

Learning from the James Bay Neighbourhood Association Project



A collaborative and strategic journey to improve the air quality and well-being in their neighbourhood

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	2
About this project	4
Background: The James Bay Neighbourhood Association (JBNA) and Air Quality.....	5
Interviews	7
THEME # 1: Assets for a Strong Neighbourhood Association	9
Assets for Strong Neighbourhood Associations Checklist	11
THEME # 2: Building Useful Partnerships	12
Building Useful Partnerships Checklist.....	13
THEME # 3: Pursuing Change.....	14
Pursuing Change Checklist	15
THEME # 4: Identifying Challenges	16
Identifying Challenges Checklist	18
Appendix 1: Abridged History of James Bay	19
Appendix 2: Interview Questions.....	20
Appendix 3: Interview Responses.....	21
Appendix 4: Links for Further Information	27
Appendix 5: VIHA studies of James Bay Air Quality:	27

About this project

The main goal of this project is to contribute to growing multi-sector interests in:

- Meaningful community engagement
- The ‘healthy communities’ field of study and practice
- Health prevention strategies
- Measurement and monitoring of human health at a community/local level

This project aims to document and share the processes, successes and challenges of the James Bay Neighbourhood Association (JBNA) in identifying local environmental quality and health issues associated with land-use associated impacts and mobilizing resources to try to address those impacts.

The Vancouver Island Health Authority (VIHA)’s interest in this project is to document, learn, share, and inspire others about the neighbourhood role and action in environmental quality and health issues and to provide information which may be of assistance to stakeholders (including Health Authorities, government agencies, academics etc.) in working positively with neighbourhood associations to address health concerns.

Between 2009 and 2011, VIHA participated in the Healthy Canada by Design initiative, funded by the Canadian Partnership Against Cancer (CPAC) through the Coalition Linking Action and Science for Prevention (CLASP), and the Real Estate Board of British Columbia.

The JBNA has been in existence for several decades, and VIHA has been involved along with a number of key partners with their air quality improvement project since approximately 2006.

For this project report, VIHA and JBNA met in the Fall of 2011 and developed project objectives and outcomes. Interview questions about the successes, challenges, aspirations and work related to air quality in the James Bay area were developed and used in interviews with a total of 10 individuals from various agencies and organizations in order to gain information about their unique role, opinions and perspectives about JBNA’s ongoing work to advocate for improved air quality.

In November and December 2011 a Community Planner retained through the Healthy Canada by Design project (Heather Evans, Community Planner, and MCIP), conducted the interviews and assisted in the creation of this document.

Using the results of interviews with the JBNA and partner agencies, four themes/aspects were developed for neighbourhood associations considering advocating for systemic change in their community. These themes contain succinct summaries of lessons learned by JBNA and its partners, and a checklist to provide a quick and easy way to absorb these lessons.

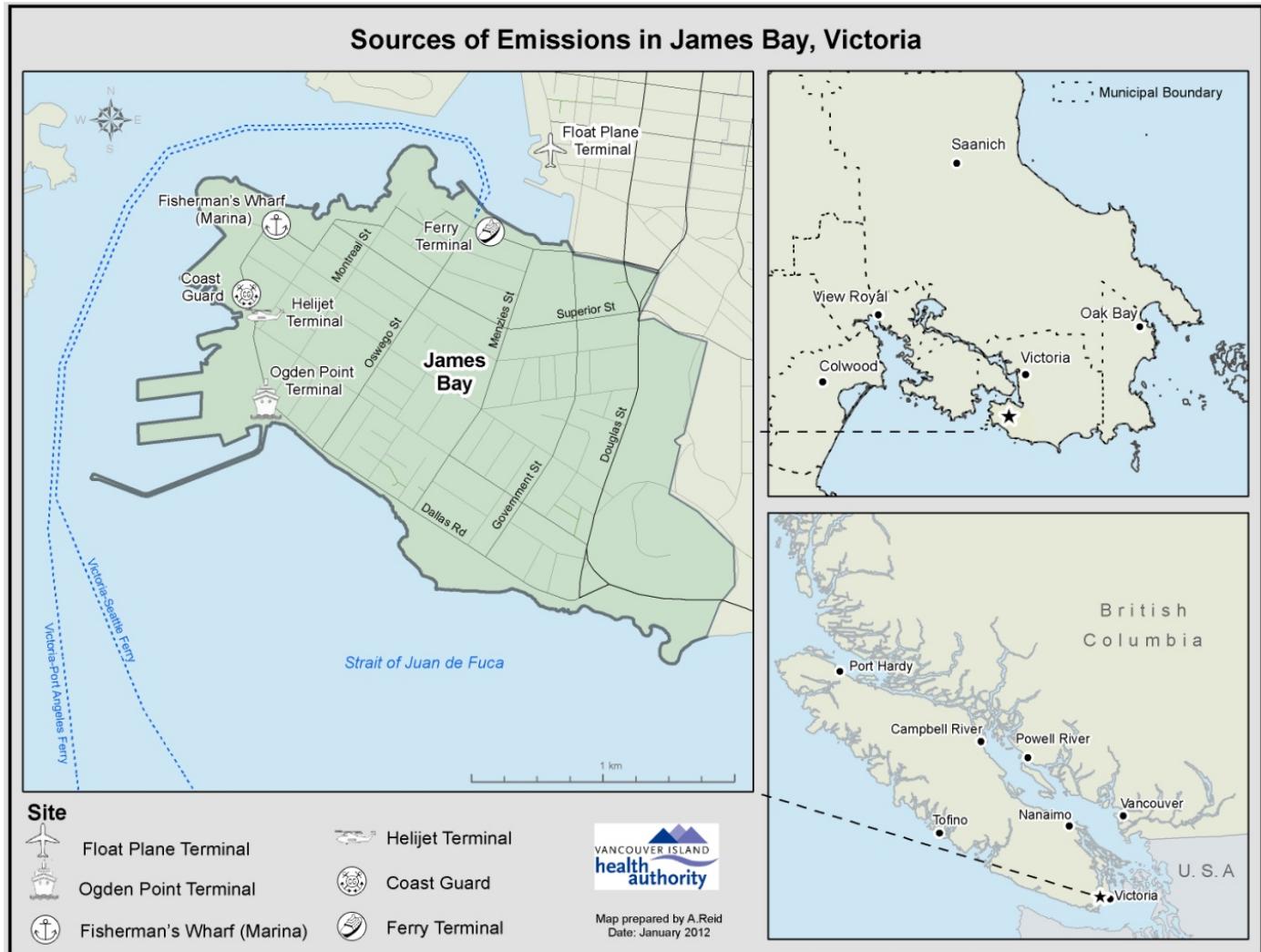
The four themes/aspects are:

**Assets for Strong Associations,
Building Useful Partnerships,
Pursuing Change, and
Identifying Challenges.**

Background: The James Bay Neighbourhood Association (JBNA) and Air Quality

For nearly a decade, the growth of transportation traffic, including airborne, marine and road-based traffic in James Bay, has been of concern to the community. See Map 1.

