

Downtown Eastside Women's Summer Fair & Flea Market Report



Project Description

The Downtown Eastside Women's Centre initiated a project to develop a Women's Fair & Flea Market. The Women's Fair & Flea Market was formed in response to the unsafe environment for women within the DTES Street Markets. Stakeholders clearly identified that safe space for women in the Downtown Eastside is lacking, particularly spaces for women to participate in street based economies such as street vending.

The Women's Fair & Flea Market was an opportunity for women in the community to engage in street based economies within a safe, respectful environment, with the goal of ensuring vocational and income generating opportunities for women residents in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, as well as being a model for re distributing and repurposing goods and materials that would be otherwise destined for the landfill. The Fair provided inclusive and safe vending opportunities for women in a safe, secure and accommodating environment, as well as skills development for peer based roles in operating and governing the Fair. This year, the Fair operated between June 10 and September 30, every Saturday from 11am to 4pm.

As part of the project, the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre worked to engage other Women's organizations including, Battered Women's Support Services, Atira, and WISH in providing specific training for women . Pacific Association of First Nations Women provided connection to facilitators to assist in teaching vendors crafting skills to make items to sell at the market. The UBC Medicine Collective partnered with The Downtown Eastside Women's Centre to provide a series of workshops to vendors including Indigenous traditional salve making, tea harvesting and making, traditional oil making. These items were sold at the market.

The project had the overall objectives of:

- Promoting safe, non violent spaces for women by providing 30-45 individual women engaged in survival economy and women serving organizations to sell their products in an inclusive environment
- Develop increased opportunities for women to generate income by vending used goods, repurposed goods, art, crafts, and hand made traditional indigenous salves and teas through partnership with the UBC Indigenous Medicine Collective
- Promoting empowerment and ownership over a community event by engaging women of the community in the initial planning of the Women's Fair & Flea Market and continuous quality improvement
- Promoting skills development leading to employment by providing training that is relevant to the needs of the women of the community, by facilitating skills development sessions, including anti-oppression training that integrated customer service,

communication, conflict resolution, first aid, Food Safe and traffic control to 20-25 women peer workers, employed in various positions in the Fair.

- To redirect used goods from the landfill to generate income for women

Report Objective

- Acquire a solid understanding of the Downtown Eastside Women's Fair & Flea Market model, including the reasons for its implementation, program model, challenges and opportunities and successes
- Evaluate the successes and learnings from the Fair to improve future market income generation and employment opportunities

Benefits and value for participants and community

- Assess benefits for vendors, including increase of income
- Examine skills development for peer workers and vendors in the areas of training provided and progress toward meaningful activities with other community agencies after the end of the fair
- Assess benefits to community in re using and re cycling of large volume of donated goods that would otherwise be destined for landfill

Methodology

The evaluation was conducted over the course of the Women's Summer Fair & Flea Market from the planning stages from June 1, 2017 to October 31, 2017.

Interviews

- Interviews with Fair program peers and vendors at the start, middle and end of Fair
- Interviews with community groups including BWSS, DTES Street Market Association, EMBERS, H.A.V.E. Café

Focus Groups

- Focus groups with peer workers and vendors at completion of training series and end of Fair
- Focus groups with women of the community

Surveys

- Survey of visitors at the market on three separate occasions

Data Collection

- Number of vendors, visitors, peer workers trained
- Number of Peer worker hours worked
- Number of vendor training hours
- Number of employment related trainings, participants and outcomes to employment

"I wish the market would go all year. I love working it. It gives me something to look forward to every week."

Peer Worker Participant



The Women's Fair was built upon the current DTES Market model ensuring vocational and income generating opportunities were created for residents of Vancouver's downtown eastside. The DEWC in consultation and/or partnership with other Women serving organizations facilitated inclusive and safe vending opportunities that respond to the needs of women ensuring safety, security in an accommodating environment. It offered women safe survival vending, selling of locally-produced women's arts and crafts including those produced through partnerships such as the UBC Indigenous Medicine Collective and Pacific Association of First Nations Women. These partnerships provided an opportunity for women to produce and crafts such as beaded earrings and traditional salves and teas. Skills building peer based roles in the setup, operating, and governance of the Women's Fair were also part of the opportunities.

