey Hindle, Volunteer Coordinator, SFU Public Square
James Yang, Intern, SFU Public Square
Vancouver Foundation:
Catherine Clement, Vice President, Public Engagement and Communications
Denise Rudnicki, Director, Strategic Engagement

Additional Team Members:
Andrea Majorki, Manager, Communications, Vancouver Foundation
Christine Faron Chan, Director, Communications, Vancouver Foundation
Meriko Kuboka, Manager, Grants and Community Initiatives, Vancouver Foundation

In addition, other collaborative partnerships were formed to support the design and delivery of the Community Summit. These partnerships included:

SFU Internal:
Scott McLean, Director, Public Relations, SFU Vancouver
Emily Ross, Coordinator, Communications & Public Relations, SFU Vancouver
Carole Knight, Director, Design Group
Jennifer Conroy, Designer, Design Group
Kirsten May, Designer, Design Group
Josh Laidlaw, Website Designer
Gloria Chu, Director, Ceremonies and Events
Sue Porter, Associate Director, Ceremonies and Events
Lynda Hewitt, Director, Client Services, Meetings and Events
Michael Alexander, Director, City Conversations
Gord Price, Director, The City Program, SFU Vancouver
Renée Sarojini Saklikar, Lunch Poems @SFU
Wayde Compton, Director, The Writer’s Studio
Wendy Norman, Student Life Educator, Leadership Programming
Student Engagement & Retention, Student Success, SFU Student Services
Julie Ovenell-Carter, Assistant Director – External, SFU Public Affairs and Media Relations
Mark Winston, Academic Director and Fellow, Centre for Dialogue
Robin Prest, Program Analyst, Centre for Dialogue
Brenda Tang, Administrative Coordinator, Centre for Dialogue

External to SFU:
Lizzy Karp, Founder, Rain City Chronicles
Sarah Van Borek, One Voice Music Project, Creative Director
Adam Dobres, One Voice Music Project, Sound Director
Kim Gilker, Communications and Program Coordinator, International Centre of Art for Social Change
Vancouver Public Library (VPL)
BC Libraries Association (BCLA)
Immigrant Employment Council of BC (IECBC)
Downtown Vancouver Business Improvement Association (DVBIA)
Business Council of British Columbia (BCBC)
Business in Vancouver (BIV)
Opus Art Supplies
Check Your Head
Sustainable Cities International
Vancouver Foundation Youth Philanthropy Council (YPC)
GenWhy Media
Keith McLean
Vancouver School Board
Burnaby School Board
Environmental Youth Alliance
OBJECTIVE TWO

Provide exceptional positive publicity for SFU and the Vancouver Foundation, positioning each as a contributor working with community to jointly create solutions.

The Vancouver Foundation is Canada’s largest community foundation and has a mandate to help build more vibrant, healthy and resilient communities across British Columbia. Simon Fraser University is Canada’s leading comprehensive university, and recently adopted a new strategic vision committing it to be “Canada’s most community-engaged research university”. With this in mind, the first Community Summit theme, Alone Together, was a perfect fit for both organizations in that it helped solidify and extend SFU and the Vancouver Foundation’s reputations as strong supporters of community connections and engagement.

The Community Summit amplified the Vancouver Foundation’s research on urban isolation and started a conversation that would last many months. By building on Vancouver Foundation’s research in creative and interesting ways, the SFU Public Square demonstrated its capacity as a trusted and credible convener for public dialogue. Indeed, both SFU and the Vancouver Foundation received positive recognition as active participants in the movement to address social isolation and disconnection in Metro Vancouver.

Highlights:

- Over 55 positive media stories about the SFU Public Square Community Summit
- SFU Public Square received several unsolicited notes of support from Metro residents
- Two municipalities developed programs to extend the work of the Community Summit and have sought SFU Public Square and Vancouver Foundation’s engagement
- The University of Montreal and Concordia University have sought advice on how they can learn from SFU’s engagement strategies
- The Vancouver Foundation has made engagement one of their two foundation funding priorities and are extending their Neighbourhood Small Grants Program to support further community initiatives

Testimonial

“I’m so impressed with SFU’s work in the community. I wish that UBC could develop this kind of presence in the city.” UBC Professor and participant in City Conversations Summit event

Lessons Going Forward:

- One shortcoming identified by SFU senior administration was the lack of consistent branding of the SFU engaged university in both the collateral and media messaging.
Going forward, SFU’s brand will be strengthened and recognized in all SFU Public Square materials.

Marketing and Public Affairs

A strategic marketing and communications plan was developed internally in advance of the Community Summit, and was enhanced with input from the Vancouver Foundation. The plan identified target audiences, key messaging, and communications vehicles for advancing the ideas generated through the Summit, the goals and desired outcomes for both organizations.

To reach a broad audience, SFU Public Square worked with media and other communication channels using a combination of ad buys, press releases, news, op-eds, blogs, poster campaigns and feature reporting. The outreach strategy began in June 2012 at the SFU Public Square program launch, with the announcement of the Vancouver Foundation/SFU Public Square 2012 Community Summit partnership, and continued until the Summit’s close.

Community Summit outreach, media and communications activities included:

- Invitations to the official public launch of the SFU Public Square initiative, where the Vancouver Foundation/SFU Public Square Community Summit partnership was announced (news), June 2012, sent to hundreds of SFU community members including students, academics, alumni and staff, and to Metro Vancouver community members across many sectors;
- An interactive website designed to educate and mobilize a diversity of audiences to participate with the Summit;
- A blog on the SFU Public Square website, featuring content related to the Community Summit theme and community engagement overall;
- Innovator Profiles on the SFU Public Square website, profiling community engagement practitioners and inviting visitors to engage with SFU Public Square website;
- Use of social networking tools like Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, and YouTube to extend outreach and encourage interface with new audiences;
- Building rapport with SFU internal public affairs, communications and marketing departments to ensure Summit messaging reached all three campus communities;
- Securing a media partnership with the Vancouver Sun which included the publication of 10 opinion pieces, each examining the Summit theme from a different perspective during the 12 days pre-Summit and one wrap up op-ed post-Summit; five days of colour banner print ads pre-Summit (one on the front page), online advertising campaign for the Summit running September 7 – 23rd, positioned on www.vancouversun.com Vancouver Sun home page and News channel;
- Cultivating a relationship with the Georgia Straight, leading to the prominent placement of four pieces on the SFU Public Square and Community Summit and a discounted media buy for two full page (one black and white, one colour) ads for the Community Summit in the two pre-Summit weeks;
• Launching a six week “guerilla” Inthistogether.cc poster marketing campaign pre-Summit to incite discussion, pique interest, drive traffic to the SFU Public Square Facebook page and engage target audiences in Summit activities;
• Engaging radio talk and public affairs shows to broadcast thematically relevant programs leading up to and throughout the duration of the Summit;
• Releasing media advisories in regional and community press, announcing the participants and the theme for the Summit (news) resulting in regional and national coverage;
• Inviting stakeholder groups, Summit partners and presenters to educate and mobilize their networks in support of the Community Summit theme and activities;
• Profiling a short video about the SFU Public Square, produced by Julie Ovenell Carter, on the SFU Public Square website, SFU and Engage websites, and on the SFU News YouTube Channel, SFU Public Square Playlist;
• Releasing a number of reports post-Summit - Mayors’ Roundtable, Our Voices youth conference, Business in Community and this Final Report

