

# Champion of Dunbar Village: Dunbar Earthquake and Emergency Preparedness (DEEP)

Story by Sarah Gordon Photo by Sandra Steier

Do you recall the modest earthquake that struck the West Coast on December 29, 2015 and jolted many of us awake from our sleep? How prepared were you for that event? Almost a year later, do you have emergency supplies and a solid action plan in place or have you swept the occurrence under the rug as a one off event?

Since 2011 an active team of Dunbar citizens have been talking about and preparing for 'the big one,' a full-scale earthquake. Dunbar Earthquake and Emergency Preparedness (DEEP) is a citizen's grassroots effort to ensure Dunbar residents are able to take care of themselves after such a disaster.

Ann Pacey is one of DEEP's energetic founding members. She is a member of various emergency related organizations and boards, including the Village Vancouver Transition Society (VV), which inspires individuals and organizations to take actions that build resilient and sustainable communities. DEEP emerged out of a presentation VV made to the Dunbar Residents' Association (DRA) in 2011 to encourage neighbours working together.

**"We're all in it together. I was interested in the question of building community resilience when I started." Ann Pacey**

At this meeting enthusiasm ignited and key members from the DRA including Susan Chapman, Jane Ingman Baker and Walter Wells formed a steering committee and joined forces with Pacey to start DEEP. Another key player who Pacey describes as "a tireless volunteer" is Katarina Halm, who dedicated great effort into compiling the wealth of information found in DEEP's brochure, building their website and coordinating outreach.

After a major disaster occurs people will be on their own for a significant length of time and will need to look within their local resource base, as city and emergency resources will be over extended. DEEP's original vision was based on the Block Watch model, to build neighbour capacity block-by-block to collectively look out for each other and offer their skills in time of an emergency.

Block captains were invited to participate in the DEEP program adding new and interesting activities to their block parties. Pacey says DEEP's Block Watch model has been slow to gain wider participation however, perhaps with added awareness this could become a reality.

Pacey points out that people don't have to share political, religious or cultural views in a time of a crisis. It is a time to rally together; having DEEP in place helps neighbours kick into action and assist one another.

**"Now is the time to prepare, not when a disaster happens. If we are prepared we will be able to take better care of ourselves." Ann Pacey**

DEEP looks at actual events in other cities such as Christchurch and San Francisco, to learn from and apply those lessons, when (and based on plate tectonic research it is indeed when, and not if) a similar earthquake occurs on the West Coast.

Pacey stepped down as DEEP's head when she moved out of Dunbar, but she still plays an active role and John Halldorson has taken over as director. He is a Dunbar Community Centre Association board member and as a retired Chief Warrant Officer in the Canadian Army Reserve for 43 years, had ample



Ann Pacey, Katarina Halm, John Halldorson

experience dealing with emergency response.

Halldorson says, "It is a bit of a struggle getting people involved and then keeping them interested."

**"DEEP does monthly presentations of various preparedness subjects and a couple of table top scenario exercises to run through what happens in an actual event." John Halldorson**

He points to the good work DEEP has done increasing awareness and developing neighbourhood preparedness using the Map Your Neighbourhood Program.

Map Your Neighbourhood creates a neighborhood map identifying locations of gas meters, propane tanks, and other hazards, as well as a list of all residents, particularly those likely to need help. It identifies those with key skills such as medical, ham radio, machinery operators or equipment, for example, chain saws, generators, and winches that might help in an emergency. Map Your Neighborhood teaches

a team approach to neighbourhood response, including communications and staying safe while helping.

"DEEP has a vision of being a stepping stone and coordinating point in the community during an emergency or disaster," Halldorson reports. He is pleased to share, "DEEP is one step closer to this as Dunbar Community Centre Association has funded a shipping container which will contain emergency equipment like radios, enhanced first aid, tarps and search and rescue kits. The Vancouver Park Board has authorized this container to be set up at Dunbar Community Centre. This dovetails perfectly with the City's recently launched Disaster Support Hub (DSH) concept, will hopefully get city support and that may help us, as the only emergency preparedness community group in Vancouver."

Imagining the prospect of having one's home and life turned upside down is not pleasant, but thanks to the dedicated DEEP volunteers and their visionary preparedness plan, Dunbar is one step ahead of many communities. To learn more about DEEP visit their website ([www.dunbar-deep.ca](http://www.dunbar-deep.ca)) and request a talk on a block level. After all, it's always best to be prepared.