The Women's Fair ran -rain or shine- every Saturday from 11:00am- 4:00pm through the months of June to September on Columbia Street between Cordova and Powell Street. The Women's Fair had the support of local artists and performers who donated their time and artistic abilities to contribute to the friendly, festive, and safe atmosphere.

Further opportunities were afforded to women of the DTES community to participate in the operations and facilitation of the Women's Fair with the appropriate supports and skills development. As well the Women's Fair provided a safe, festive environment for people who live outside of the area to visit, learn and engage positively with the DTES community.

The Market operations were established through consultation with the women of the DTES community. These consultations were done through a series of informal information gathering sessions facilitated at DEWC. These meetings informed the Vendor and Peer Worker selection process, guidelines and expectations for Vendors and Peer Workers, as well as guidelines and expectations for the Fair.



*“We want to support women and
the community”
Flea market patron*

What Peer Workers Said

The Downtown Eastside Women's Street Fair and Flea Market model was designed to provide opportunities for women to contribute to their community and also generate income for the community. Women were an integral part of the planning and development of the model. Through focus groups, the various structures for employment, pay, training, debriefing, and governance were created.

Through the focus groups and interviews with those in all streams of the project (Direct Employment at the Fair, Skills Development, Employment training), it was clear that women of the Downtown Eastside Community felt a collective necessity to bring their community together at an event that was fun and safe for all members. Women identified that they would rather vend or work at the Fair as an alternative form of income generation rather than participate in other forms of informal or street based income generation. It was also clear that the employment stream provided access to training without the barriers that marginalized women face on a daily basis.

Considerations raised by women in ongoing focus groups were:

- Sustainability of the market
- How to create opportunities past the summer
- How to create a transition from the temporary nature of the market to more regular year round employment
- How to get more support to transition into more permanent work
- How to make the event more of a community event
- How to recruit more vendors and increase marketing
- Make it fun

Women wanted to take ownership and responsibility for the overall running of the fair. Women became invested and provided committed leadership to their peers. They wanted to show the neighborhood what the community was about, in terms of who they are and how people can come together.

What Vendors Said

The Street Fair drew an average of 19 vendors per week. In total 43 individual vendors participated. Vendors welcomed the opportunity to sell their merchandise. They said that they felt a connection to the community of women and that they appreciated the women's only

vending situation. Vendors noted that there was camaraderie and cooperation between different vendors rather than competition. As the market progressed, inquiries from vendors from outside of the Downtown Eastside area, such as South Vancouver, New Westminister, Burnaby, Coquitlam, and Pitt Meadows vendors increased. Regular vendors and Peer Workers of the Fair were consulted and there was consensus that the project could offer a select few tables to outside women vendors at a nominal table charge of \$5 per table.

Vendors noted that they typically made an income of \$35 to \$40 on low visitor days and \$100 to \$120 on high visitor number days, with the average being \$79 per week. Vendors stated that estimating whether it was worthwhile to attend was difficult due to the weekly fluctuation of visitor numbers.

Vendors noted that a better strategy for marketing to draw in customers would provide more sustainable income for them. They noted that some days visitor numbers were down which put a strain on their ability to generate income.

What Visitors Said

Fair attendance fluctuated from a low of 45 to a high of 138 visitors. The average attendance was 82 people per week. Visitors to the market were surveyed on their impressions and what they thought of the market. Most visitors were either from the Vancouver area or tourists from such countries as the United States, the Netherlands, and China. Visitors from abroad were interested in the community and listened to women's stories

Visitors were interested in the concept of the Fair and women were excited to provide information on the Fair and the neighborhood. Often visitors would buy a trinket or two for 10 times the amount being asked for by the vendor. Visitors were supportive and encouraged the women of the Fair to continue making the neighborhood welcoming. They were often surprised by the exuberance of the Peer Workers. Visitors commented on the warm and friendly atmosphere of the market.