Outcomes:

The following list provides an overview of all of the media coverage for the SFU Public Square Community Summit in alphabetical order:

**Academica Group:**
1. “SFU builds on its ‘Engaged’ brand with new ‘Public Square’” – brief update – September 21

**AQ Magazine**

**Burnaby Now:**
1. “SFU Public Square profile” - August 23

**Business In Vancouver (author listed):**
1. “SFU Public Square and Vancouver Foundation engage local business community” – Jennifer Harrison – September 21

**CBC Radio (guest listed):**
1. Early Edition – August 21 – Shauna Sylvester – Library Challenge
2. Radio Canada (Phare Ouest) – August 28 – Elodie Jacquet – Library Challenge
3. BC Almanac – September 17 – Nora Young – Technology and Opening Night
4. Radio Canada (Boulevard du Pacifique) – September 17 – Scott McLean – Summit
5. On the Coast – September 18 – Dave Meslin – Opening Night at the Orpheum
6. Radio Canada (Phare Ouest) – September 21 – Elodie Jacquet - Summit

**CJSF:**
1. “Interview with Jackie Pichette – SFU Public Square” – September 20 – 4-4:30pm

**CKNW (guest listed):**
1. Bill Good - September 17 – Shauna Sylvester – Alone Together Summit

**First Perspective (Indigenous People news):**
1. SFU News Release – Laughing Irregardless

**Georgia Straight (author listed):**
1. “SFU president Andrew Petter chooses a road less travelled in forging connections” – Charlie Smith – September 6
2. “SFU Public Square Community Summit addresses feelings of isolation and disconnection” – Gail Johnson – September 11
3. “Shane Koyczan eager to help urbanites connect” – Janet Smith - September 13
4. “Straight Talk – Film Fest Explores Isolation in the City” – Adrian Mack – September 20

**Global TV - Toronto**
1. Dave Meslin appearance on The Morning Show – October 9

**Globe and Mail (author listed):**
1. Reporter Sunny Dhillon attended business luncheon/working on story on isolation among seniors
2. “The mental hump of community involvement” – Stephen Quinn – September 22
3. Video on Globe and Mail Site – featuring Shauna Sylvester – October 5

**Living Today (monthly Filipino Canadian Magazine):**
1. Anna Pansacola and staff attended Opening Night at the Orpheum

**News 1130 (guest listed):**
1. September 18 – Shauna Sylvester – Summit

**Novae Res Urbis (monthly planning magazine):**
1. Reporter Karenn Krangle attended Opening Night at the Orpheum

**Radio Canada (TV):**
1. Telejournal Colombie-Britannique – September 19 – Isolisation et jeune

**Restorative Justice in British Columbia (blog):**
1. “SFU Public Square forum all Next Week” – September 11

**South Asia Mail:**
1. “Alone Together Film Festival comes to Surrey” – September 21

**Spacing Vancouver:**
1. “SFU Public Square Summit aims to bring Metro Vancouverites closer” – September 7

**Surrey North Delta Leader:**
1. “SFU Surrey hosts Alone Together film festival” – September 21

**The Peak (SFU Student Newspaper):**
1. “When friend becomes a verb” – Urban Conspiracy Cabaret – September 17

**The Peak (Vancouver based radio station):**
1. Cory Ashworth promo of Rain City Chronicles – September 10-21

**Toronto Star**
1. “Social Isolation is biggest concern for residents, Vancouver survey finds” – October 9
**Vancouver Observer:**
1. “Alone Together: SFU Public Square “One Voice” video – September 19

**Vancouver is Awesome:**
1. “Rain City Chronicles – Extraordinary at the Vancouver Playhouse” – September 4
2. “Hey, Vancouver! Your mayor is awesome” – September 21

**Vancouver Sun:**

**Op-Ed submissions:**
- each submission ran with a box detailing Summit info, series, and listing SFUPS website
1. Gregor Robertson - September 7
2. Andrew Sixsmith - September 8
3. David Vogt & David Eaves – September 10
4. Bing Thom - September 11
5. Nora Young – September 12
6. Baharak Yousefi - September 13
7. Maureen Webb - September 14
8. Toby Barazzuol – September 15
9. Dave Meslin – September 17
10. Andrew Petter and Carole Taylor – September 24

**Tara Carman SFU PS articles:**
1. “SFU Summit searches for ways to build community” – Sept. 17 – in addition to Sun, article appeared on Canada.com and wire
2. “Improv helps youth unplug, build community” – Sept. 20 – in addition to Sun, article appeared on Canada.com and wire
3. “Workplace can be community for the lonely” – Sept. 21 - in addition to Sun, article appeared on Canada.com and wire

**Other:**
1. SFU Public Square logo appeared with four youth centered articles in print
2. Daphne Braham participated at City Conversations - September 21
3. Faye Wightman mentioned Summit in her Op-Ed on September 19
4. Live webcast of Orpheum Event – September 18
5. World premiere of “One Voice” video – September 18
6. “Opinion: Most Vancouverites happy with their connectedness” – Vickie Cammack and Donna Thomson, Special to the Sun – September 21
7. Vancouver Sun Business Blog “Protect books, not potash: let libraries open bookstores”

**World Journal:**
1. Interview with James Yang – SFU Public Square intern – September 13

**Additional:**
- Of note, SFU Public Square’s hashtag #sfups trended on Twitter in Vancouver from 7:40pm-1am on September 18.
- 2. CBC Radio’s North by Northwest (weekend show) scheduled two interviews with SFU Public Square presenters, however both times dropped out.
Lessons Going Forward:

Stay the course:

• Continue to build real partnerships with media outlets,
• Foster multi-channel outreach strategies,
• Develop personal relationships with key journalists,
• Clarify key messages and ensure all staff receive media training,
• Engage SFU Public Affairs and Media Relations (PAMR) staff at the outset, in the design and development of a media strategy, and maintain close communications in each phase of delivery,
• Provide timely and newsworthy information as soon as it is available to SFU PAMR,
• Maintain strong media monitoring and,
• Follow-up with key media partners.

Next year, SFU Public Square will further advance the “engaged university” SFU brand and extend our media and outreach strategies to include more ethno-cultural and national media.
OBJECTIVE THREE

Help to inform relevant organizations and governmental bodies on the issue, elevate the level of discourse, and provide a framework for understanding that takes into account a variety of perspectives.

