



**Federation  
of Calgary Communities**  
Improving neighbourhood life in Calgary

Terence Leung  
For the Federation of  
Calgary Communities

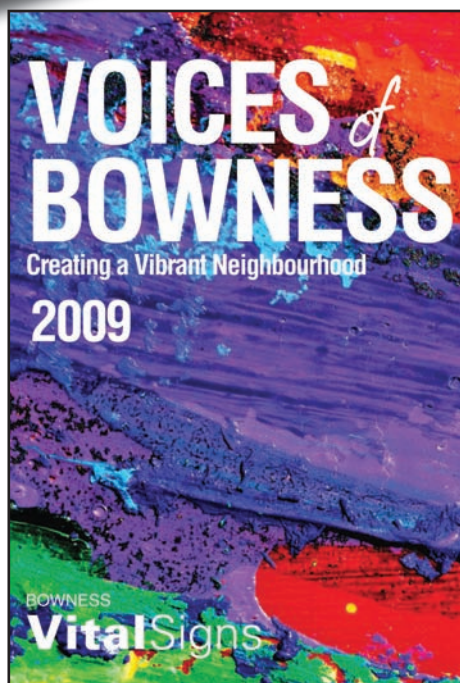
For larger communities, it's nearly impossible to get the pulse of every member in the community, but the Bowness Community Association felt it was important to try.

Partnering up with the United Way for their Vital Signs project, the initiative was to survey as many people in Bowness as possible to get an idea of what they liked about the community and improvements it could make.

The results in their Voices of Bowness report released in November 2009 were sometimes surprising and reflected pride in the community and, also, some concern.

"I think there were some areas we were surprised in. What I was surprised at was that the kid's concerns were a reflection of adult concerns, such as wanting more green space and more police presence," says Carla Betzner, who was part of the implementation team for the project.

"We went out and there were several (other) groups that went out directly to do one-on-ones with the community — surveys in dropboxes, libraries and busi-



**The Voices of Bowness Report released in November 2009 reflected pride in the community as well as concerns such as a lack of art and recreation facilities and a need for more police.**

*Photo courtesy FCC*

nesses. It was great to get church organizations involved. Small clubs got together and we even took it into schools."

In total, 542 residents responded to the survey with the majority feeling a positive sense of community, natural environment and a good transportation system.

A lack of art and recreational facilities and a need for greater personal safety

were concerns voiced in the report.

"I think the most valuable thing about doing this was that people were able to voice what they loved about Bowness... to be able to sit back and reflect," says Betzner.

"We thought it was a great idea for getting community involvement and to bring some spirit back into the community. It's a showcase for what Bowness is about."

Along with the United Way, key supporters of the project included Boys & Girls Clubs of Calgary, The Calgary Foundation, City of Calgary Community & Neighbourhood Services, and Bowwest Community Resource Centre.

These organizations helped coordinate volunteers and provided guidance for the community.

"The United Way put forth this report for Calgary originally, but not for the community side. They approached us to help figure out where we needed to put our efforts," says Bowness Community Association president Derek Podlubny.

"We were able to get a good sense what everybody thought about things, such as the art scene and general living conditions. Now we have a measuring stick that we can use as a starting point like taking off things such as graffiti or implementing babysitting programs. The report was a barometer of what people want to see."

With the Bowness Community Association put into receivership in 2004,

Podlubny says the lack of an association for such a long period created a need for Vital Signs.

"As a new community association board, it was exactly what we needed as a community to get out there and headed in the right direction. If there are other associations looking at this and wondering how they can touch base with their whole community, doing something like this is extremely valuable," he says.

Podlubny is now in the process of implementing their action plan to address the concerns in the report and further enhance the positives of the community.

"It's huge, there's no other way than going out face-to-face that better shows the community that you care and that you're genuinely interested in what you need. As a community association, we can talk about what we think they want, but you don't really know unless you get out there."

For more information about the Vital Signs report, visit: [www.bownessvitalsigns.com](http://www.bownessvitalsigns.com).

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## Saddle Ridge

Saddle Ridge is located in northeast Calgary. It is north of Martindale and Taradale and east of the Calgary International Airport. For many years, the area consisted primarily of agricultural development, however, there has been some recent residential development.

Saddle ridge is home to a wetland pond which is surrounded by interpretive pathways. As residential development takes place, soccer fields and baseball diamonds are being installed in the area. There are no schools in the community.

The Saddle Ridge community association is located in a Quonset hut. The centre is used by four Sikh dance troops, highland dancers, Boy Scouts and a karate club.

A seniors club also regularly meets to play cards and engage in other activities. At the

rear of the centre is a large gas barbeque that can feed as many as 300 people. It is used for a variety of community events throughout the year.

Other special events are hosted by the community association as well, including an annual Christmas festival.

### Demographics

Located in Ward 3, Saddle Ridge has a population of 10,984 (2008 Civic Census) with approximately 24.8 per cent comprising the immigrant population (Statistics Canada, 2008 Census of Canada).

A total of families accounted for 350 children still living at home with 47.1 per cent of these being 6-14 years old. According to Stats Canada, 2001 Census of Canada the median household

income for Saddle Ridge in 2005 was \$71,101. In addition, 32.3 per cent of the population over 20 completed college, attended university or graduated university with a degree — an additional 5.9 per cent graduated from Trade Schools (Statistics Canada, 2006 Census of Canada).

There are a total of 1,990 occupied private dwellings in Saddle Ridge with 98 per cent being single detached dwellings (Statistics Canada, 2006 Census of Canada).

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