

## Compassionate Community Case Study

### Walk for Compassionate Community

Nelson, BC

What you need to know	
Organization	Kalein Centre for Dialogue, Integrated Hospice Care & Education
Website	<a href="http://kaleincentre.org/">http://kaleincentre.org/</a>
Contact information	<a href="mailto:info@kaleincentre.org">info@kaleincentre.org</a>
Target Audience	Community members
Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To bring community members together – through a self-guided or group walking tour, followed by a debriefing conversation - to see the community in a different way, with a compassionate lens</li> <li>• To facilitate conversations about death, dying, grief, loss, living fully and Compassionate Community</li> </ul>
Outcomes/Results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greater awareness of Compassionate Community</li> <li>• Normalizing grief, loss, death and dying</li> <li>• Bringing the conversation to the community</li> <li>• Increasing citizens' knowledge of and appreciation for the community</li> <li>• Partnerships</li> </ul>
Cost to Participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Free</li> </ul>
What is needed to initiate a similar activity?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Familiarity with the community and identifying potential sites to include on the walk</li> <li>• Liaison with local historian or museum to help with history of the sites</li> <li>• Determine walk route with 8-12 sites – a circular format is best</li> <li>• Prepare tour sheet (with site descriptions and questions for reflection) and map</li> <li>• Location and plan for debriefing conversation/activities to follow the walk</li> <li>• Advertising and promotion</li> </ul>

Existing Toolkit/Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Please see the accompanying manual '<i>Walk for Compassionate Community – Success Guide</i>'</li><li>• Descriptive PowerPoint slides</li></ul>
Recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Encourage participants to strike up conversations with strangers – this is a great way to build community and create a shared sense of Compassionate Community</li><li>•</li></ul>

Fall 2019

  
*Compassionate  
Communities*

Walk for Compassionate Community -  
Success Guide



## Walk for Compassionate Community

### Summary

*“A walk for compassionate community allows people in your community an opportunity to experience places in the community with a compassionate lens - it’s a walk with the heart leading, rather than the head.”*

- Mike Stolte, **Walk for Compassionate Community** Co-creator (Kalein Centre)

In 2017, Nelson, B.C.’s Kalein Centre ([www.KaleinCentre.org](http://www.KaleinCentre.org)) organized the first Walk for Compassionate Community to allow participants a way of seeing the community with a different set of eyes than those they would normally use. A local historian was enlisted to identify approximately 20 downtown Nelson locations that had a unique history where people might pause, reflect and contemplate events in their own lives, and those of other community members. Among the sites chosen were:

1. an alley featuring vibrant graffiti that was a tribute to someone who had died recently of an overdose;
2. the old courthouse where three people had been hanged 100 years ago when executions drew the whole community to watch;
3. an old, small private hospital (that is now a rental house) where, 100 years ago, births and deaths were rarely seen because these primarily happened in people’s homes, where birth and death were a normal part of living.

The walk allows people to reflect on the location, offers some history, and then poses some provocative questions to get participants thinking and feeling, and sometimes questioning their own beliefs. These are all key elements to creating a Compassionate Community (NOTE: questions correspond with the locations above):

1. Is there value in allowing people to publicly express their grief? If so, what is it? Is this expression an example of a Compassionate Community? What are other examples?
2. Why are we so intrigued by death? Are we less so now? NOTE: 40 years ago, a few dozen countries had banned the death penalty. Today more than 100 have.
3. What have we lost and gained by having births and deaths take place in institutions?

In Nelson, the 20 locations were short-listed to nine (see pages 4-5) so that they could be easily put into a one to two-hour self-guided walk no longer than 1-2 km, accompanied by a guide sheet and map. Participants were also asked to identify three additional locations (and to physically walk to these locations, if time permitted) that elicited a sense of compassion, a sense of loss, and a sense of gratitude or living fully.

The walk can be done in a self-guided manner or as a group activity, facilitated by a knowledgeable walking guide. For both these activities, a debrief by a skilled facilitator to draw out learnings, reflections and observations is recommended immediately following the walk.