Photo courtesy of Rebecca
Newspaper

Blisset Vancouver Courier

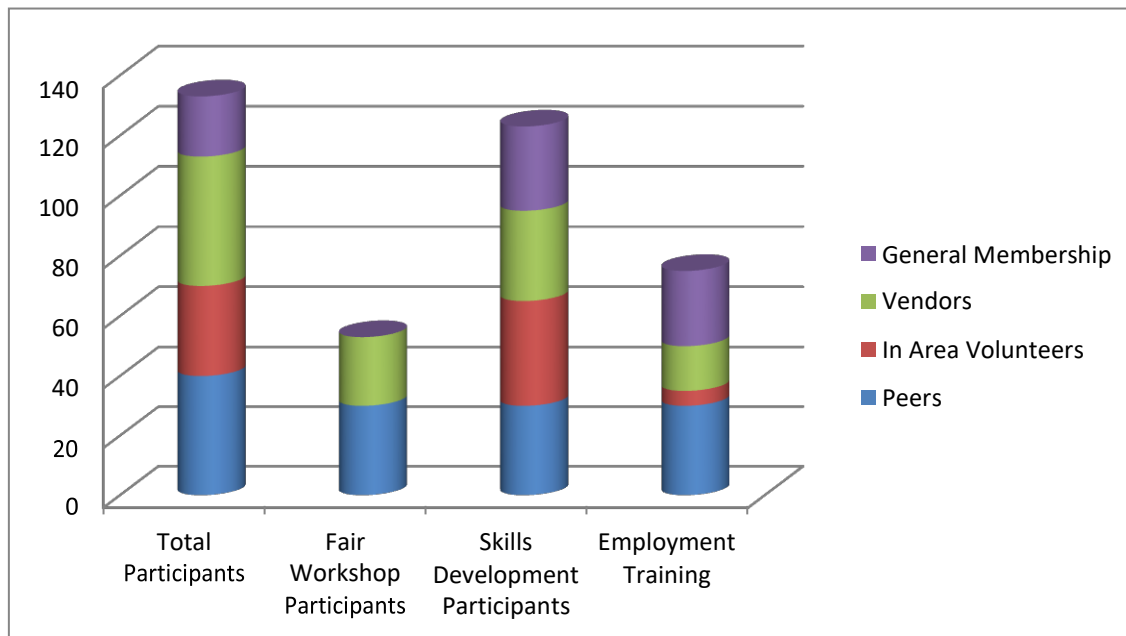
“This market is a great opportunity. It’s amazing. It’s empowering. It lifts up my confidence and spirit — it’s my favourite market to go to.”

Results

Total participation in program = 133

Total of participants to complete program = 125

Total of participants skills development to employment = 75



There were a total of 133 women who participated in the project. The project provided training to women in the following areas:

- Skills Development
 - Communication
 - Conflict Resolution
 - Customer Service
- Employment Training
 - Traffic Control Person
 - Food Safe
 - First Aid & Overdose Response
 - Culinary Training Mentorship
- Fair Specific Workshops
 - Debriefing
 - Effective Communication
 - Conflict Resolution

- Overdose Response (Narcan Training)
- Job specific training (use of walkie talkies and other equipment)

Of the 133 participants, 40 individuals were employed by the Street Fair & Flea Market, 30 individuals were participants in the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre (DEWC) In Area Volunteer program, 20 individuals were women who access services at the DEWC and 43 individuals were vendors.

