

Beacon Community Services History: Oh dear! Do we have to move again!

2024 marked Beacon Community Services' (BCS) 50th year of service - Helping People, Empowering Communities, Improving Lives. Just as the Society changed its name as it grew and evolved, those changes also caused it to move its corporate office. Offering more services meant more staff and volunteers, resulting in the need for more office space. In its 50 years of operations, Beacon moved its corporate office eight times. Tag along and I'll show you where they were located.

1. 1974-2002: Youth Centre 2304 Oakville Street Sidney
2. 1974-1979: Sidney Town Hall Basement
3. 1979-1980: 9813 Fifth Street, Sidney
4. 1980-1985: 9788 Second Street Sidney
5. 1982-1989: Suite 103-9790 Second Street, Sidney
6. 1985-2002: 9751 Third Street Sidney
7. 2002-Current: 9860 Third Street, Sidney
8. 2010-Current: 2723 Quadra Street, Victoria, BC

1974-2002: Youth Centre 2304 Oakville Street Sidney

In 1974, the Sidney Teen Activity Group (STAG) was started by volunteers Camille Martin and Jean Grant and operated out of a clubhouse at 2304 Oakville Street behind Sanscha Hall (Sidney and North Saanich Community Hall Association). After acoustical and seismological upgrades were completed, Sanscha Hall was renamed the Mary Winspear Centre. William Winspear, Mary's nephew, was a very generous contributor to the campaign in honour of Mary. Mary dedicated her life to educating youth and retired to the Peninsula where William would visit in the summers.¹ She was also a great supporter of STAG.

Camille continued to run STAG until 1988. Due to a loss of funding, STAG closed its doors and Camille resigned her position to pursue other career options after 14 distinguished years as the Youth Services Coordinator. The youth program continued to

¹ <https://www.marywinspear.ca/get-involved/history>



use the clubhouse until 2002, at which time the program was changed to an outreach model.

The clubhouse was demolished sometime after 2015 and was replaced by a parking lot located beside the Sidney Community Safety Building. The parking lot is used for public parking and for parking at events at the Mary Winspear Centre.

The Clubhouse 2304 Oakville Street June 2009²



The Clubhouse Location 2304 Oakville Street April 2024



² Photo courtesy Google Maps June 2009



1974-1979: Sidney Town Hall Basement

In the fall of 1974, with funding from the Town of Sidney, two resources were hired – one to coordinate the Sidney Teen Activity Group (STAG), Camille Martin, and the second for a community development worker, John Layton. As well, there were sufficient funds remaining to rent an office, which Camille and John shared, in the basement of the Town Hall.

Based on an April 16, 1975 article in The Sidney Review, John continued to work out of the Town Hall. Camille spent her time either in the office or at the clubhouse.

Funding for John's role ended in March 1977, and the use of the basement office was temporarily halted. New funding was obtained and used to hire a Volunteer Services Coordinator, Sharon Wiegand. "Camille and I spent the summer completing grant requests on her kitchen table." said Sharon during an interview in 2024.

As a result of their efforts, additional funding was received from Canada Works. The funds were used to pay the rent for office space, and Camille and Sharon moved back into the basement office. At this time, Barry Wyckham, counsellor for the Guidance Association and the Society's Treasurer, had the other office, which he had moved into that June.

Getting access to the Society's office was easy, "just go around the back of the Town Hall and down the ramp behind the garbage cans." In 2024, Sidney Archives was located across the hall from the offices previously used by the Society and the Guidance Association.

Town Hall April 2024



Access to the Office April 2024



1979-1980: 9813 Fifth Street, Sidney

The first of several moves took place in 1979, when the Society outgrew its one room office in the basement of Sidney's Town Hall after hiring three paid home support workers.

In July 1979, the Society moved to the "little white house on Fifth Street", at 9813 Fifth Street, a building owned by Alexander & Gane. Louise Cole, Camille Martin, and Sharon Wiegand had offices in the house, and the reception was manned by volunteers. In 2024, this space was the parking lot for the TD Bank.



9813 Fifth Street 1990³



9813 Fifth Street April 2024



³ Photo P2019.21.278 courtesy of Sidney Archive



1980-1985: 9788 Second Street Sidney

In 1980 with funding to deliver the Special Services for Children program, the Society was again in need of additional office space. In August 1980, the Society moved out of the little white house and into both units at 9788 Second Street. In 2024, Sidney Nail and Spa was in Unit A, and Second Street Tattoo was in Unit B at this address. Of note, the Guidance Associated set up their office in the little white house after the Society moved out, and they continued to operate there after the September 1982 amalgamation with the Society.



1982-1989: Suite 103-9790 Second Street, Sidney

On December 1, 1982, the Society launched the Peninsula Employment Centre in office space at unit 103-9790 Second Street, next door to the main office.

In early October 1983, due to funding cuts, the Community Counselling Centre moved from the little white house on Fifth Street into suite 103-9790 Second Street. As well, Home Support needed additional office space and they also moved into that office.

In 2024, unit 103 was reached by going up the stairs just inside the Second Street entrance. On the top floor were 6 offices.