The first self-guided walk in Nelson was a huge success. Participants wanted to share their impressions and see how other community members felt both as they experienced the walk and as they reflected afterwards. The debrief conversations were rich and deep.

There are no hard and fast rules for a Walk for Compassionate Community. It can be combined with an already existing walk, enhanced by adding a scavenger hunt component to keep it fun or light, or to draw in a younger crowd. The walk is set up to elicit and evoke feelings, a sense of compassion for the community and other community members, and as a rich exploration.

Since the first walk, the concept of a Walk for Compassionate Community has spread to other parts of B.C. and even to California. Please let us know how your walk went at [info@kaleincentre.org](mailto:info@kaleincentre.org).

## Steps to Success:

1. Walk your community and think of sites that you feel would be beneficial to include on your walk
  - a. This is the best place to start to be able to create a rough list of sites that you feel can provide insight into life, loss, and grief.
2. Contact your local historian
  - a. Your local historian or museum will be able to help with the history and background of the sites. They are also a good resource for other sites that you may not have thought of.
3. Think of the best route. It is recommended to keep the route in a circular format; this allows participants to stop and start at any location.
4. Hold a debrief event immediately after the walk where participants can share their experiences through conversation, journaling, poetry, drawing or other forms of artistic expression.

## Recommendations:

- Limit to 8-12 sites - too many or too few will cause the intended audience to lose interest
- Keep the tour sheet maximum 1 paper double sided
- Provide a downloadable map with tour locations

- Encourage participants to strike up conversations with strangers. This is a great way to build community and create a shared sense of Compassionate Community.

**Thursday, May 31<sup>st</sup> 2018 – 6 pm Touchstones / 7:30 pm  
(approximately) United Church (main church) for community  
conversation afterwards**

## **Inspired Encounters – Discovery of Compassionate Community**

Downtown Nelson

This is an activity that you can undertake at your own pace or with a group. Your insights will be the basis for a community conversation at the United Church after the walk.

What is a compassionate community? How do we perceive death and dying? How do we explore grief and loss to live more fully and authentically? This is a tour of Nelson that allows you to reflect on Nelson in perhaps a different way than you are used to. Please reflect on these questions – be inspired to strike up a conversation with a stranger, quietly journal, take photographs, sketch or simply reflect. You can start anywhere and finish anywhere. **NOTE:** This entire discovery exercise should take 1-2 hours to complete. If you have limited time, please go to locations 10-12 (highlighted in green). A pdf map is also available to guide you.

#	Location	Description	Questions for self reflection
1	IODE Park (Hall St. at Herridge Lane)	Gentrification or improvement? Despite the changes in the park having been part of a public plan for many years, most people were surprised and upset when many of the mature trees in the park were cut down. We love trees, and we also get used to things, and can feel upset by change. It can be hard to trust that change may be for the better, in the long run. Also, sometimes it isn't.	Must things die in order to create space for other things? What loss did you truly fear that led to change for the better?
2	Bubzee's graffiti -Memorial Graffiti at Herridge Lane and Josephine St.	Find a piece of art on a wall that depicts hands releasing a bird flying away. Painted by a local artist after the death of a young friend by overdose.	Is there value in allowing people to publicly express their grief? If so, what is it? Is this expression an example of a compassionate community? What are other examples?
3	The Capitol Theatre	In Ancient Greece, attending the theatre to watch the tragedies was mandatory for every citizen. In the tragedies the Greeks were reminded over and over again that no matter how hard we may try to do the right thing, we can make mistakes, sometimes even catastrophic ones. And despite our being good people, the Gods may decide to toy with us. This was meant to inspire catharsis -- which, at the time, meant 'pity and fear.' Today, this theatre overflows with the stories we tell ourselves about who we are as a community, and what it means to be a person. We meet and regenerate ourselves, over and over again.	How might we behave today if we truly believed we are where we are in our lives out of sheer blind luck, rather than by virtue of our merit and hard work? What is the purpose of gathering with others as a community to tell and share our stories?
4	Strathcona Hotel (site of Nelson City Police at Stanley St. near Victoria)	The site of the police station and library was the former location of the Strathcona Hotel. A beautiful old wooden hotel with a tower, balconies and elaborate woodwork, the hotel burned down in the 60's. Sadly, there was loss of life. A young man fearing his sister was trapped,	What are some of the crucial moments where our lives flashed before our eyes where a decision/fate might have had a deadly outcome?

