



Smithers Community Services Association

Our story at forty

SCSA builds community, one program at a time

It was 40 years ago this month that Smithers Community Services Association was born.

Four decades later, much has changed within the association, but its reasons for being remain the same: to develop social resources, set priorities for community needs, and liaise with existing community resources.

“When you look at our values, it’s really about moving people along their own path, as they define it,” executive director Cathryn Olmstead says. “We really come at it from a place of empowerment.”

SCSA registered as a charitable non-profit society on Oct. 25, 1973 in response to a call for greater youth and volunteer services in the community. While youth and volunteerism remain a focus, it has evolved into food security, housing, literary services and transit operations, responding to community needs as they arise.

Early on, SCSA grew into working with adults with developmental delays, a program that later shifted to another agency. Other programs incubated under SCSA include Smithers Home Support Society, Smithers Receiving Home Society and Northern Society for Domestic Peace.

“Integration is key to community development,” Olmstead says. “SCSA transcends traditional boundaries to engage all ages and demographics of our community, in an effort to make people feel at home in the Bulkley Valley. We see this value reflected in every facet of the organization.”

Learning and connecting within the community often involve creativity: art, cooking and music, for example. A community member might learn literacy through playing guitar, culture through the community kitchen, or confidence by

building skateboards and guitars with the Youth Empowerment Program.

“We’re very creative in how we help people in their lives,” Olmstead says.

But SCSA’s contribution extends far beyond its immediate mandate, beginning with the employment it creates within the community. With a staff of more

than 50 people, SCSA spends close to \$2 million each year on wages and benefits alone. Last year, it spent more than \$150,000 on local contractors and spends between \$100,000 and

\$200,000 each year for repairs and maintenance on housing developments like Bulkley Drive Housing Society, Cottonwood Manor and The Meadows Assisted Living.

The organization also shops locally, buying food for its seniors’ housing and emergency shelter and renting spaces for events and staff training.

SCSA is funded by a variety of ministries, both provincial and federal, along with support from the Town of Smithers and community donations. Programs such as the Good Food Box, Volunteer Smithers and Helping Hands receive grants from the gaming commission.

In the spring of 2014, the association will assist the Town of Smithers in planting 40 trees between Railway Avenue and the CN tracks. With the help of a Wetzin’kwa Community Forest grant, SCSA will contribute signage to this stretch of the Perimeter Trail that celebrates our community culture and history.

Throughout our 41st year, SCSA will be publishing a series of articles about our current programs and how they fit into our guiding principles. We hope you’ll join us in this celebration.

SCSA’s guiding principles:

- We help each other live with confidence and courage
- We believe in the power of belonging
- We act with integrity
- We grow through creativity and flexibility
- We celebrate the strength of diversity
- We cultivate contribution and participation