The project provided basic training to develop skills that would enable women to move on to further training leading to employment or other volunteer opportunities. DEWC partnered with H.A.V.E Culinary training program to provide a mentorship program in the DEWC kitchen which laddered into the H.A.V.E Culinary eight week training program. Women were enrolled in Food Safe and First Aid as part of the culinary training program. DEWC also partnered with EMBERS by providing Traffic Control Person training and certification with the plan to transition participants to the EMBERS work placement program. Other women who participated in the Skills Development program continue to practice what they learned to become more confident and self motivated to move on to employment training. In total, 42 women completed the training provided through the employment stream of the project.

Vendors participated in a series of training workshops with Battered Women's Support Services in the following areas:

Customer Service: Vendors trained in the basics of greeting customers, providing good customer service. – What is good customer service; exploring & practicing skills to promote good customer service & working as a team

Conflict Resolution: Vendors trained in how to handle & resolve conflict; using scenarios to explore, highlight & practice various strategies & skills to de-escalate conflict

Marketing: Price negotiation and visual merchandising

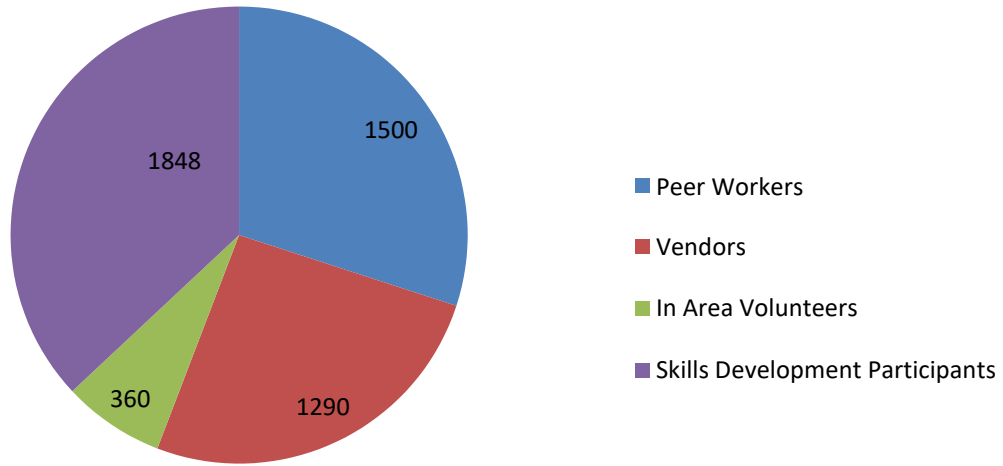
Peer Workers participated in training with Battered Women's Support Services as well:

Communication: How to communicate as a team, with vendors, with customers, with supervisors; verbal & nonverbal communication; how to de-escalate conflict

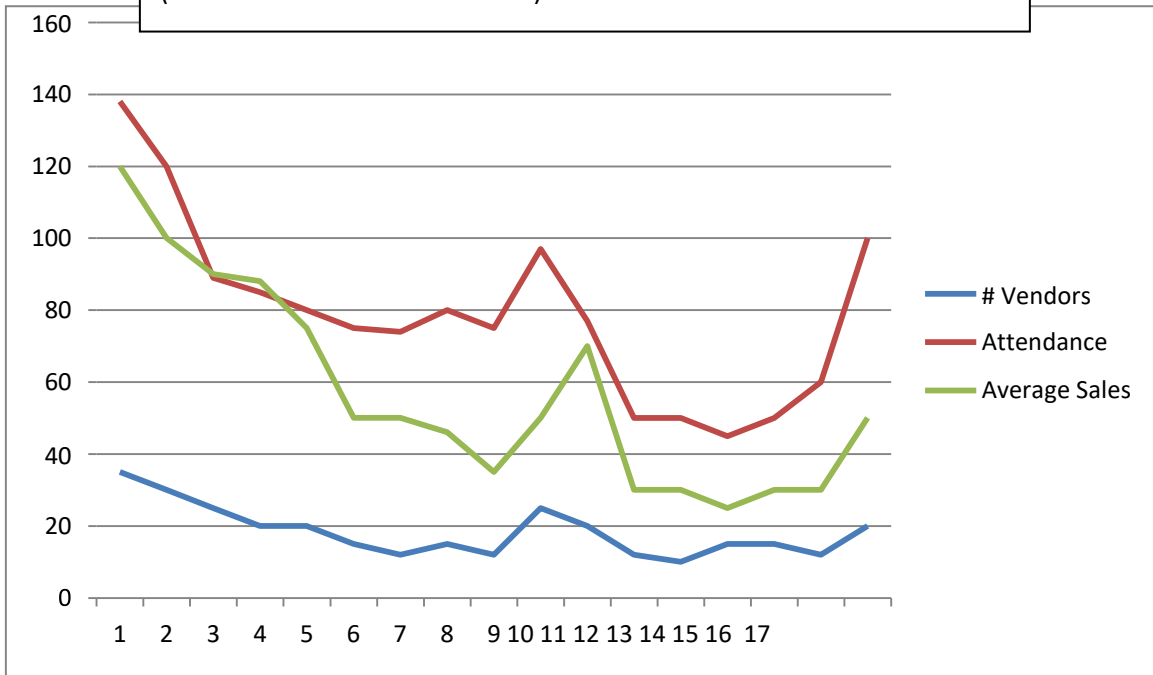
Conflict Resolution: How to handle & resolve conflict; using scenarios to explore, highlight & practice various strategies & skills to de-escalate conflict