MAP 1



Over the years, citizens in the area have increasingly complained of fumes and noise from the harbour activities to public health departments, the City of Victoria and other government agencies. Land use changes from industrial to residential uses such as high-rise development has led to increased densification of residential development adjacent to water areas where Cruise ships, International Ferry traffic, helijet and float plane activities occur and associated emissions were often encountered.

For the JBNA it was difficult to find clear answers as to whom these issues should be addressed, since a number of attempts to address these issues in the past had met with no success. At the same time a continued devolvement of federal jurisdiction over all harbours in Canada contributed to a jurisdictional vacuum.

A JBNA survey of residents and found that noise, air pollution and traffic congestion tied to relatively recent and dramatic increases in cruise ship visits and the associated land-based movement of people and goods were of particular concern for James Bay residents.

The JBNA contacted VIHA with their concerns. Serendipitously, public health had been considering the 'neighbourhood association' level of community organization as a starting point for community engagement when addressing environmental health priorities, such as ambient air pollution. The evidence presented by JBNA to VIHA indicated that a 'neighbourhood level' investigation into the question of potential air degradation associated with the dramatic increases in cruise ship activities appeared reasonable.

Subsequently, VIHA raised the JBNA concerns with other members of an existing Capital Regional District (CRD) Air Quality working group (AQWG) hosted by CRD staff whose members consisted of government agencies and academic institutions who advised the CRD staff on annual reports of regional air quality monitoring. VIHA's proposal was to add a neighbourhood level assessment of air quality to the CRD's regular regional air monitoring data collection analysis. The other AQWG members were also interested in investigating air pollution at the neighbourhood level and, together, developed a broader plan to address the issue.

The Ministry of Environment (MOE) had recently acquired air monitoring equipment that needed a first time set-up and field testing. A current air pollution researcher with the University of Victoria took the lead in setting up a two year air monitoring plan in consultation with MOE and collaborated with an appropriate master's student interested in the project. The CRD staff facilitated MOE setting up the equipment in a location best suited to continuously monitor air quality over a cruise ship season. VIHA continued to work with all the interested partners over the intervening years which grew to include a representative from the Greater Victoria Harbour Authority and another member familiar with cruise ship air pollution from Transport Canada.

All of the reports related to the air pollution modelling and monitoring can be found on the websites listed in Appendix 5.

The main findings were that increases in sulphur dioxide (SO₂) air pollution, from the high sulphur fuel used by cruise ships, occurred during the cruise ship season (spring to fall) and that short term spikes of SO₂ measured in the James Bay monitoring locations were correlated with cruise ship activity. The magnitude and the duration of the SO₂ air pollution were related to the docking and departing of ships; the number of ships at port and the current weather conditions. SO₂ is known to cause exacerbation of asthma symptoms and breathing problems in persons with lung disease. The peak values exceeded World Health Organization recommended short-term levels but did not exceed Provincial Ambient Air Pollution levels. However, these scientifically-derived results provided a starting point for discussions about future cruise ship air emissions and the potential impact on the health of residents in James Bay.

VIHA's Medical Health Officer, in consultation with the BC Center for Disease Control, conducted a health review of the air pollution findings. At the same time that this report was being developed a fortuitous outcome occurred: Transport Canada announced a joint Canadian/North America initiative to improve air quality in coastal region's ports by requiring lower sulphur fuels for all marine traffic within certain distances of shore, called Emission Control Areas (ECA), starting in August 2012.

Consequently, the health review report recommended continued air monitoring during the next 3 cruise ship seasons with recommended precautions for individuals in the community with existing respiratory conditions. An online website was created linked with real-time hourly SO₂ air pollution measurements

so that concerned individuals could plan activities around any peaks SO2 levels. The health review asked for voluntary use of lower sulphur fuels by the Cruise Lines, if possible, with the expectation that SO2 emissions from cruise ship traffic would decrease over time due to a legislated steady lowering of sulphur content in marine fuel requirements starting in August 2012.

The teamwork and contributions from many sources provided a strong body of scientific evidence from which to move forward.

However, planners and other health Authorities, expressed interest in the **story** of the process and details about those aspects of this project that are not captured in the scientific studies – the human element and dynamics of working as partners with community members and institutions. This project attempts to document some of those *qualitative aspects* of any collaboration that helps to bring issues into greater focus.

The perspectives gathered through personal interviews of those involved allows for a broad view on “what makes a successful collaboration” and “what challenges one can expect along the way”. It is hoped that when working on contentious land use issues with (or as a) neighbourhood associations or other organized group, these findings can provide a glimpse of the road ahead!

Interviews

James Bay Neighbourhood Association (JBNA) garnered assistance and support from a number of agencies for their studies regarding air quality and environmental health, including in-kind research and expertise with their studies, grants, and advice regarding analysis and implications of study findings.

The six involved staff/associates from the following involved agencies were also interviewed.

Vancouver Island Health Authority (VIHA) is one of five regional health authorities in the province of British Columbia, and James Bay is within its jurisdictional area. VIHA staff was contacted in 2006 by the JBNA President, who requested advice and support. JBNA's interest was aligned with VIHA's Air Quality Core Program, and general promotion of community engagement. Staff from VIHA's Population and Public Health Observatory and the Chief Medical Health Officer became involved in the monitoring of health and air quality in the region as well as the promotion of measures to improve air quality. VIHA created the James Bay Air Quality Study group, and invited several of the other agencies described below how they might consider being involved with this group.

The BC Ministry of Environment (MOE) became involved in the James Bay air quality concerns through a request from VIHA to assist with identification of issues. Additionally, a few staff from the Regional Environmental Protection group, whose role also includes air quality, has been involved. In contributing to this study, Ministry staff has also provided information about regulations and perspectives from some other agencies that have not been directly involved.