Throughout the lead up to, the week of, and the month following the Community Summit, SFU Public Square and Vancouver Foundation staff actively engaged a wide variety of organizations and government officials on the issue of urban isolation. This intentional outreach, combined with educational programming, including profiling strategies for change, enabled the Community Summit to successfully increase the level of local discourse around issues of isolation and disconnection in the urban environment.

By hosting eleven events over six days, each unique in its style and target audience, the Summit appealed to many different demographics and brought unlikely groups together to engage with the issues. Event styles included: a closed door policy dialogue with mayors, a cabaret with local artists, a Pecha Kucha style event with librarians, and open space opportunities for grassroots community organizers. By building a partnership with mainstream media the Community Summit also allowed a number of thought-leaders (including leaders of local organizations and institutions) to share ideas and options for change.

Indeed, the mix of Community Summit event styles was intended to reach different audiences and incorporate a variety of perspectives in both traditional and unconventional ways; an approach that was validated by the comments received during our post-event evaluations, which indicated that there is a huge diversity of perspectives on how best to educate and engage audiences in addressing public issues. The Summit as a whole opened up dialogue on social isolation and disconnection from a number of perspectives, enabling different viewpoints and ideas for change to emerge.

Lessons going forward:

• Looking at the Community Summit as a whole, this objective was successfully realized. Where we fell short of meeting this objective was through some of our individual programs, e.g. we received some criticism for the lack of diversity on the Opening Night panel.
• As the Summit program developed, and the guerilla marketing and mainstream media strategies were implemented, the level of discourse grew in the public arena. Going forward, the SFU Public Square will continue to prioritize public outreach through media and promotional channels. In coming years, we will expand our strategic communications to ethno-cultural and audience specific print, broadcast and online channels.
OBJECTIVE FOUR

Engage citizens who have not traditionally participated in public dialogues and increase their knowledge and understanding of the issues.

By incorporating a variety of event styles, the Community Summit successfully provided opportunities for a wide range of individuals to engage with the issues highlighted by the Vancouver Foundation’s research. Where the Summit may have fallen short on meeting this objective was on increasing participation in public dialogues. While some events were both open to all citizens and conducive to productive conversation, several others, while open to the public, lacked a tangible discussion component.

Each community event brought attention to the issues of isolation and disconnection in a unique way. They appealed to different audiences, and often drew individuals who would not have otherwise encountered or considered the research. The media strategy for the Summit, including 10 op-ed pieces in the Vancouver Sun helped further boost interest and engagement with the Summit theme among Metro Vancouver residents, and beyond.

The Our Voices youth conference, Creating a Connected City: The Role of Business, and Mayors’ Roundtable Dialogue all provided meaningful opportunities for particular groups to consider their role in addressing the issues of isolation and disconnection. In each of these cases, individuals who do not typically participate in this kind of exchange of ideas (e.g. certain business leaders, high school and university students as well as out of school youth, mayors and councilors) were present and engaged.

Lunch Poems @SFU, the Urban Conspiracy Cabaret, Rain City Chronicles - Extra Ordinary, and the Alone Together Mini-Film Festival, were all public events that successfully increased engagement with the issues. Their formats however, while entertaining and appealing to wide audiences, were not conducive to genuine and productive dialogues.

The Opening Night at the Orpheum and Big Ideas for Libraries events came closer to meeting this objective, by engaging audience members, but as noted above, this engagement was limited. The Community Summit edition of City Conversations - Lonely in Vancouver, most successfully met this objective; open to all members of the public, it invited participants to discuss the issues as well as solutions. With standing room only, this event successfully engaged a wide public audience in a productive, albeit a very short, dialogue.

Lessons going forward:

• Taken as a whole, the Community Summit significantly increased public knowledge and understanding of the issue, and took large strides to include a cross-section of community members in serious and solution-focused dialogue.
• Going forward, the SFU Public Square will host activities that enhance greater dialogue and substantive interactions among participants.
OBJECTIVE FIVE

Champion innovators, research and stories of success to provide inspiration and motivation.

In providing a multitude of opportunities for Metro Vancouver residents to interact with thought-leaders, their work, and each other, the Community Summit successfully championed innovators, research, and stories of success. Moreover, survey responses, interviews and a review of Summit outcomes all reveal that the Community Summit provided inspiration and motivation to implement ideas and change in behaviours. Where the Summit could have gone further in meeting this objective, however, is in championing SFU-related research.

Each Community Summit event took strides to disseminate the Vancouver Foundation’s research in some way. The Connections and Engagement report, and a number of mini-reports by the Vancouver Foundation, were formally presented at the Summit edition of City Conversations, the Mayors’ Roundtable, and at the Creating a Connected City Business Lunch. The Foundation’s research findings were also mentioned and explored in a variety of ways at the Orpheum event, the Our Voices youth conference, Big Ideas for Libraries, the Urban Conspiracy Cabaret, Rain City Chronicles – Extra Ordinary, and the Alone Together Mini-Film Festival. Several of the Open Space recipients integrated the theme into their own activities.

The Vancouver Foundation’s research also received strong profile and media interest in the weeks leading up to and during the Summit; as did the opinions of thought leaders like Dave Meslin, whose unique interpretations of the issues and innovative ideas for change were highlighted in op-ed pieces published in the Vancouver Sun and on CBC.

Insofar as each event profiled innovators, and highlighted citizens or projects that bring people together, the Community Summit also provided a great deal of inspiration and motivation for change. Indeed, the Rain City Chronicles - Extra Ordinary event, which showcased citizens who have overcome isolation and worked to build community connections, provided hope and encouragement for audience members. A number of youth participants at the Our Voices event indicated they felt inspired to change their own behaviours and become more involved in their communities as a result of the conference. A particularly remarkable outcome at this event was the “connections wall”, which emerged organically over lunchtime; individuals at the conference began covering a wall at the Roundhouse Community Centre with stories of connection, isolation, and / or their own interests and contact information with the hopes of building relationships that would extend past the event.

Lessons Going Forward:

SFU faculty, students, staff and alumni engaging in constructive community work were profiled on the SFU Public Square website, but could have been further enhanced at Community Summit events. The exceptions were:
• SFU Professor Colin Browne’s poetry reading and SFU Alumni Charlie Demers MC role at the Urban Conspiracy Cabaret,
• SFU Professor Andrew Sixsmith’s opinion piece on seniors and isolation in the Vancouver Sun,
• SFU Librarian Baharak Yousefi’s pivotal role as lead coordinator at the Library event with support of Dean Charles Eckman and Karen Marotz
• SFU staff Dan Moxon’s performance in the One Voice Video and appearance as the lead singer of Bend Sinister at Opening Night at the Orpheum
• Former SFU TLC videographer Sarah Van Borek’s direction of the One Voice Music Project
• SFU Alumni Tara Mahoney’s involvement in the Youth Advisory Council for the Our Voices youth conference
• Michael Filimowicz, SFU Faculty and coordinator of the Philosopher’s Café’s design and coordination of the Alone Together Mini-Film Festival

In the future, SFU Public Square Community Summits should do more to involve and shine a spotlight on the work of SFU academics. For example, all future Summits should commission SFU-specific research and develop a communications and distribution strategy for this research.
OBJECTIVE SIX

Provide experiential learning and leadership opportunities for students and youth to engage with decision makers, the public and the issue.

