

Some Salient Points from “...And They Called a Meeting...”
- A brief history of the LSPC (1961-1999)

From the Introduction...

Re: Mission: “...helps provide a voice to those not being heard. We bring people together to promote social and economic justice.” (Brenda Reimer, 1998)

‘ “Scanning the panorama of human needs” means researching and analyzing health, welfare and recreation needs in the community, finding out what is being done about those needs, evaluating existing services and eliminating duplication.’

‘ “Drawing up plans to meet needs and mobilizing action to fill gaps” often means doing the actual work of initiating services agencies or lobbying government for them.’

‘...consulting the community at all levels of planning. It has insisted that planning must include social concerns and that economic planning alone is not sufficient.’

Services Initiated or assisted;	Big Brothers/Big Sisters Assn Canadian Mental Health Assn Castlegreen Housing Coop Child Care Services (City of TB) Community Residence (City of TB) Council on Positive Aging (COPA) Family Services TB Handicapped Action Group Inc. (HAGI) Handi Transit Lakehead Fundraising Assn Meals on Wheels Options for Youth Superiorview (housing for individuals with disabilities) Voluntary Organizational Leadership Training (VOLT) Volunteer Centre William W Creighton Youth Services
Tasks assumed:	Research Service initiation Communication about community services Coordination of community services

From The 1960s: Instant Success...

- Initial meeting convened Mar 14, 1961. Focus:
 - The formation of a Rehabilitation Council
 - A possible Rehabilitation workshop
 - Duplication of services
 - A central registry
- In 1962 estimated \$11.25 million going into area local welfare and a “Social Planning Council” is needed to manage the needed associated research
- First organizational meeting of LSPC (constitution and by-laws in hand) was on Jan 18, 1963 at LU – intent to set up organization to i) develop services to meet identified needs, ii) to increase communication, iii) to provide information. First Board established 1966. Funding from local municipalities, United Appeal, memberships both individual and organizational. Took two years to sell 175 memberships
- “We stand at a threshold...let us hope that we will devote our energies toward creating communities which will lift men up.” (Susan Simonsen)
- Objectives by end of 1960s:
 - To facilitate planning/coordination of all health, social welfare, rehab, recreation services to promote efficiency
 - To improve the quality of service of health, social welfare, rehab agencies
 - To study community needs and resources
 - To develop public understanding of aims of health, social welfare, rehab agencies
- Had standing ctees on i) membership and ii) public relations; 1970 budget \$16,500, 66% from United Appeal

From The 1970s: Doing a Great Deal of Everything...

- ‘Planning and policy making’ became an additional major focus in 1970s
- Staff overworked, committees got off topic, little guidance from Board; toward end of 70s Board assessed situation; took mandate to annual meeting; membership wanted more of everything!
- A lot accomplished in ‘70s; stable to growing funding from United Way/City and with much make-work government-grant \$

- Board set out a refined Vision:
 - Citizens must be involved in influencing decisions that affect their lives
 - Planners must be responsible to the community (!!)
 - All citizens have right to equality of access
 - Poverty has many causes and society has responsibility to eradicate same
 - Prime responsibility to push toward a socially healthy community, therefore LSPC will have the disadvantaged as one of its main concerns

- Efforts focused in 1970s on children and youth, on persons with disabilities, on local housing crisis, on poverty, mental health, and seniors, on planning/policy, and on the notion of a 'central registry'.

From the 1980s: Crunch Time, and Starting Again from Scratch...

- The money dried up and simply carrying on became an enormous challenge! LSPC had to raise prices and go out into community cap-in-hand; it also had to finally begin choosing among priorities.

- From published research material (e.g., *The Forest Industry in Northwestern Ontario: A Socio-economic Study from a Social Planning Perspective*) and the well-known left-leaning background of the Executive Director of the day, the public got the idea that LSPC had become politicized. Great Lake's union demanded in 1983 that none of its donations to United Way should be directed to LSPC. Projected LSPC funding went down from \$44K to \$30K; LSPC objected re United Way policy and the United Way Board retaliated by cutting the allocation to \$15K, and expelling LSPC from United way membership. LSPC threatened legal action and United Way relented for 1983. LSPC was still in 2001 not a member of United Way, a condition affecting only two other of the 14 social planning councils across Ontario.

- City followed suit in 1985 reducing the LSPC contribution from \$48K in 1983 to \$0 in 1985. LSPC went into fund raising mode, including bingos and the precursor to its Christmas Fest, what became its single largest fund raising event of the year. City funding was reinstated to the tune of \$21K in 1985. LSPC's efforts in the fundraising arena eventually resulted in the formation of the Lakehead Fundraising Association.