Greater Victoria Harbour Authority (GVHA) is a non-profit society that operates several facilities in the Port of Victoria, including the cruise ship terminal and recreational and commercial moorage in and around the Inner Harbour of Victoria. JBNA participated in GVHA's working groups on noise and the Ogden Point transportation, and continues to participate in the harbour pathway working group. The main point of contact for the community is the GVHA CEO.

University of Victoria, (UVic) Department of Geography researchers became involved through their connections with VIHA staff, their membership with a regional Air Quality Working Group, and their participation in a funded Border Air Quality Study. They provided information and research services, and provided technical analysis in the collaborative research.

Agencies	Interviewed members
James Bay Neighbourhood Assoc.	4
Vancouver Island Health Authority	2
Ministry of Environment	1
Greater Victoria Harbour Authority	1
University of Victoria	2

It should be noted that not all suggestions in the interviews were true of or directly applicable to the JBNA – in some cases, interviewees discussed skills, assets, etc. that would have been helpful to possess. Equally, some challenges or barriers discussed by interviewees were generalized statements not necessarily experienced in interaction with the JBNA or the agencies interviewed here. It should also be noted that the themes below are based on the experience of the interviewees. All advice and suggestions are qualitative.

THEME # 1: Assets for a Strong Neighbourhood Association

Based on findings from our interviews, there are many skills and assets which are highly valuable, if not prerequisites, to neighbourhood associations pushing for regulatory change outside their own mandates.

Staying Power

Although neighbourhood associations are often perceived as having highly malleable membership, there is a potential for higher degree of continuity and stability within the core active group of neighbourhood associations than in potential partner agencies / organizations which often undergo staff changes, shifting political priorities and influences, etc. Longevity, if achievable, provides stability and helps to drive long-term agendas which address complex issues requiring patience, and persistence.

Wide skills base

Being able to pull on a wealth of knowledge and skills from different members is a tremendous advantage. Encouraging individuals to take on and ‘own’ roles, for example “the writer” or “the technical person,” can smooth processes and create stability and organization within the association. A wide range and diversity of skills is essential to success. Also, feeling that they have a particular skill that is depended upon helps members feel they are part of the team and committed to the cause.

Seek out specific knowledge bases

Very specific knowledge and skill sets may be necessary for some project stages. For example: if the neighbourhood association wants to research the cost-benefit analysis of the cruise ship industry to the community, a member with social science/economist training is a top priority; to develop and administer a neighbourhood survey a surveyor is critical. Seek out members with professional experience who are able to stand toe-to-toe with officials and scrutiny. If members with these skills are

not readily available, perhaps these people and skills can be ‘borrowed’ from other agencies and partner organizations. Most partner agencies prefer to contribute in kind rather than financial support.

Technical knowledge and critical thinking

In pursuing official changes based on health concerns, there will necessarily be technical data to be gathered and presented. Having a member or several members with strong technical, research and interpretation skills is important. The ability to learn jargon quickly is also a helpful skill.

Credibility in Representation

Although neighbourhood associations are democratic groups, the lines of accountability and representation are often unclear to non-members, who are unable to tell what portion of the neighbourhood is really represented by the association both in general and on any specific issue. Mechanisms to clearly demonstrate that the association is representing the majority view of its residents – e.g., resident surveys, interactive websites or polls – are useful.

Communicating Out, and Within

It is important to have several communications mechanisms available to reach the constituents in the neighbourhood, a wider demographic, and key stakeholders. For example, a regular column in the neighbourhood/municipal newspaper, a website, participation in local social media, radio broadcast, plus attending meetings and networking opportunities in the community as much as possible helps to spread the message.

Professionalism, Accountability, Transparency

Associations that are organized and professional will be more successful than those which are not. This can be achieved through regular, open, documented meetings; a formal meeting space or office; a member responsible for communicating and correspondence who is organized and up-to-date.

Physical Space

Dedicated office space is hugely helpful. It adds professionalism, but is also very practical. It allows for one drop-off point for documents, filing facilities for ease of document access, computer access for those who don't have access at home or have shared access, and possibly even a place to meet.

Strong Leadership, Bite-Sized Tasks and Projects

A trusted leader in a neighbourhood organization is a key asset. It is also key that people can engage with the organization to work on one or more issues that are important to them. Since members' efforts are part time and voluntary, an ideal way to work on a number of issues is to establish sub-groups and working groups to take on projects within a direction and mandate approved by the Board.



Assets for Strong Neighbourhood Associations Checklist

The following are helpful skills to seek out in members:

- Scientific background
- Policy/Planning background
- Civil service background
- Land-use background
- Health science background
- Data analysis background
- Strong writing
- Proof-reader
- Coordinator/communicator
- Presenters
- Networkers
- Political experience
- Up-to-date with current affairs
- Experience with legislation
- Knowledge of legislative changes
- Technical skills
- Facilitation skills
- Specific subject matter familiarity

Consider documenting accountability and popular support for your association/project:

- Regular, and open, meetings
- Regular newspaper column
- Regularly updated website
- Residents polls
- Petitions
- Internet blog/forum posts
- Social media site with followers/likes
- Local radio
- Letters to the editor

Consider setting up systems that create a professional, organized, transparent and competent organization:

- Regular, open meetings
- Well-kept minutes which are openly accessible
- A clean, easily navigable webpage with well-written content
- Meeting space, or an office space
- A member in charge of correspondence who is up-to-date with the association's projects, organized and has strong communications skills

Consider finding a small office space by leveraging:

- Municipal funding
- Shared space with other local associations
- Shared space with local institutions, for instance through Good Neighbour Agreements

THEME # 2: Building Useful Partnerships

In order to mobilize healthy change, a neighbourhood association will need the support of partner organizations to create a credible argument. The neighbourhood association will also need the cooperation of the agency/ organization which will institute the regulatory change to create the desired result, as well as potentially those who will regulate/monitor it. Keep in mind, that not all agencies involved in the process will be partners – some will likely be neutral or in opposition.

Understand your partners' roles

It's critical for neighbourhood associations requesting the support of agencies to know and respect the mandates, abilities and limitations of those agencies. Expecting more or different things from agencies than they are able to provide is frustrating for both parties. Determine which agencies would be able or necessary to participate in the project before approaching them. Consider developing partnerships with agencies that may not share all of your views but are required to be involved as part of the solution. Be open to different roles and contributions, including: funding, staff time, endorsements, advising, collaborating on a report, referrals to other agencies, etc.