This objective was successfully realized through two main avenues: the process of designing and delivering the Our Voices: Youth Building a Connected City conference; and through the engagement of students and youth as SFU Public Square volunteers and employees to prepare for and host all Summit events. While there is always room for improvement, future Community Summits should aim to emulate and build upon these successes.

An Advisory Committee of 15 youth and student representatives had nearly full control over the design of the Our Voices conference program. They gained relevant leadership experience as members of the committee, and as chairs and members of smaller sub committees, interacting with decision makers at SFU to design a realistic and innovative daylong conference.

Participants at the Our Voices conference had significant opportunities to grapple with the subject matter and take on leadership roles in small and large group activities. They also had an opportunity to engage in thematic roundtable dialogues with decision makers from across Metro Vancouver, including a City Councilor, Director of Transportation, and City Manager; and post-event surveys indicate participants found these experiences to be both rare and valuable.

SFU students and youth volunteers gained further leadership experience as they supported the design and delivery of the Summit as a whole. The SFU Public Square has only one full time staff member, and an Executive Director who works 50% on this project. The remaining resource team has been exclusively made up of students and volunteers. This team was deeply involved in the work of the Summit. Students were leading the way in outreach to communities, recruiting and training volunteers, and designing Summit events. Over 80 volunteers, a majority of whom were students, supported the Community Summit’s success in a number of ways: as note-takers, facilitators, greeters and more. Volunteers interacted with the public on behalf of SFU Public Square and gained knowledge of the Summit theme and hands-on event and promotions experience.

Lessons going forward:

The most important lesson going forward is to build upon the successes of this year’s youth engagement strategy.

- Continue to hire SFU students to staff the Community Summit office
- Recruit volunteers and interns to help design, deliver and evaluate the Community Summit activities
- Engage early and intentionally with youth organizations as Community Summit partners
- Promote widely through youth oriented communication channels
• Ensure Community Summit events are welcoming and appealing to young people

Perhaps the most important message we heard time and time again, particularly from SFU students, is to start our organizing process earlier and avoid September for hosting events.
OBJECTIVE SEVEN

Provide opportunity for cross-sector generation of knowledge, solutions, partnerships and collaborations to address isolation in the urban environment.

There were a number of instances during the Community Summit when SFU Public Square brought representatives from different social and economic sectors, regions, and demographics together to collaborate and generate ideas in support of community connections and engagement. In some cases, this effort could have been more explicit, and others it could have been taken even further to truly support innovation and cross-pollination of ideas.

The Mayors’ Roundtable Dialogue brought representatives from across Metro Vancouver to share experiences and lessons learned; something many of them expressed is not done frequently enough. In this way, SFU Public Square enabled Metro Vancouver’s leaders to develop strategies for addressing isolation in their own regions, reflecting upon the successes and setbacks of their neighbouring communities. Similarly, the Summit brought leaders from across the business community to discuss their sector’s role in supporting a healthy and vibrant community - many of whom might never have otherwise broached the subject.

Both of these efforts could have been taken further and demonstrated a more explicit cross sector generation of knowledge, if representatives from the separate groups (business and political communities), had the opportunity to interact and discuss ways of mutually supporting each other in the pursuit of a more connected city. A similar strategy could be applied to any combination of representatives from the not-for-profit sector, government, the academic community and more.

At the Our Voices conference, youth had the opportunity to share their concerns and ideas with decision makers, and decision makers had a chance to learn from the experiences and suggestions of a younger demographic; both City Conversations and Opening Night at the Orpheum provided a chance for thought leaders to hear questions and suggestions related to issues of isolation from a cross-section of citizens. While the Our Voices event generated a report of recommendations, events like the Orpheum and City Conversations could have gone further to support the identification and implementation of solutions by producing a record of discussion points.

Lesson Going Forward:

As we move beyond “launching” the SFU Public Square, we will examine ways of engaging more serious processes of cross-sector dialogue and deliberation. These processes will be informed by SFU commissioned research and engage a broad array of partners. While we believe we had a strong mix of partnerships and an appropriate level of exchange for our first Community Summit, we recognize that the program was shallow and wide rather than focused and deep. This was appropriate for the launch of an initiative that aimed to reach as broad a sector of the Metro Vancouver public through a
range of both substantive and “spectacle” style events. Going forward, we anticipate the pendulum to swing more towards serious dialogue on pressing public policy issues.
4.0 COMMUNITY SUMMIT EVENTS

VIP RECEPTION AND OPENING NIGHT AT THE ORPHEUM

TUESDAY 18 SEPTEMBER 5:30 – 9:30 PM
ORPHEUM THEATRE, VANCOUVER

The Alone Together: Connecting in the City 2012 Community Summit launched with a large-scale public forum at the Orpheum Theatre. The evening began with a VIP reception for SFU, SFU Public Square, Vancouver Foundation and Community Summit partners’ significant supporters, board members, as well as members of local government and the event’s performers. The Vancouver Foundation had a team of volunteers circulating the venue to engage participants by administrating a short survey on content from their Connections and Engagement Report.

Vancouver band, Bend Sinister opened the event, followed by spoken word poet, Shane Koyczan, and the world premier screening of the One Voice Music Project video. The centerpiece of the evening was a panel moderated by former journalist and SFU Chancellor, Carole Taylor, and four civic influencers from across Canada who provided differing perspectives on the Summit theme.

Community choreographer/Toronto based artist-activist, Dave Meslin, international award-winning urban planner Larry Beasley, Nora Young, author and host of CBC’s radio program “Spark”, and Vancouver Foundation Vice President of Public Engagement and Communications, Catherine Clement, comprised the panel of thought leaders. The panel mixed brief presentations with moderated discussions shaped by questions collected from the audience and via twitter. The evening ended with a surprise live closing performance by Bend Sinister and the One Voice musicians. The Vancouver Sun featured a live webcast of the entire event on its home page, which the SFU Public Square featured on its home webpage as well.

Testimonials

“Thanks for organizing such an entertaining and thought-provoking event! I attended the opening night at the Orpheum and thought that the venue was well chosen, the musical and poetry performances at the beginning were a refreshing way to begin a public dialogue, and the speakers were interesting and articulate. I hope to attend similar events in the future!”

“This is exactly what I’ve always wished SFU would do given our radical beginnings!!! Education is about transforming lives and communities--not just preparing a small percent of undergrads for graduate school!”

Over 1100 people attended Opening Night at the Orpheum, with over 150 guests in attendance at the VIP pre-show reception. A post-event online survey indicated that 87% of attendees were satisfied and found the event was enjoyable, 86% thought the event content was relevant and
interesting, and 73% of those who participated in the post-event online survey indicated they would attend an SFU Public Square event in the future.