Team Work: what you need to fulfill your role; how to build safety; how to work as a team

Total Training Hours



30 Peer Workers received 50hrs training each
 43 Vendors received 30hrs training each
 18 In Area Volunteers received 20hrs training each
 42 Skills Development Program Participants received 44hrs training
 (includes women from all areas)



Numbers of Vendors, Attendance & Average Sales over the 17 week period

As a final project, women worked with other community agencies to develop three (once per month in October, November and December) pre Christmas Craft Fairs, utilizing the Atrium space in the Woodward's building. The project rented space through KW Studios, another community partner. A festive, entertaining opportunity to work with community partners to showcase the talents of local women and artists in the community evolved.



Getting Ready for the Community Craft Fair

Community partners such as Atira's Enterprising Women Making Art (EWMA), Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre Cultural Navigators, The Aboriginal Mother's Centre, and Pacific Association of First Nations Women all attended with crafts made by their members. The Peer Workers from the Street Fair were employed to draw in and greet customers, greet vendors, set up the venue and generally organize the craft fair.

Being inside and in a space with other retail shops provided a different experience for the Peer Workers and Vendors. The Peer Workers noted that they felt much more professional and felt that they were representing their community to a higher degree as they mingled with the

public. The training that they received provided a level of confidence and professionalism that was evident from the way they interacted with shoppers and vendors.

What We Learned

- A focus on marketing is required for future Fairs:
 - Income generation was dependent upon foot traffic and drawing customers. It was found that a marketing strategy is required to ensure that the general public is aware of the Market. Vendors want to take more of role in planning for advertising, marketing and recruitment of other vendors.
- Having entertainment or an anchor vendor such as a collaboration with Farmer's Markets or the Street Vendor's Collective should be explored
 - The days that there were entertainers booked for the Market, foot traffic was drawn in. Musicians had their own social media advertising and drew their followers to the Market. The idea that an anchor vendor or two with a following would increase the customer base came from vendors themselves.
- Community development done by women of the community can be done brilliantly through supported facilitation and skill building
 - The Peer Workers had interactions with some of the residents of particular remodeled buildings where "Live/Work" situations are most common. The Peers were able to have conversations which were respectful and information filled, inviting the residents to take part in the festivities.
- Income generation through safe venues is crucial
 - Women were able to relax as they participated in vending. They noted that this particular vending opportunity was less stressful and less chaotic than the typical Street Markets of the Downtown Eastside. Vendors felt that they should be involved in marketing in order to best maximize income generating opportunities.
Vendors were able to supplement their income
- Focus on training for women that is relevant and tailored to their skill levels in a supportive, empowering way is important
- Transition to a sustainable and ongoing income generating opportunity should be explored
 - Peer Workers and Vendors noted that they felt that the Women's Street Fair & Market was a success and that expansion to an ongoing opportunity should be explored. Women noted that through better marketing, they would be able to increase their income generation and the opportunities for more women to vend

