



Name of Organization: The Building Capacity Project

Name of Project: Kitsilano Neighbourhood House

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What happened last year: In 2021, Kitsilano Neighbourhood House implemented its Buddy Program, mounted some new dementia-inclusive outdoor programming, and recruited for a Dementia Advisory Committee. The Buddy Program started out by hosting 2 trainings so participants could learn about dementia and spread awareness in the community. The activities included: a Dementia 101 training facilitated by the Alzheimer Society of BC. Twenty-seven participants attended the training, 11 of whom expressed interest in becoming a dementia buddy. This was followed by a second ASBC-facilitated training that took the form of a small presentation followed by a round table discussion, which was attended by 4 of the initial dementia buddies.

During the summer months, Kits House successfully hosted several outdoor activities in the park and other places along 4th Ave. and Broadway. These activities focused on arts, movement and play, and were intended as opportunities to connect with the larger community and to build new connections with people of all ages, including people in the community living with dementia. Finally, throughout the year, Kits House conducted outreach to people with lived experience who were ready to be an advocate for people in their community. The outreach resulted in connections with two people, and the goal was for these two people to help create awareness and build capacity around dementia in Kits House Programming, and ultimately act as a Dementia Advisory Committee.

Challenges and opportunities: For the Buddy Program, the challenge is to build on the knowledge gained in the initial sessions by providing scenario-based training so participants can be familiar and comfortable in providing support to people with dementia inside and outside of program settings. The biggest challenge overall is to identify who has dementia and engage those people in the organization (both within and outside of programs) in a way that allows them to feel safe, supported and included.

What's envisioned for next year?

Kits House plans to build on each of these initiatives. In order to create conversational spaces that increase awareness of dementia among the KNH community as well as a feeling of safety for people living with dementia, Kits House will initiate Dementia Dialogues, a series of conversations about dementia.

Along these lines, the Advisory Committee will seek to reconnect and transform the committee into a series of focus groups (also including care partners, and community members) to guide Kits House in their actions to become more dementia friendly.

The Buddy Program will seek to expand its training to all volunteers who are interested in supporting seniors, and then provide complementary training for those interested in becoming Dementia Buddies, and potentially partner Buddies with a person with dementia within programming or within the community (e.g. to go shopping, for a walk, etc.).

Finally, Kits House's Dementia-Inclusive Programming initiative will seek to build capacity in staff members, including program facilitators in a range of seniors programming (Osteofit, Chair Yoga, Choose to Move, Seniors Lunch, Art and Music classes, and in partnership with DRA and SGSC, outdoor programming), and to brand these programs as dementia-friendly using the Fireweed Logo.