Be open-minded

Try to keep from forming strong expectations about potential relationships with agencies, or what they may be able to provide. Going into a relationship with strong conclusions already formed about what the problem is and how it needs to be solved severely limits fruitful and evolving partnerships. Instead, be curious and open to involving the agencies and individuals in the solution and the path to get there.

Be respectful, truthful and cooperative

Although the process of changing regulations can be long and frustrating, it is important for neighbourhood associations to maintain positive, respectful and open relationships.

Aggression, lack of trust and transparency can alienate others and hamper progress. In many cases the decision to support the neighbourhood association will rest with individuals – good relationships and respectful are essential.

Be patient and committed

Many organizations will have complicated practices, bylaws, mandates and procedures that are time-consuming, complicated and not immediately apparent. As partners, it is important for neighbourhood associations to be understanding of these frameworks and work within them. This requires patience and commitment.

Be politically aware

Local politicians can be an excellent way of bringing attention to an issue and pushing it forward. However, be careful not to damage relationships with civil servants or the administration when leveraging the political angle.

Recognize and celebrate success

It's only natural to be focused and always be working towards the ultimate end-goal. However, realistically the best-case scenario may be unachievable, or may take years. Remember to celebrate the small steps that are achieved and appreciate and recognize the part partner agencies played in these achievements. It helps partners to justify their involvement, portray their own role in the community, and deepen/reinforce their commitment to the project. It is possible that the individuals who have formed partnerships with you might move on before your final objective is reached.

Strategic Allies

It is wise to invite key figures and influential leaders to your table, and/or seek them out and spend time so that they understand and hopefully support your objectives. Ideally they can speak positively and endorse your goals, which will help overall community support and swaying the minds of others.

Building Useful Partnerships Checklist

Understanding your partners' mandates and limitations:

- Are they active in your geography?
- Are they responsible for the area of policy or research you are interested in?
- Are they mandated to work with the public, and/or organizations like yours?
- Is it to their benefit to work with the public?
- Are their goals aligned with yours?
- How wide is their scope – is your subject their only focus, or are they responsible for a wide array of programs?
- Who are the most appropriate individuals to approach within the organization?

When interacting with partner agencies, try to be:

- Prepared and informed about your issue, and about their context related to the issue
- Transparent, and consistently share new information
- Respectful, polite and patient
- Open-minded, without pre-conceived notions of what they can give or how they will be involved
- Patient with policies and procedures that guide their conduct and involvement
- Non-aggressive, non-confrontational in communications
- Considerate of the relationship between the staff and politicians of the agency
- A bridge builder. If they are not able to become involved in your project directly, ask if they can refer you to colleagues in other agencies or share their knowledge with you. Keep the door open!

Consider celebrating successes and sharing the credit with your partners, such as:

- The publishing of a report or survey
- A successful milestone meeting
- The launch of a new initiative, website or process phase
- A major development, such as a new key partner joining or positive change in stakeholders
- The passing of a new regulation or bylaw
- The launch of a new regulation or bylaw
- An project or accomplishment by a partner that relates or supports your objectives

THEME # 3: Pursuing Change

Working towards creating a change that will have a positive impact on local health can be rewarding, but it is also a lengthy, complex and potentially frustrating process. There are many factors to keep in mind when advocating for health-related policies or changes.

Be realistic about goals

The road towards policy change is long, complex and potentially arduous. It is a marathon, not a sprint, and it is important to goal-set accordingly. Quick change will almost certainly be unachievable, and eventual change is not guaranteed. It is important to set realistic goals in terms of change so that members do not become disillusioned or burnt out working for big change on a short time scale. It is also important that members agree with the goals.

Use a collaborative approach

The more stakeholders it is possible to bring on board, the stronger the case will be. Working openly with partners in research projects is especially important, as it lends validity and buy-in from those agencies to the methodology and results. Research projects conducted with the support of recognized public agencies will stand up more firmly to criticism.

Identify and nurture key partners

Although all partners bring strengths, there are those who are essential to the process, such as decision-makers and those mandated to protect public health. Key players must be identified, brought on board, and then the relationship with them maintained. It is also important to recognise the limitations of these key stakeholders and, despite their power, not expect them to act outside their areas.

Use data and metrics

What is measured is managed. Data and metrics are a critical component in supporting a case for change, as they are difficult to ignore. If no monitoring is being performed, consider trying to bring in even temporary monitoring capacity.

Ensure orderly turnover

Although turnover of people within neighbourhood associations is potentially lower than in some partner agencies, it is inevitable that members will leave. If these members have been responsible for key portfolios of work, ensure that there is a handover to their successor if possible, or detailed records kept if not. Notes and minutes are important in any case to provide an institutional memory.

Avoid single-issue focus

Total focus on one sole issue can weaken the association and its results, as it creates the impression of a one-issue lobby group rather than an association representing the diverse interests of the neighbourhood. A community voice and a focus on multiple issues provides more balance and stability.

Raise awareness

It can be difficult to raise public awareness of issues due to lack of airtime and face-time and a shortage of communication resources, but it is absolutely necessary to work at developing a general desire for change in order to achieve it. Involving politicians can be an important avenue, even if the issue does not clearly lie within their jurisdiction as they can be advocates. Be thoughtful and strategic in campaigning not to misrepresent or otherwise alienate partner organizations. Advice and expertise from communications professionals (within the neighbourhood associates, or from trusted advisors) could be particularly valuable.

Be scientific, but not too technical

It is important to walk the line between too simple, and too complex. Scientific, evidenced-based reporting is essential to make arguments for regulatory change. However clear, plain-English explanations and the impact on 'real people' are also essential to ensure neighbourhood residents and the population more generally understand what the issue is, what findings have been reported, and why they should be engaged or sympathetic.