The following strengths, shortcomings and lessons were identified, taking into account factors such as: the experiences of SFU Public Square staff, volunteers and partners who planned and delivered the event; the attendance rate; and feedback from audience members.

**Strengths:**

- The theme was interesting, thought-provoking and relevant
- There was a variety of programming options to attract and satisfy the needs of various target audiences
- Shane Koyczan and the One Voice Music Project video were considered the highpoints for many participants
- Social media activity was substantial, on night of this event the SFU Public Square hashtag #sfups trended on Twitter in Vancouver from 7:40 pm to 1:00 am
- The One Voice Music Project video received over 4000 views on the SFU News YouTube Channel over the course of the week following its premier screening at this event

**Shortcomings:**

- The panel of civic influencers was not perceptively diverse, in terms of age, ethnicity and/or political orientation
- Although some people appreciated the opening band, many felt the music was too loud and may have been inappropriate for the event
- The chosen venue’s seating capacity was too large given the short time frame for promotion leading up to the event, and further complicated by the fact that none of the speakers or entertainers were enough of a draw to fill the venue

**Lessons going forward:**

- In order to fill such a large venue and deliver a high quality event, planning should start earlier, and ideally the event should not take place so soon after students and faculty have begun the academic semester
- Strategies should be developed in advance such that if event tickets are not 50% sold by 2 weeks prior, efforts to fill the venue should be immediately implemented
- An on-site orientation with volunteers is mandatory and will help to clarify roles and better prepare for smooth event delivery
- If hosting a VIP reception, consider hosting it at a different location from the main event to avoid those attending the event, but not included in the VIP reception, feeling excluded
OUR VOICES: YOUTH BUILDING A CONNECTED CITY CONFERENCE

WEDNESDAY 19 SEPTEMBER, 9:00 AM – 3:00 PM
YALETOWN ROUNDHOUSE COMMUNITY CENTRE, VANCOUVER

At the Our Voices: Youth Building A Connected City conference, youth from across Metro Vancouver came together and explored the real and growing issues of isolation and disconnection in our city. Designed by an advisory committee of youth representatives, the conference program included a range of engagement styles such as visual art, drama, storytelling and thematic roundtable discussions with 10 influential decision makers1. As they participated in activities throughout the day, the youth inspired a vision for building a more vibrant and connected city, which has since been documented and shared (over social media, on the SFU Public Square website, and via e-mail; and in hard copies at SFU events) in a graphic-styled report. Their ideas stand to strengthen engagement across community and cultural divides, and support a more connected, happy and healthy city.

Approximately 80 youth, aged 15 to 26, participated at the conference. A post-event online survey administered to participants indicates the event was informative, empowering and inspirational; 100% of respondents agreed they: “learned more about the issues of social disconnection and isolation”, “had meaningful opportunities to voice their opinions and ideas at the conference”, and “felt inspired to get more involved in their community”. The vast majority (90%) of survey respondents indicated they would attend another SFU Public Square event in the future.

The advisory committee that planned the conference consisted of 15 youth and student representatives from across Metro Vancouver. In facilitated sessions with SFU Public Square representatives, committee members together, made decisions regarding all

Testimonials

“I gained the courage to do simple actions of connection, like making eye contact and smiling as I walk down the street or wait at the bus stop, and further inspiration to continue to be involved in community projects.”

“The fact that a youth group came up with the event, activities, flow, etc. was phenomenal. Nothing but good things to say about this event, truly.”

“Great initiative, amazing opportunity to meet other people, get inspired, make a difference, and influence policy makers. Great stepping stone to start engaging”

1 Patti Baccus, Chair Vancouver School Board; Laurie Anderson, Executive Director, SFU Vancouver; Jerry Dobrovolny, Director of Transportation, City of Vancouver; Andrew Brooke, Manager, Public Consultation, Translink; Andrea Reimer, Councillor, City of Vancouver; Kira Gerwing, Manager, Community Investment, Vancity; David McLellan, Deputy Manager, City of Vancouver; Gordon Harris, President and CEO, SFU Community Trust, Univercity
program activities, speakers, and themes. The advisory committee included representatives from SFU student groups, the Vancouver Foundation’s Youth Philanthropy Council, GenWhy Media, Check Your Head and Vancouver secondary schools.

Strengths:
- Participants valued the opportunity to interact and share ideas with influential members of their community
- The event successfully incorporated a variety of formats to encourage more substantive participation and engagement
- Advisory Committee members felt the final program met their expectations and reflected the ideas agreed upon at planning meetings (all members who responded to an online survey agreed they were “proud to have been part of the committee that planned the Our Voices Conference”)
- The event received substantial media coverage, including a detailed article in the Vancouver Sun
- The event’s graphic-styled report of recommendations has been widely shared and praised for its unique format

Shortcomings:
- Attendance was lower than expected
- The timing of the conference (during school hours) was not convenient for many participants and would-be participants
- The process of working with School Boards to facilitate attendance was difficult given the short amount of time between the end of summer vacation and the date of the conference

Lessons going forward:
- Hosting the event on a weekend (ideally not in the first month of the academic year) would facilitate attendance, particularly for university students and employed youth
- Inviting decision makers and civic influencers to listen and engage with youth creates a more meaningful and gratifying experience for youth
- More planning time is needed when working with an Advisory Committee. Clarity around expectations is also key (some members indicated they felt they became more of an ‘organizing’ committee rather than an ‘advisory’ committee)
- Connections with Lower Mainland School Boards should be made much earlier in the planning process to ensure increased participation from high school students
LUNCH POEMS @SFU

WEDNESDAY 19 SEPTEMBER, 12:00 – 1:00 PM
SFU HARBOUR CENTRE CAMPUS, VANCOUVER

Lunch Poems @SFU is a branded “SFU Public Square event” which is presented free for the public on the third Wednesday of every month. SFU Public Square hosted a special edition in honour of the Community Summit, featuring Canada’s first Parliamentary Poet Laureate, George Bowering, and emerging poet Cecily Nicholson.

Over 75 people attended the event. The audience was markedly diverse both culturally and socially as youths, seniors, poets, people new-to-poetry, poetry enthusiasts, general public and SFU student/staff/faculty, including an entire class of students and their teacher who travelled from Surrey for the event all were in attendance.