Unit 103 was the second one on the right at the top of the stairs. This unit was the middle set of windows above Brown's The Florist who, in 2024, had the ground floor unit.



The Job Finding Club, established in May 1985, took over the office space vacated when the Peninsula Employment Program (PEP) and the Employment Program Officer (EPO) moved to 9751 Third Street with the rest of the staff.

The Job Finding Club remained at this Second Street location until 1989. At that time, the completion of an addition to the building at 9751 Third Street enabled the Job Finding Club to move there from their Second Street satellite office.



1985-2002: 9751 Third Street Sidney

In the summer of 1985, the Society moved its main office from 9788 Second Street to 9751 Third Street Sidney, School District 63's old Administration Building. In 2024, this location was a Robbins parking lot. They were joined by the Job Finding Club in 1989, who were able to move over after an addition to the building was completed. This was the first time that all the staff, except the Thrift Shop staff, were located in the same building and the team was looking forward to the synergy this would bring.

School District 63 Building in 1986 Jean Jones CEO with Anne Johnston Board Chair



School District 63 in early 1990s⁴



“I started working at PCA in 1995 and, at that time, the building was painted blue. I remember the snow storm of 1996. The region got a lot of snow (123.9 centimeters, or over 4 feet of snow!). It was a real mess as the region discovered it didn’t have adequate snow removal capability to handle that much snow.

At the time, I was working at the 9751 Third Street building and lived just a few blocks away, at the southern end of First Street. Having grown up in Toronto, Ontario, it never occurred to me to not go to work just because of the snow.

⁴ Photo courtesy Sidney Archives P2019.21.273



When I got into the office, only Donna Lafranchise come in. She had moved here from Ottawa, Ontario, so was also used to dealing with a lot of snow. It was more difficult for her to get in though, as she walked from Dean Park Estates and, in the early days after the storm, none of the roads were plowed and the sidewalks were not cleared.

It wasn't until the third day after the storm as roads were being cleared, that other people started coming into the office.

About that time, Donna and I started to get concerned about the amount of snow on the flat roof of the building, so we took it upon ourselves to go up and shovel it off.

Before we removed all the snow from the roof, we lay down and made snow angels. Who can say they did that on a roof in Sidney! It was a good thing we removed the snow though, because when the freezing rain came through a few days later, many roofs collapsed under the weight of the wet snow." *Source 2024 Interview Kathy Mason, Volunteer Coordinator in 1996*

9751 Third Street, Sidney – School District 63 Building circa 1995



9751 Third Street, Sidney – School District 63 Building April 2024



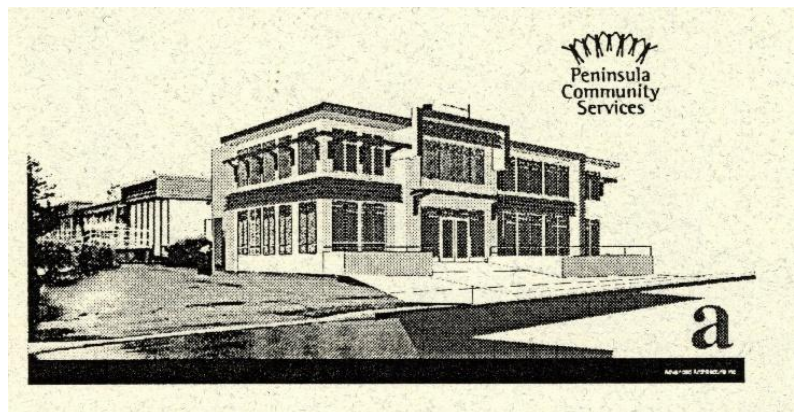
2002-Current: 9860 Third Street, Sidney

After months of anticipation, the Society moved over the weekend of February 15, 2002 into its new and, expected to be, permanent home. The three-storey, 7,500 square-foot building was debt free, and expected to meet the needs of the growing community for many years into the future. The site was chosen for its affordability, the Town provided the land at no cost, central location, and proximity to public transportation.

This first photo is the architect's drawing created in 2001. The second photo was taken in November 2023.

In 2002, the building's main-floor public features included a large, bright Employment Resource Centre, equipped with eight computer stations; a cheery Family Resource

Centre, stocked with parenting resources and entertainment and activities for children, and five private counselling/meeting rooms.



At that time, the building's lower level featured a large meeting and workshop room, a computer lab, and employment counsellors' workstations and the upper-level housed administration and home support teams.

The building was equipped with an elevator, and was also wheelchair and scooter accessible.



2010-Current: 2723 Quadra Street, Victoria, BC

In 2007, BCS purchased the building at 2723 Quadra Street, located in the heart of the Quadra-Hillside neighbourhood. BCS was excited to join the Quadra-Hillside business community and had been looking for a suitable building in this community for several years.

In 2010, administration moved from 9860 Third Street, Sidney into this location, joining the Home Support team and the Quadra Street Thrift Shop, already residing at this address. In 2024, this remained the home of the corporate offices. The Thrift Shop and Home Support teams were no longer located here. To find out more about them, check out the articles titled *Thrift Shops what a success story* and *Helping Seniors Live Independently for as long as it makes sense*.



2723 Quadra Street, Victoria – March 2024