Pursuing Change Checklist

Be realistic about goals:

- Do not set expectations before meeting with partners
- Set timelines with partner input, and consider setting generous targets
- Determine goals all or the majority of members agree with
- Remember to consider small achievements as well as major ones

Use a collaborative approach:

- Identify a wide range of potential stakeholders to involve in project, and bring them on in a staged approach if needed
- Lines of accountability can be blurry, especially between levels of government. Communicate regularly with all potentially-accountable parties, even those not actively engaged in the project
- When conducting studies or writing reports, if possible do so in partnership with academics or professionals from the field of study as well as the affected and implicated organizations

Identify and nurture key partnerships:

- Determine which potential stakeholders have a strong public voice. Factors to consider are:
 - Name/title recognition – is the individual or their position well-known and respected?
 - Decision-maker – does the individual have the power to make important decisions?
 - Subject-matter expert – is the individual recognised as an expert on the topic?
- Determine the key deliverables key stakeholders need to endorse; do not over-burden them
- Ensure awareness of their role and limitations – avoid frustration from unrealistic expectations
- Work to maintain good personal relationships with key stakeholders

Use data and metrics

- Collect and present data as often as possible, rather than relying on anecdotal evidence
- Use stakeholders to help analyse and present complex data

Ensure orderly turn-over of people within the neighbourhood association

- Keep good meeting minutes
- Keep up-to-date contact list of stakeholders with position, mandate/limitations, and project role
- Keep a list of potential stakeholders who were contacted but were unable or unwilling to participate, to avoid duplicating effort
- Keep a project plan, including deadlines and projected milestones

Avoid single-issue focus:

- Try to have at least 3 or 4 areas of focus— they do not have to be major commitments

Raise awareness:

- Keep your website up-to-date
- Launch a social media campaign
- Post information in local shops and restaurants, and community centres if permitted
- Involve local politicians

THEME # 4: Identifying Challenges

There are many challenges any neighbourhood association attempting to create healthy change will encounter. Although not all of them can be mitigated, being prepared can reduce stress and burnout.

Be prepared for personal attacks

In advocating for change, it is almost guaranteed that someone will be a financial loser, whether it is an industry losing profits or a city council spending more. In this situation, the parties perceiving themselves to be under attack can direct their anger at specific individuals if the evidence presented by a neighbourhood association is more difficult to refute and challenges the status quo or power relationship.

Time stresses

Although a popular perception of neighbourhood associations is of a group of retirees with all day to spend on their issues, in fact most members have limited time available to allocate to their neighbourhood work. It can be frustrating for a group of individuals volunteering their free time to run a long-term project in partnership with and opposing full-time paid employees. Time to be invested is in strong demand. Ideally a broad segment of the population would be involved to provide representation and a skills mix, but younger adults tend to be overwhelmed with household and employment requirements and may have limited time to become deeply involved in neighbourhood issues.

Process length

The process of bringing about systemic change is lengthy, complex and often highly bureaucratic. This can be exhausting for neighbourhood associations with limited time, funding, and patience. Even when expectations of a lengthy process are in place, the long road with obstructions along the way can be disillusioning, frustrating, and can cause burn-out.

Partner turn-over

Often neighbourhood association members have greater longevity than their partner agency members. Turn-over requires new members to be briefed and brought up to speed on the project, which can be frustrating when it occurs frequently. There is also a risk that new agency members may not choose to become involved in the project, as in many cases it is an individual's choice to take part rather than the agency's mandate.

Deadlocks can occur

Sometimes, no matter the partners and evidence backing the project, change will not be possible. The individuals or agencies responsible for instituting the change may refuse to do so. Deadlocks can sometimes be broken by staffing turnovers, but a change in personnel is not sure to produce results.

Personality issues

As in any group of people from diverse backgrounds working on a stressful project, there is a large possibility that there will be friction between personalities. This can occur within the neighbourhood association, within its partners, or with opponents. As the success of these projects largely depends on goodwill and volunteered time, it is important to minimize antagonism and aggression. Strong leadership from within the association is critical. A focus on the principles of the organization and common goals (rather than the people carrying the message) and keeping a respectful dialogue may also be helpful.

Misrepresentation

It is possible that information presented as factual truth may not be. Always check any quoted facts or conclusions against the source material. If there is no source material, seek out the truth from partners or other experts. Be aware also that a neighbourhood association's actions and opinions may be misrepresented in media or to decision-makers by opposing groups. This kind of discrediting can do major damage (see "Opposition").

Reactionary role

Neighbourhood associations are often the ones reacting rather than acting. They do not control the agenda, and if they are invited to meetings it can be on short notice and require quick turn-around times for information. This is challenging for volunteers.

Opposition

It is not always possible to find common ground with organizations and individuals in the community. When working for change, it is likely some players will suffer financial losses, and so be unsupportive or resistant to the proposal. If it is necessary to work with an opposing force in order to move forward, a facilitator or mediator may be a worthwhile investment. At the very least, it is important to keep track of the opposition's agenda and be prepared for any opportunities or threats that surface. If the opposition has considerable influence over the media and can damage the neighbourhood association's credibility, it may be necessary to engage strategic advice and perhaps the services of communications professional.



Identifying Challenges Checklist

Try to be prepared for:

- Personal attacks on members
- Attacks on the neighbourhood association
- Frustration of volunteered time being run down by paid professionals
- Partner or other agencies expecting more time commitment than is possible
- Very long, complex process
- Frequent set-backs
- Turn-over in any/all partner agencies, potentially requiring each new individual to be convinced to join the project and then brought up to speed
- Complete, un-moveable dead-lock
- Personality issues within the neighbourhood association
- Personality issues between the association and partner agencies
- Personality issues between the association and other stakeholders
- Evidence being misrepresented, over or underestimated, or otherwise conveyed inaccurately
- The neighbourhood association's message being misrepresented in media or to decision-makers
- Non-control of meeting agendas
- Being treated as a guest at meetings, rather than a stakeholder/partner
- Being given short notice of meeting or other important dates
- The expectation of information or work on very short notice