Strengths:

• Featured poet, George Bowering, was a huge draw alongside guest poet Cecily Nicholson
• Event was very well attended (Teck Gallery was full)
• The event was a successful collaboration among SFU Public Square, the SFU Writers’ Studio, SFU Vancouver Campus and the SFU Centre for Dialogue
• The event was planned and hosted by a committed and experienced volunteer committee who personally connect with participants before and after the event
• This SFU Public Square branded event is gaining respect in the poetry community – there is a sense of community among attendees, and a willingness to engage among poets and those interested in poetry

Shortcomings:

• Some participants found the ambient noise in the Teck Gallery to be distracting (although many consider the venue an asset)
• More should be done to attract individuals outside of SFU and poetry communities
• There could be more opportunities for engagement with audience members

Lessons Moving Forward:

• The program needs to develop better promotional materials and a broader distribution strategy
• In order to continue generating a large audience turnout and a high caliber of poets, the event must maintain the level of professionalism and organization that has earned the respect of the broader community
• Potential opportunities for audience engagement should be explored
OH THE PLACES WE’LL KNOW! BIG IDEAS FOR LIBRARIES IN COMMUNITIES

WEDNESDAY 19 SEPTEMBER, 6:00 – 8:00 PM
SFU HARBOUR CENTRE CAMPUS, VANCOUVER

This event was the brainchild of an engaged SFU Surrey Library employee, Baharak Yousefi, with the support of Dean of Library Services, Charles Eckman and Head, Belzberg Library, Karen Marotz. Prior to the Summit, the SFU Public Square put out a call to the public, encouraging citizens to submit their most creative and innovative ideas on how libraries could expand their role in building community. Twenty-four submissions were received. A selection jury was formed of staff from Surrey Libraries, BC Library Association, Vancouver Public Library, SFU Surrey Library and the Vancouver Foundation, and tasked with picking the top ten submissions. Those selected were each given 5 minutes to pitch their ideas to the audience at our Big Ideas for Libraries in Communities event at SFU Harbour Centre. Audience members provided written feedback on each of the presentations and selected their top three ideas. At the close of the evening, Faye Wightman, CEO and President of the Vancouver Foundation announced the winners and invited all ten presenters to apply for funding to support their ideas.

This event exceeded the expectations of everyone involved; both in terms of attendance at the event (over 150 people attended the sold out event), the level of enthusiasm displayed by attendees, and in social media and media activity leading up to the event. The public’s passion for libraries – community, public, school, or electronic - was overwhelming!

The session was video recorded and posted on the SFU Public Square playlist on the SFU News YouTube Channel to expand its reach and impact to a greater audience. Shauna Sylvester, ED of SFU Public Square was also featured on CBC’s The Early Edition with Rick Cluff, talking about this challenge.

**Strengths:**

- The event was well attended
- Audience members enjoyed and appreciated the format (blue-sky ideas generation) and the energy of the event
- Representatives of various organizations from within and outside the SFU community successfully collaborated to deliver the event
- Many audience members were from outside of the SFU community, signifying successful public outreach

**Testimonials**

“I really enjoyed the whole atmosphere--so charged, so energetic, so interesting!”

“The event felt honest, safe and creative. People talked about what mattered to them without fear of being judged.”
Shortcomings:

• There were limited opportunities for audience interaction and dialogue
• Due to short notice, fewer ideas than preferred were submitted for consideration
• The Head Librarian of Vancouver Public Library (VPL) expressed concern that the VPL had not been officially approached from the onset to play a leadership role in the event

Lessons going forward:

• The event format (presentation of ideas for using or improving public spaces / entities, followed by a vote and feedback component) resonated with participants and could be a model for future events
• More notice is required to enable higher rates in idea submissions
• Better communication with VPL could have been initiated at the conceptual stage
**CITY CONVERSATIONS – LONELY IN VANCOUVER**

**THURSDAY 20 SEPTEMBER, 12:30 – 1:30 PM**
**SFU HARBOUR CENTRE CAMPUS, VANCOUVER**

*City Conversations* is a free, bi-monthly, public lunchtime dialogue event, presented by SFU Public Square and delivered in partnership with SFU Vancouver and SFU City Program. Each session features brief presentations from knowledgeable people on current topics affecting Vancouver and the Lower Mainland, with the remaining minutes spent in conversation amongst attendees. City Conversations does not have lecturers and an audience, but rather presenters and participants.

As part of the Community Summit, this special edition of City Conversations featured an interactive dialogue on the Vancouver Foundation’s report on isolation in the region. It featured **Catherine Clement**, Vice President, Public Engagement and Communications at the Vancouver Foundation, **Lee Herrin** of Sentis Market Research, and **Daphne Bramham**, Columnist with the Vancouver Sun. The focus of the session was the drivers of change and pathways that may lead residents to become more active and connected in their neighbourhoods and communities.

Over 78 people were in attendance (standing room only). The session was also video recorded and posted on the SFU News YouTube Channel - SFU Public Square playlist, to expand access to a greater audience.

**Strengths:**

- The event was well-attended
- The discussion was energetic and engaging, focusing on causes as well as solutions to the issues of isolation and disconnection
- A diversity of views were represented (panelists did not all agree or share the same perspective)

**Shortcomings:**

- Given the high attendance rate and desire for participation, some participants were not able to pose their questions or share their comments
- There were individuals sitting on the stairs and standing in the doorway due to high attendance

**Lessons going forward:**

- There is a need for a more systematic approach to enabling audience participation, so that all attendees have an equal opportunity to contribute
- When large attendance is expected, the event should move to a larger venue
- A written record of the conversation and questions which were not discussed (due to lack of time) would allow for post-event engagement with the subject
CREATING A CONNECTED CITY: THE ROLE OF BUSINESS

THURSDAY 20 SEPTEMBER, 11:30 AM – 2:00 PM
TERMINAL CITY CLUB, VANCOUVER

An essential component of the Alone Together Community Summit, Creating a Connected City: The Role of Business was co-sponsored by the Downtown Vancouver Business Improvement Association, Business Council of British Columbia, Immigrant Employment Council of B.C., and Business in Vancouver. The goals for the event were to (1) provide the Metro Vancouver business community with insight into the Vancouver Foundation’s recent research on isolation and community connectedness and (2) consider the roles that members of the business community could and should play to help address these issues.

The dialogue encouraged open and solutions-oriented conversation by focusing on two areas of inquiry:

- Does business have a role to play in creating greater connectivity among citizens in the region? And if so, why, and what is that role?
- What are other initiatives that should be taken to address isolation and build greater connectivity in our cities? Who should take the lead?

Over 220 people from a range of businesses attended the event, several of whom expressed enthusiasm about having the chance to engage with the issue in a format which was quite different from a standard business luncheon. The content from the dialogue was recorded and included in a full report of the event, available online.

Comment received pre-event:

“I need to say that as someone who is working on opening and building a small business on a shoestring - like most small business start ups - and someone who is keenly interested in connecting with and contributing to the community - that's a core part of our business model - a $75 lunch (at the Terminal Club, no less) does not make me feel included in this very important discussion...”

Follow-up comments from the same participant after the luncheon:

“Thanks for working to make it all work smoothly.... As we now know, everything went splendidly, a tribute to your attention to the values and the details.”