- Women are extraordinarily resilient
 - No matter the circumstances of their lives, women came to work as Peer Workers or Vendors to promote their community and generate income

The Downtown Eastside Women's Street Fair & Flea Market provided opportunities for women that encouraged them to take a step outside of their comfort zones. Women often struggle with literacy and may give up any opportunities that may arise if they are required to have a specific literacy level. The Women's Centre partnered with agencies to develop workshops that allowed women of all literacy levels to complete courses such as Traffic Control Person training. Eastside Movement for Business and Economic Renewal Society (EMBERS), Battered Women's Support Services (BWSS), H.A.V.E Culinary Training Society, Advance Continuing Education Ltd., and Traffic Control Academy were important partners who assisted to tailor course material to meet each woman's needs. We found that with the focus on individual success for each woman, we were able to expand each woman's plan of training and support them to accomplish their individual goals. The project provided opportunities that had not previously been offered to women in a way that suits their needs. Work continues with women who participated in the project in terms of support to continue their education and vocational goals.

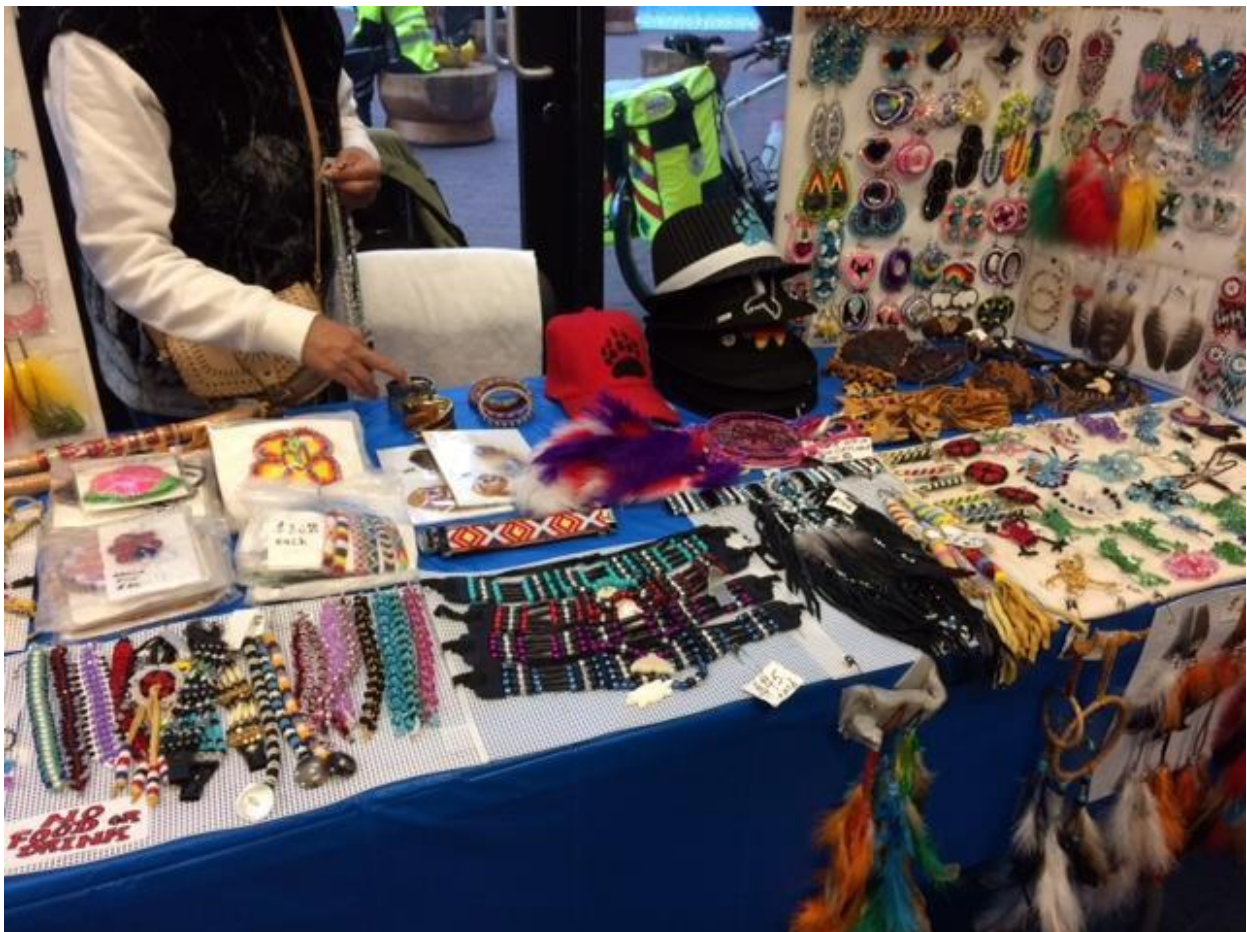
The Downtown Eastside is a repository for used goods. The Downtown Eastside Women's Street Fair & Flea Market was successful in re-distributing goods and materials that would have otherwise gone to the landfill. Vendors were able to sell or repurpose items. Vendors were able to work with the UBC Indigenous Medicine Collective through a series of workshops to learn to make traditional Indigenous healing salves and teas to sell.