Appendix 1: Abridged History of James Bay

Prior to 1850	Current area known as James Bay is the home of the Serngwhung tribe, part of the Coast Salish whose descendants are the Songhees Nation. The Serngwhung ceded their land to the Hudson Bay Company in 1850.
1850-1950	The land in the James Bay area is used for farming, and then elite homes the south and east, and industrial and shipping hub with working class cottages in the west part of the James Bay area.
1950-1970	Rapid redevelopment in Victoria; significant proportion of the historical housing was replaced with apartments.
1970s	Community reaction to changes and threatened historical community. City of Victoria forms planning committees, and the first James Bay Neighbourhood Plan is created in 1973.
Current	<p>Residential: A densely populated neighbourhood in Victoria that houses 15% of the City's population and the largest group of 65+ residents in Victoria. 73% of residents rent their homes. Residential Heritage Program to protect existing heritage resources, and sustained development interests.</p> <p>Transportation: A major transit corridor for the greater Victoria area for ferries, cruise ships, helicopters, the Canadian Coast Guard, fishing boats, pleasure crafts and tourist vehicles ranging from buses, horse-drawn carriages, to pedicabs.</p> <p>Ogden Point docks changed from an industrial to cruise-ship port, and growth of the cruise-ship 'port-of-call' industry from 2000 to 2008 has brought larger and more ships, resulting in greater emissions and transportation impacts on the neighbourhood (40,000 to 400,000 passengers per year).</p> <p>Influential regulators and landowners include the Greater Victoria Harbour Authority (GVHA); local, provincial, and federal governments, and the development community. Most of the waterfront lands are controlled by the GVHA and Provincial Capital Commission.</p> <p>Community: Home to the Legislature, Dallas Road waterfront, and Beacon Hill Park, vibrant James Bay hosts regional and national community events. These include the holiday celebrations, Gay Pride Parade, countless charity runs, and many more.</p>

Appendix 2: Interview Questions

...regarding the efforts to measure and mitigate air pollution from land-and water based activities in the James Bay Area, Victoria BC

1. What skills are needed for an effective Neighbourhood Association?
2. How did your organization approach and get involved with the above issue of air pollution from land and water based activities in the James Bay area?
3. When (year) did your organization get involved with the project?
4. When did you (personally) get involved with the project?
5. What were the key people attributes, skills and/or temperaments that contributed to (or detracted from) an effective strategy for the James Bay Neighbourhood Association (or any neighbourhood association)?
6. What was the nature of the challenges encountered by the James Bay Neighbourhood Association? (and by other neighbourhood associations)
7. How did your organization (or your work) help to overcome or address the identified challenges (or not)?
8. What advice do you have for other neighbourhood associations for dealing with land use issues that impact the health and well being of the community?
9. What are the 3-4 most important elements needed to be an effective neighbourhood association?
10. What personal experiences or situations (2 or 3) should one prepare for in this work involving neighbourhoods, community well-being, and health?

Part B Questions to be asked of James Bay Neighbourhood Association only

1. Why are you involved with this work in your neighbourhood?
2. Are you proud of your involvement and results? Why or why not?
3. What makes you want to stop being involved?
4. What is your most valuable contribution?
5. How would you define success for your pursuits in this area?
6. What are your plans for the future with respect to this issue and your involvement?

Appendix 3: Interview Responses

Notes:

- The points below are not direct quotations from interviews.
- The points below intend to convey the spirit and intent of ideas that were provided by the interviewees, but may not include all of their comments and ideas.
- More than one person was interviewed from many of the groups and agencies listed below. The sum of comments are shown below, and are associated with agencies and not with particular individuals.

1. Skills/Actions that are important in order to be a successful neighbourhood association	
JBNA	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Neighbourhood Associations (NA) are always trying to maintain or gain credibility because they are not a government agency, when in fact they <i>are</i> a democratic organization.○ Community attachment and commitment to the livability of the neighbourhood are things that make people persist with neighbourhood association work.○ It is important to create working relationships, and advocacy relationships.○ People can take on different roles, and be relied upon for these roles. E.g., the communicator, the writer, the technical person, the proof-reader, the parks person, etc. Without these roles filled, the organization falls into disarray. Once people get involved, the NA can discover their 'thing(s)' and they fill those role(s). A solid administrative core is invaluable (letter writing, record keeping, secretarial duties).○ The community is permanent, and NAs often have more staying power and continuity in roles than the agencies they work with.○ A good membership base is essential to success.○ Communication roles: Within the organization, it is necessary to have regular meetings and ensure that everyone's voice is heard and valued and that individuals not be allowed to grandstand. It is also necessary to prepare reports and presentations to diverse audiences and ensure that messages are widely distributed.○ Members with technical knowledge and critical thinking are an asset, e.g., how to read a report and ask some good analytical questions.○ Having a small office space is a huge asset.○ Having a 'stable of advisors' on board to give proper advice is really valuable – e.g., staff from the health authority, the University, etc.○ A missing attribute for most NAs is time. There are so many roles and things that require time: Email, board meetings, open meetings, council meetings. All these are required just to stay current and afloat.○ When there is turnover, good transition is essential to ensure that information is not lost.○ The longevity of a president or senior members brings a tremendous sense of permanency. Whereas turnover can create the impression the NA may be an issue that will go away.○ The internet is a fabulous tool for neighbourhood associations, both for communications and for access to data and research. It allows greater transparency and the ability to acquire information that can help you to create change, if you are willing to do a lot of research.○ It is essential to be persistent. In order to keep momentum, find alternate ways to get the neighbourhood's messages across.○ Some NAs could benefit from a public relations/communications specialist's help. A very uneven balance of power and resources between neighbourhood groups and the industry and regulatory agencies can exist in terms of communication, media, political attention. Some assistance to the NA offset the full time professional positions of industries would