		ran back in the building and died, when she, in fact, had left by another exit. Our decisions are often made in the chaos of the moment and can have far-reaching consequences.	Do you consider yourself fortunate to be alive today? If so, why?
5	Railtown (western end of Baker St.) & Railtown train Station	The area of town now called Railtown is the former site of Chinese market gardens, a Doukhorbor farm (still visible as the vague outline of a barn in the roofline of one of the buildings at Maglio's Building Supplies), and probable indigenous settlement (alluvial plains between creeks and lakes – liminal spaces – are often where we find the richest soil and the best fishing but are also places of flooding and community dislocation). The area has been primarily residential, and primarily industrial. Today it is poised on the edge of transformation again. At the train station – recently restored and brought back to life by the Chamber of Commerce - countless thousands of people came and went, perhaps seeing each other for the first and last time. This is a true liminal space.	What are your most poignant memories of greetings or departures from transitional/liminal spaces (e.g. train stations, airports or bus depots)? Are these liminal spaces places of sadness or celebration for you?
6	Old Hospital (big house kitty corner from Yellow Deli Restaurant on Falls St.)	This is large house now with several rental units. At one time it served as a hospital. Today 80-90% of births and deaths take place in hospitals and institutions. One hundred years ago, it was the opposite.	What have we lost and gained by having births and deaths take place in institutions?
7	Site of Redfish Grill (Stanley St. Near CIBC)	Another victim of fire, this historic building was gutted a few years ago. At one time, rumour has it that a tunnel connected the basement of the Red Fish building to the basement of the Hume Hotel. Gentlemen could enter The Hume by the front doors and dine in style, then sneak through the tunnel to the Red Fish building and up to the top floor where there was a brothel and opium den, without compromising their reputation.	We all have secrets. What roles do they play in our well being? What happens when this is taken away because of illness (institutionalization, hospitalization, etc.)? Do humans and communities need these unsanctioned outlets?
8	Courthouse (Vernon and Ward St.)	Three people have been sentenced to hang in Nelson. Two were buried near the courthouse after they died and are presumably still there somewhere. People reportedly crowded the Hume Hotel's balcony at the time to watch the killings.	Why are we so intrigued by death? Are we less so now? NOTE: 40 years ago, a few dozen countries had banned the death penalty. Today more than 100 have.
9	China Town and Red-Light District (Lake St. near Josephine)	Go past the credit union and turn right, as if to go to the Youth Centre and you'll find yourself in what used to be Nelson's red-light district. One formal brothel building still stands -- can you find it? It's the one with the balcony out front. It's also the area where most of Nelson's considerable Chinese population used to live. The wrong side of the tracks! Or, in our case, of Ward Creek. Public health nurses used to visit the women who worked in the brothels every month to make sure they were healthy.	Do we still take care of those most vulnerable or those considered to be by society "undesirable"? What could we do differently to become a more compassionate community?
10	A location that signifies a sense of loss or grief for you	Pick a place in downtown Nelson where you feel a sense of loss or grief. Go to this location and sit or stand quietly for a few minutes.	What is the sense of loss or grief? Have you properly honoured it? Has the community?



11	A location that feels truly alive in Nelson	Pick a place in downtown Nelson where you sense the aliveness of the community or you personally feel a sense of aliveness. Go to this location and sit or stand quietly for a few minutes.	What is this sense of aliveness? Are others aware of it? Do you take enough time to pause and honour this aliveness in your life?
12	A location that demonstrates the concept of compassionate community	Pick a place in downtown Nelson that you feel represents the concept of a compassionate community (or a community that truly cares). Go to this location and sit or stand quietly for a few minutes.	What does compassionate community mean to you? What is it about this place that makes it special? Are there lessons for the broader community?