“I just saw the Community Summit "Dialogue with Business Leaders" report and wanted to commend you on a job well done. Not only is the information presented in an aesthetically pleasing way but it is also an effective recounting of the day's proceedings. Kudos to you and your team.”
**Strengths:**

- The event was sold out. Attendees represented a good cross-section of Vancouver’s business community leaders, signifying successful outreach
- Some smaller businesses were extremely happy with the format which enabled them to network more easily (compared to other business lunches)

**Shortcomings:**

- Technical difficulties slowed the pace of the dialogue
- The topic was “too soft” to appeal to mainstream businesses – some business associations had difficulty recruiting members to the event
- The event took place at the same time as the major Vancouver Board of Trade fundraiser, which led to less attendance by more senior executives
- The shape of the room was not appropriate for the number of tables; recording and projection of the speakers on the video monitors would have helped overcome space limitations
- The note-taking was done by interns and in the end was not appropriate for reporting purposes

**Lessons going forward:**

- A sound and AV technician must be present throughout the event
- Scoping the room and layout of tables by the lead facilitator before booking the space is essential
- Other themes that are more directly related to business development will attract more participants
- Ensure note-takers are properly briefed and capable
URBAN CONSPIRACY CABARET

THURSDAY 20 SEPTEMBER, 7:30 – 9:00 PM
SFU GOLDCORP CENTRE FOR THE ARTS, VANCOUVER

How can the arts be an effective tool for connecting in the city? Together with the SFU School for Contemporary Arts and the SFU Woodward’s Cultural Unit, SFU Public Square hosted an evening of arts for civic revolution! The event featured local artists, each contributing entertaining cabaret performances. CBC’s Debaters’ Charlie Demers and Richard Side, served as MCs for the night, and their cast of co-conspirators included Colin Browne, Gamelan Gita Asmara, the High Society band, Veda Hille, Paul Keeling, Project Limelight and Margo Kane. The event used comedy, music and poetry to help disseminate information contained in the Vancouver Foundation report, and brought profile to local groups such as Project Limelight who actively work to build and strengthen resilient communities by providing arts opportunities for marginalized children in Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside. The finale of the show invited the audience to come on the stage and interact with the artists and each other.

Over 340 people attended the event, and a video recording and was shared, post-event, on the SFU News YouTube Channel - the SFU Public Square playlist - to expand it’s reach and impact to a greater audience.

Strengths:

• The event was well attended
• A variety of performances appealed to a wide audience
• The comedic approach provided access to an audience that might not have otherwise engaged with the issues
• The SFU Public Square, SFU School for Contemporary Arts and SFU Woodward’s Cultural Unit successfully collaborated to deliver this event

Shortcomings:

• The event was structured as a spectator or “audience” event. Although there were some opportunities for engagement, there was not enough apparent opportunities for audience interaction and dialogue
• Although it helped raise awareness of the issues of isolation and disconnection, the event did not lend itself to solution-focused idea generation

Lessons going forward:

• Featuring relatively high-profile individuals (e.g. CBC’s Debaters’ Charlie Demers and Richard Side) helps raise attendance
• Having a post-event reception with an interactive component (survey or facilitated dialogue) would enable deeper engagement with the issues and solution-oriented dialogue
At the Mayors’ Roundtable Dialogue, Metro Vancouver Mayors and Councilors gathered to obtain an in-depth and functional overview of the research conducted by the Vancouver Foundation on isolation and community connectedness in Metro Vancouver. This session also delved into the potential drivers of change identified in the second phase of the Foundation’s research, offered officials an opportunity to share insights on what has and has not worked in their municipalities to address isolation and build connectivity, and explored practical initiatives that local governments can lead, sponsor or promote to build greater connectivity within municipalities and across the region.

There were 15 Mayors and Deputy Mayors, and 2 City Councilors from Metro Vancouver in attendance. Several participants indicated they had a positive experience, found the session useful, and felt more sessions like this would be of benefit (as Metro Vancouver Mayors rarely have the chance to share information about successes and challenges from their municipalities).

Strengths:

- A majority of Metro Vancouver Mayors attended
- The dialogue was productive and engaging, facilitating knowledge sharing across Metro Vancouver communities

Shortcomings:

- The room was not entirely closed off, allowing for ambient noise and necessitating use of a microphone, making the dialogue less fluid
- Some Mayors would have liked to have had the chance to prepare their municipalities list of activities with City staff before sharing them with the broader group
- The follow-up report was not released in a timely fashion

Lessons going forward:

- When convening a more intimate dialogue such as this one, a private room is ideal

Testimonials

“it’s nice to be spending this much time talking about this issue. The data substantiates a lot of what I’ve already thought / suspected. Facilitating this and giving us this data is a huge start.”

“This was a wonderful opportunity to blue sky on a focused topic. Talk big ideas. A chance to think about the changing dynamic of the democratic process (archaic laws that don’t relate to our community), I would like to learn more.”
• Organizing the event after a board meeting was a successful strategic way of boosting attendance of Mayors, although hosting it at a venue walking distance from the board meeting would have reduced late arrivals
RAIN CITY CHRONICLES: EXTRA ORDINARY

FRIDAY 21 SEPTEMBER, 7:00 – 11:00 PM
VANCOUVER PLAYHOUSE, VANCOUVER

SFU Public Square partnered with Lizzy Karp and Karen Pinchin, co-founders of Rain City Chronicles, in the production of this public evening of storytelling and music. Extra Ordinary cast the spotlight on the unseen and unsung heroes within the region who are working to build connectedness in their community. Featured were a number of the Vancouver Foundation’s Neighbourhood Small Grants recipients, SFU alumni, and other unexpected presenters sharing their inspirational stories of connection. The night was a huge success, and the post-show reception was well attended.

This event provided ample opportunity for informal interaction, information dissemination and conversation at the pre and post-show receptions. The Vancouver Foundation conducted activities during the pre- and post-show periods, asking people to provide their ideas on what community means to them and answer survey questions related to their research. SFU Public Square volunteers manned a button display, encouraging audience members to choose a button from our collection of four, each button inscribed with a different message - Connect, Engage, Community, or, Together. To the delight of the audience and presenters, as part of their Summit sponsorship contribution Vancity donated 300 cupcakes for the post-show reception.

The Vancouver Playhouse was sold out for this event (670+ people in attendance), with dignitaries including the Mayor of Vancouver and two Vancouver City Councilors in attendance. Vancouver Mayor, Gregor Robertson, and SFU President, Andrew Petter, also had prominent speaking roles at the event, each sharing personal stories related to the theme. The session was video recorded and posted on the SFU Public Square playlist on the SFU News YouTube Channel to expand its reach and impact to a greater audience.

One significant outcome is a new grassroots project - A Good Book Drive, which was created as a result of one of the stories told at the event. The project consists of an annual book drive to encourage literacy and bring stories to a new generation of readers, and support kids in need of new books.