	<p>help to counter communications 'spin'.</p>
MoE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ From a partner's perspective it is really helpful when a NA member can learn a technical jargon quickly in order to interact meaningfully with partners and stakeholders. If NAs are well-informed and open to learning more, partners will help to bring you up to speed. ○ Communication requires both the ability to speak well on an issue, and listening. ○ Facilitation skills are very helpful. ○ Use networking to figure out strategically who needs to be brought on board to advance the cause. Bring the right people in for the project. ○ Understand the roles, mandate, and the limitations, of the agencies who you are asking to partner with/help you. ○ It is not practical to leave problem-solving to governments; cooperation and good will and a team approach are necessary to advance issues. ○ Being trustworthy, cooperative, and truthful is very important – and not sensationalizing because it creates a reactive and distrustful environment. In some other unrelated projects, a lack of trust and transparency lead to suspicion and significantly hampered progress. ○ Be passionate and dedicated, but avoid being aggressive. ○ The leader for the NA needs to be trusted by their group and their constituents. ○ Be open to fresh and new perspectives, and new players/collaborators. This can help keep the mission fresh, gain new perspectives, identify ways around road blocks, etc. ○ Try to keep open lines of communication early on, and deal with issues early in the process instead of allowing them to continue
VIHA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Credible experience and credible people within the NA are very important to success. ○ When making the case, gather credible evidence <i>and</i> collect anecdotes that people can relate to – both are important. ○ Go beyond a 'populist' approach, but avoid isolating the audience, participation and focus to an academic focus. ○ Avoid being dependent on other agencies to do all of your research. Rather, understand how to do your own research and build the capacity to do what you are capable of. ○ Success requires a group understanding/consensus about the action that they want, and the role that evidence plays in bringing about change. Both evidence and the right communication channels are necessary to bring about change. ○ It is necessary to recognize the uneven balance of power compared with regulatory agencies and industry. ○ Select issues that matter to the whole neighbourhood and affect the whole neighbourhood in order to represent it well. ○ Communications and the way that issues are broached with partners is important: Create a first impression that is reasonable. Show the ability to articulate in a calm and thoughtful fashion, and ask 'how can you help us?' rather than phrasing it as a demand. ○ Understand the roles, and the limitations, of the agencies who you are asking to partner/help you. Also understanding bureaucracy and how it operates. ○ Be a broker for a broader community's interests. ○ Jurisdictional boundaries and resources are not limitless and if the neighbourhood association understands the boundaries, they can be more strategic. Also understand the political atmosphere of the organizations you are working with. Staff contacts within organizations can help to create good news stories about partnering with the neighbourhood. As most organizations want to be seen in this light, it will inspire them to continue their involvement in the project.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Keep an open mind to how you might work together and form a relationship with stakeholder organizations – if you are too rigid in your expectation and if you have already come to your conclusion about what the problem is and how to solve it, then the purpose of your conversation and your partnership is lost or very limited. ○ Be aware that tenacious and ongoing membership will be required many years: the goals of a neighbourhood association are more like a marathon than a sprint. ○ To make the most of partnerships, a current knowledge about how the various organizations who are necessary to the process will see the issue, how they might be interested and the role they could play, are all important. Research potential partners before approaching them. ○ Continuity is a strength. People who represent the longevity and dedication of the group's cause, good records, etc. lend the credibility of an institutional memory. ○ Celebrate your victories and share them with the people who helped you get there; they will want to also be part of your future endeavours. ○ Genuine commitment to the health of their neighbourhood is essential. ○ Enlightened and knowledgeable people are a great strength. ○ Be willing to push back hard, not shrink away. ○ Determination, communication, and commitment for a long and possibly torturous trip are all necessary. This is partly because many of the agencies that need to be included in the discussion are organizations with practices, layers, mandates, etc. that are not apparent.
UVic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ NAs need to be respectful of process: including all the partners, honestly and transparently. ○ NAs need tenacity, to be able to put in time over years, and not expect a short term answer. ○ NAs can and should benefit from the retired professionals. Use their skills and knowledge to go toe to toe with proper documentation. ○ Be an organized group, with a meeting space and regular meetings. ○ A leadership that continues to fuel interest and bring others along is a huge asset.
GVHA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Use a collaborative approach – work with municipalities, stakeholders, residents. Do not leave any of them out, they are all needed. ○ NAs need a combination of expertise in a variety of areas including land use planning, health science, community engagement, communication and facilitation skills. ○ NAs can potentially have and invest a lot of time: retirees help a lot! ○ Aggressive communication by NAs can alienate stakeholders, other residents, municipalities, and business owners, causing resistance to whatever is presented by the NA. Stakeholders can be threatened by accusatory tones, shutting down future dialogue.

2. Challenges/Threats to a neighbourhood association's success

JBNA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ It is a continual challenge for NAs to get their messages out effectively ○ Members involved in projects may encounter personal attacks, and may find their personal credibility can be called into question rather than the validity of their studies. ○ Gaining visibility and credibility is a constant need to keep up with. ○ There can be disagreement within the NA, especially on what route or tactics to pursue. ○ Individuals the NA works with come and go as positions, roles, personnel and elections change the people involved. But a NA has staying power. The lack of continuity within agencies can be very frustrating because with new people cyclically involved, the NA finds itself answering the same questions that were asked years ago by predecessors – it is difficult to feel as if the issues have progressed and advanced. Ironically, a lack of continuity is sometimes cited as a weakness of a neighbourhood association, when the opposite is
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	<p>often true.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ NAs, as volunteer organization, can run up against professional full time paid spin-doctoring of the issues. The neighbourhood gets an unequal voice in the media. And the spin doctors have much more ready access to the politicians. ○ City council members may not always be respectful of residents. ○ There are many conditions in our society that make it a challenge to get younger (mid-career) adults involved in NAs, an involvement which is important for diversity and for succession planning. Families do not have time particularly in our double income world, and adults with younger families tend to use their time to be part of more family oriented endeavours like parent advisory groups. These conditions make it challenging to build membership. ○ A lack of local recognition of the issue, both from residents and local government, can be a real challenge. ○ It is challenging to react and act on short notice (to provide comments on reports, to attend meetings, etc.) especially as volunteers. ○ Sometimes change only comes about only when the status quo and ranks of authority and power have a change in players, parameters, and/or organizational security. ○ Few people are willing to speak out against the actions of powerful business or political groups, due to possible retribution related to job and social pressures.
VIHA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The organizations from which NA desires change and response are not nearly as accountable as the NA has to be to its constituents. Many organizations' agencies and boards are hand-picked, mandates change, and their priorities and leanings are in flux.
UVic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Information leaks can be a damaging setback in terms of building relationships and trust. ○ Most of the organizations that were involved had some experience and relied on protocol of everyone having the same information etc. but in some situations for other groups a facilitator could be a really good idea and necessary role.
GVHA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Operating on a shoestring budget and relying on the longevity/commitment of volunteers is stressful. ○ The very industries that need to change are threatened by the research that is being produced, making a positive relationship between industry and NA very difficult.