We learned that for future Fairs, marketing needs to be a key focus in order to draw in customers. Planning and organizing should begin early with sufficient lead time to provide women training well ahead of the Fair. Women noted that they would like weekly training and better facilitated debrief sessions so that they can work out any issues or concerns in a timely manner. Women also noted that regular drug and alcohol support would be helpful. Peer Workers who struggle with addictions were committed to staying sober while they participated in the Fair, often abstaining from using during their employment period.

Peer workers were generally satisfied with the wage they received. If the Fair were to become an ongoing opportunity, they would like to review the staffing structure to ensure fair and equal work and payment opportunities for all hired Peer workers. Women are invested in ensuring that equity and feasibility are examined as measures in the planning of future Fairs. Vendors were focused on generating more income and as noted, they would like a strong marketing plan in order to maximize their income generation.

Women made it clear that they wish to be involved in the Community Development aspect of the Fair. They noted that as long time residents, they want to liaise between their community and those who have more recently come to call the Downtown Eastside home. Women acknowledged that they often feel marginalized by the gentrification of their neighborhoods. They noted that there are sometimes difficulties between the two sides and that they are best suited to be ambassadors to bridge the gaps to foster understanding between the two sides.

The Skills Development program was able to expand into a program that provided women with training that was relevant to them and their goals. The program was able to work with women toward a goal of further volunteer opportunities or part time or casual employment and community partnerships were enhanced through this process to support women.



We learned that the Street Fair project has made a positive impact on women of the Downtown Eastside community. Women who struggle with addictions were committed to ensuring that they stayed sober for work at the market. Through a supported process, women can build on their strengths and skills. Vendors engaged with the community in positive ways, such as providing information about their products, how they repurposed used goods and how they are committed to being ambassadors for the community. They learned about community development and the different systems that they can influence by their active participation in community. Women came away from the project with a sense of pride.

Throughout the project it was evident that women wanted to take a leadership role in promoting a positive image of their community. They wanted to show that there is hope and vibrancy in the place that they live and work. They wished to dispel the reputation of the Downtown Eastside as being a place only for addicts and drug dealers. The women also wanted others to know that they are mothers, sisters, daughters, nieces, aunts and grandmothers who are trying to nurture their community. They recognize the difficult journeys that every member of their community travels and hope to encourage and nurture people to better circumstances.