Strengths:

• The event was well attended
• A number of individuals’ and community organizations’ projects were highlighted and appreciated
• Stories drew attention to both the issue of isolation as well as potential solutions
• Audience members enjoyed the musical performances
• A post-event reception provided an opportunity for audience interaction
Shortcomings:

- Some audience members did not like sponsors being profiled at the beginning of the event

Lessons going forward:

- Partnering with an organization with an existing fan base (e.g. Rain City Chronicles), gives an event credibility and helps draw a larger audience
- The Vancouver Playhouse is a good size venue for a medium-to-large scale event
ALONE TOGETHER MINI-FILM FESTIVAL

SATURDAY 22 SEPTEMBER & SUNDAY 23 SEPTEMBER
WESTMINSTER SAVINGS CREDIT UNION THEATRE, SFU SURREY

The Alone Together Mini-Film Festival was held at the SFU Surrey campus in the Westminster Savings Credit Union Theatre (a world class HD digital and 3D theatre system). Two screenings were scheduled, featuring films that address the critical and growing issue of declining feelings of belonging, neighborliness and human connection in our urban cities. The festival opened on Saturday with An Evening Tribute to Shorts, 7:00 – 9:00 pm, screening a collection ranging from animation and experimental, to documentary and narrative films that explored the nuances of belonging, migration, identity and human connection. The following day, the festival presented Sunday Afternoon at the Cinema, 2:00 – 4:00 pm, highlighting the feature-length documentary “This Space Available” which explored how billboards and commercial advertisements dominate our public space, and “One Voice”, the SFU Public Square produced short music video that demonstrates the power of music as a connecting force. On Saturday, a post-screening dialogue with four of the filmmakers was held.

The festival was picked up by a number of media outlets, and received positive review on the online media channel Vancouver Weekly. Five local filmmakers and over 75 audience members attended the festival.

Strengths:

• A variety of films tackling different issues related to isolation were showcased
• Audience members had the opportunity to interact with some film-makers in a post film-screening dialogue
• The event location provided access to SFU’s Surrey community
• Excellent support from local volunteers

Shortcomings:

• The film festival was not well organized. The materials were late to be distributed, and a delay in the SFU Public Square website coming online created issues in receiving festival submissions in a timely manner, making programming difficult. Consequently, there was not enough time between receiving film submissions, creating the program, and event execution to adequately promote the festival. There was not a mitigating strategy in place to ensure that a festival program was still prepared and promoted, regardless of interruptions and delays. Further, due to delays, filmmakers were not informed in a timely manner about their films inclusion in the festival, making it problematic to secure confirmation of their presence at the festival, and having them present for post-screening dialogues.
• The scale of the festival was much smaller than originally planned and the audiences were smaller than expected
Lessons going forward:

- More lead time and organization is required to plan and promote an event of this size (the screening program must be in place at least 30 days before the event)
- Frequent and clear communication between all parties involved in the planning process is crucial to the delivery of a successful event, and ensuring expectations are met
OPEN SPACE AT SFU

18 – 23 SEPTEMBER
SFU SURREY, SFU BURNABY, SFU VANCOUVER CAMPUSES

Over the balance of the Summit dates, each of the SFU campuses (Surrey, Vancouver, Burnaby) provided free meeting space for individuals and groups, to self-organize their own community events. Applications received to our public open call were reviewed and successful applicants were granted use of a space at the SFU campus of their preference. Each Open Space participant also received a $500 sponsorship to spend at their discretion on their session. Formats were varied and innovative, from world cafés, to arranging an SFU space like a living room and inviting onlookers to participate. Overall, nineteen groups representing diverse communities across Metro Vancouver (children and youth, seniors, immigrant, mental health and healthy living organizations) participated in the Open Space program as part of the Community Summit. Taking into account the positive feedback, suggestions for improvement, and requests for a repeat program, Open Space has potential to be a successful offering for future Community Summits.

Testimonials

“SFU’s generosity made it possible for us to have a wonderful evening to celebrate and deepen our friendship with our Bhutanese friends and with the volunteers and supporters of Miracle Connection. It was also great to see how delighted our Bhutanese friends were in being able to have the celebration at SFU. I hope SFU’s support for grassroots groups like ours continues”

“As a result of this event, our e-mail list has grown from 7 to 24. Our Facebook group (Village Surrey) has 32 members and has been generating excellent discussion and sharing. The group is in the process of exploring future opportunities to meet, build relationships and move forward with some of the energy and ideas that arose as a result of this event”

Strengths:

• 19 community groups, representing diverse communities across Metro Vancouver received support to host events
• The program boosted SFU’s standing as a community supporter and showcased some of SFU’s assets in terms of event space
• The evaluation for this program had a very high response rate (all but 3 recipients provided a summary of activities and testimonials), providing SFU Public Square with valuable feedback
• A number of the groups designed their open space program to be in alignment with the overall Summit theme, therefore extending the conversation out more broadly among community members

Shortcomings:

• More groups would have applied with increased lead time
• Some groups were unclear about catering rules, and / or were disappointed that they did not submit catering requests in time for their event

Lessons going forward:

• Providing evaluation forms in advance is a good way of ensuring a high response rate and a better understanding of a program’s success
• Providing very clear communication about all university rules related to the use of space (including catering) will help avoid confusion and increase satisfaction
• Provision of free space for groups to self-organize is a needed and valued offering
CONCLUSION

The SFU Public Square’s first Community Summit successfully positioned SFU as an “engaged university”. As documented throughout this report, there were many successes and many lessons learned through our 11 event, six-day Summit. Most notably, the Summit achieved the following:

- It reflected a diversity of communities and opinions on the issues of urban isolation and disconnection;
- It provided a broad range of ways for Metro Vancouver residents to participate through their school, university, community organization, and virtually through the website, social media and mainstream media;
- It facilitated learning, informed dialogue and some deliberation on solutions to address urban isolation and build greater community connectivity;
- It enabled SFU Public Square to forge new partnerships within and outside the university;
- It amplified and increased the impact of the Vancouver Foundation research;
- It precipitated an important policy initiative to create an Engaged City Task Force for the City of Vancouver and a new initiative to host a Community Summit in the City of Surrey;
- It successfully raised funding from a variety of sources;
- It garnered positive attention for SFU and highlighted SFU’s new vision to become the “most community engaged” research-driven and student oriented university in Canada;
- It provided a means for SFU students, faculty, staff and alumni to engage with an externally oriented SFU community initiative;
- It produced several resources documenting Community Summit events and initiatives, which have been made available publicly to advance the practice and scholarship of community engagement.

The SFU Public Square 2012 Community Summit would not have been possible without the leadership of SFU President Andrew Petter, SFU Chancellor Carole Taylor, VP External Relations Philip Steenkamp and a myriad of SFU staff, faculty and students. When one considers the timeline in which the inaugural Community Summit was conceived and then delivered, it is astonishing how much SFU achieved in such a short period of time. As we prepare for 2013, we look forward to implementing the lessons learned over this past year and building on the incredible base of good will and support that has been created.