3. Lessons for Neighbourhood Associations, based on experience

JBNA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Some neighbourhoods are single-issue focused. Others may have more community voices and multiple issues, which makes them stronger. ○ Sometimes change requires a change in the scenario or a change in the players. ○ Nurture your key allies and relationships. Recognize their restrictions, and find ways for them to work within what they can do and leverage that. ○ Federal, provincial and local governments often have a role to play, but jurisdictional boundaries may be an issue. It is frustrating when government agencies make use of the grey zone of unclear jurisdictional responsibilities. Sometimes NAs may find themselves working with up to four different levels of government, none of whom accept responsibility. ○ Getting data and metrics are hugely important. Data cannot be ignored. ○ NAs have to plan for continuity and succession, but this is challenging for many of the reasons discussed (time, space, lack of middle-aged members etc.). ○ NAs are most often reacting. They are not in control of the agenda, and if/when they are invited it is often on very short notice and quick responses are expected, despite members volunteering their time.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ When doing community and neighbourhood work, the motivations can't be ego or thanks. The motivation needs to be to "do the right thing". ○ Be prepared to take aggression and personal attacks. People will bite back if NAs are making them miserable by criticizing them or asking them to change. ○ NA members are putting their own person out there. For example, stakeholders who do not agree with an NA's report may attack the credentials of the author rather than the document. ○ NAs do good work but the actual results related to the objectives can be hard to reach. ○ Do not accept what you have been told to be true. ○ It is pleasant and rewarding to work with partners that bring a genuine interest, curiosity, and respect for what the NA can contribute to their work. ○ It is important to recognize one another's valuable contributions to the NA's work and progress, and appreciate them.
MoE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ As a NA, be sure to raise concerns with the appropriate party/agency. Sometimes it is hard to get stakeholders to the table for a variety of reasons including political, capacity, etc. ○ Avoid a siloed approach. ○ Local politicians can be a useful and important avenue or conduit if the NA needs to raise awareness and take it to the next level, even if it is not their clear jurisdictional issue. NAs should be prepared to work politically when necessary, but be careful not to thwart relationships with civil servants/administration. ○ Be prepared for personality conflicts, and the fact that they can influence a lot including the content and effectiveness. Conflicts should be identified early in the process because otherwise the further efforts are like spinning your wheels.
VIHA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ In the future BC NAs could make use the provision in the public health act for a liaison relationship between health authority and municipality. ○ Ensure that the NA's selected issues represent the whole neighbourhood. ○ Come up with solutions and partnerships that are workable. Concentrate on this and keep the energy spent on complaints to a minimum. ○ Help yourselves (as a NA) by ensuring that successes and good news can be shared by the stakeholder agencies that you want to continue to work with. ○ NAs need to be politically astute and lobby the politicians as well as the agency staff.
UVic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Partnering with others can be extremely helpful for lending credibility and expertise that is needed to bring other agencies onboard. ○ While a NA needs to bring energy and urgency, it is vital to realise that understanding and changing a system takes a long time. ○ As a NA, if you need to deal with a technical topic, make sure that you bring that capacity to your board or supplement it, because without this knowledge there can be barriers to working with partner agencies. ○ When science and studies are undertaken, seldom the results of the study will rarely be one number or 'the answer', and will not in themselves actually 'solve' anything. Sometimes the 'answers' from a study are not as conclusive or direct as desired, either. The expectation that science can be a magic bullet will result in disappointment and frustration.
GVHA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ It seems like more could always be done to represent and engage the neighbourhood. There is a big emphasis on research and identifying issues, and within each project neighbourhood associations could continually seek opportunities to engage the residents. ○ Strength lies in partnerships. Research and evidence are useful, but they are most powerful when multiple partners and stakeholders are involved in the research project.

4. Lessons for other agencies that are involved with neighbourhood associations as partners

VIHA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Public sector representatives may see their role as doing good, and that they are going beyond their sphere of duty to work with a NA, but the NA may not see it that way. The role of an organizational rep is not to impose their model or their organization's power (eg. a medical model, or regulation, or your agency's agenda), nor to offer a recipe for solving the situation. Their role is to be supportive and offer suggestions as one voice at the table, not to control the situation, the outcome, or the community. ○ As an ally/stakeholder partner who represents an organization, have empathy and express it. Be human and accessible, even though the agency practices objective "evidence based decision making". Be clear about what can and cannot be done from the organization's perspective. Time spent problem solving and referring the NA to what/who <i>can</i> help them can also be helpful to them. ○ It is impressive what can be done with a committed group of volunteers, despite how difficult it is to make change happen. ○ Financial interest (e.g., of industry) will make some people/agencies not want to cooperate, and this is hard to change. Creating a level playing field is the government's role.
UVic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ As an agency representative, it is sometimes important to be present for the neighbourhood association's discussions. This takes time, and it's necessary to respect and have patience for others' concerns and the topics that are raised as concerns even if they do not specifically relate to your particular role and topic. ○ Agency representatives must be clear as to what their role is.
GVHA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Respectful dialogue is always a good thing, and will result in learning and relationship building. ○ Use the organization's principles as guidance for participation and communication.

Appendix 4: Links for Further Information

James Bay Neighbourhood Association
(particularly pertinent reports and information under Environment menu option)
<http://www.jbna.org>

Vancouver Island Health Authority Air Quality Website
http://www.viha.ca/mho/air_quality.htm

Ministry of Environment
<http://www.bcairquality.ca/>

Border Air Quality Study
<http://www.bcairquality.ca/>

Lindsay McCunn's Thesis: Organizational Commitment, Sense of Place, and "Green" Urban Neighbourhoods. University of Victoria, 2004
<http://dspace.library.uvic.ca:8080/bitstream/handle/1828/3339/Lindsay%20McCunn%20MSc%202011.pdf?sequence=1>

Smart Growth BC. *How to Start a Citizen Organization in Your Neighbourhood or Town.*
<http://www.smartgrowth.bc.ca/Portals/0/Downloads/StartCommunityOrg.pdf>

IMPACS (organization no longer exists but resource is available online).
Why Should Your Non-Profit Develop a Communications Plan
<http://www.tulo.ca/docs/165%201-3%20communications%20planning.pdf>

Appendix 5: VIHA studies of James Bay Air Quality:

Health Assessment of Air Quality in James Bay:
http://www.viha.ca/NR/rdonlyres/85F85DBB-44B7-42C4-BC40-216A64653F54/0/jbaq_health_assessment.pdf

James Bay Air Quality Study Phase I:
http://www.viha.ca/NR/rdonlyres/00DDB3AB-5BC6-4FE4-A826-79FB7629AE9A/0/JBAQS_PhaseI_Feb_8_08.pdf

James Bay Air Quality Study Phase II:
http://www.viha.ca/NR/rdonlyres/E9167F08-04E0-4A72-A303-F2B0BD1054B7/0/jbaq_maml_2010.pdf

James Bay Air Quality Study Phase III:
http://www.viha.ca/NR/rdonlyres/E9167F08-04E0-4A72-A303-F2B0BD1054B7/0/jbaq_maml_2010.pdf