- In 1980 LSPC's fundraising efforts raised \$3,000; by 1989 that figure had been bounced to over \$72K. And despite the additional efforts devoted by mainly volunteers to fundraising, the community work continued. The secret became prioritization.

- During the 1980s Council efforts focused on i) persons with disabilities, ii) family, children, and youth, iii) poverty, and iv) planning and policy. The Council “spun-off” the Council on Positive Aging and the Volunteer Organizational Training organization, and, after some ‘dancing’ with the City, in 1982 initiated the Community Information and Referral Center, the precursor of 211.
- The first computer was acquired in 1987 with Wintario funding.
- In 1989, the LSPC was recognized for its service to the public at the City of Thunder Bay’s 13th Annual Awards for the Official Recognition of Citizens of Exceptional Achievement.

From the 1990s: Staying Power Reconfirmed...

- “The LSPC came into being and continues to exist because there are people who share the values of active community participation, volunteerism, diversity, equity and social justice and are willing to support these values with their time, their abilities and their dollars” (Brenda Reimer)
- Things changed:
 - No more lengthy discussions/debates at board meetings because of the need for efficiencies coupled with new technologies
 - Committee make-up moved from community volunteers to Board members (!)
 - Many new organizations took over roles formerly carried by LSPC (which was really LSPC reaping its own rewards having established the groups initially)
 - Focus on social research, much via government contracts
 - Worked toward solutions in areas of poverty, persons with disabilities, unemployment, children’s services, housing, and minorities
 - Expanded centralized community information resource
 - By 1998 the earned/fund-raised portion of revenues totaled \$170K, close to 90% of budget
 - Much work in Children’s and Senior’s programs
- Financial constraint hit again in 1995; provincial funding cut in mid-program, and City funding decreased over time – strategically government (Mike Harris) was viewing services as the responsibility of the individual; downloading to municipalities became rampant and local governments were caught in the bind and had to reorder priorities.
- Interest/work in Poverty continued through the 90’s; LSPC became involved in The Poverty Project in 1997 and was designated as the local contact for Project 2000-Child Poverty in Canada

- There was some LSPC success (in part in partnerships) in the area of ‘Persons with Disabilities’ during the 1990’s, in part because ComSoc continued funding in the area.
- The latter 1990s saw LSPC involved, usually as a partner, in among other projects:
 - Human Services Data Base Project
 - Strategic Planning for Settlement Services (for newcomers)
 - Quality of Life Index project
 - Study on Not-for-Profit organizations
- The Community Information and Referral Center (CIRC) bloomed. CIRC’s databases became computerized in 1995 and by 2001 it was handling about 8,000 public inquiries; it was also responsible for LSPC’s coordination and communication role and produced a number of handbooks. It had become a central registry and even sold some database information. CIRC’s activity became so intense that in 1994 the LSPC Board decided to develop separate Mission Statements for CIRC and for LSPC.
 - LSPC Mission Statement (1994): The LSPC is a dynamic, not-for-profit planning agency, which promotes effective, efficient, responsible community services by:
 - Identifying and researching social issues
 - Providing information and referral services
 - Bringing people together to provide workable solutions to community concerns
 - CIRC Mission Statement (1994): The CIRC serves TB and surrounding area by providing accurate, up-to-date information on community services, organizations, clubs, events and activities. We assist organizations and the general public in accessing information and the resources they require and identify gaps in services. We work with individuals and groups to meet their needs and improve community well-being.

From The Road Ahead...

- The 1999 Board provided the following as most important achievements of LSPC:
 - The organization’s capacity to survive in the face of significant constraint, and the ability to be creative in facilitating that survival
 - The organization’s success at service development to meet local needs
 - Organizing and promoting advocacy on issues at various levels of government, and by connecting people/organizations with common interests
 - The successful implementation of the Community Information and Referral Center
 - The strength of LSPC’s role in advocating for the improvement of the quality of life of all residents of the City and district

- The 1999 Board suggested the following future priorities for LSPC:
 - Continued organizational growth and capacity, including determining a greater level of sustainability.
 - Continued community advocacy
 - Expansion of LSPC's roll in Information Service

- LSPC's values from the 1998 Action Plan:
 - the inherent worth and dignity of all individuals
 - the strength of individuals, organizations and the community
 - citizen participation
 - equal opportunity
 - collaborative partnerships
 - diversity.