

VOICES FROM THE HOOD

Reprinted from *The Soul of Vancouver: Voices from the Downtown Eastside*, 2008

THE DOWNTOWN EASTSIDE IS THE SOUL OF VANCOUVER

Sandy Cameron

Now we're not a pretty community.
We don't have a lot of gorgeous flower gardens or trees like the ones in Stanley Park. We do have Crab Park, the gardens in Strathcona, the colourful murals, and the old Heritage buildings. But when I use the word beauty in regard to the Downtown Eastside, I'm not thinking about nice looking streets. I'm thinking about the people.

It's the people who make our community beautiful, and people make our community beautiful because they have soul. The Downtown Eastside is the soul of Vancouver.

You know about soul food and soul music.

Well I'm talking about soul community.

Many of us have lived through hard times – and survived.

We know about pain, and in our pain, in spite of our pain,

We reach out to each other and help each other.

That's soul.

They say bodies are attracted by pleasure,

but souls are attracted by pain.

We are strong from the struggles we have endured.

We have learned to respect each other, and not be judgemental.

We have learned to work together to make things better.

MAKE YOURSELF AT HOME

Phoenix Winter

I moved into the neighbourhood

With my things

Left them

At the bus shelter

For passersby

The little peaceful plaque

On the welcoming bench

With welcoming words,

"Pull up a chair

In a shaft of sunlight

Come sit with me

Enjoy this house."

A small plastic yellow

Sunflower, strewn

A touch of cheer.

This is all I have

Sunshine yellow and clear

Glass walls

Bright blue sky

Warm cement and

Clean brown wood.

And I will share.

LISTEN

Diane Wood

Listen to us

2 all of us who aren't trynta sell dope on the corner,

Who have our arms out 4 a handshake or a hug,

not spare change

Listen to the laughter in a sunny park,

The hi's & hey's & hello's

When friends intersect

And the kisses goodbye

Smckx

That's love & community

& people who look you in the eye when U pass them by

If all U hear is Up Down Rigs & Threes,

Then yr not listening

I LOVE THE HOOD

Dmitri Harris

Yo! My name is Demi and I am 11 years old.

I like to listen to rap on my radio.

I love my mom

I like my friends

When I grow up

I'm gonna get me a benz

Everyday

I go to school

This crazy job action

Is really cruel

Live'n down here

It ain't no joke

A whole lot of people sniffin' koke,

A whole lot of people smoking dope,

It's hard to cope –

People offer us some

We say nope

In Chinatown

My mom likes the smells

And she likes to eat

Them things in shells

The restaurants in Chinatown

Are really nice

My favourite meal

Is chicken and rice

My neighbourhood rules

It's really cool

You better not take me

For a fool

Some things are bad,

Some things are good.

That's how I feel

About liven in this hood.