**Creating Healthy Communities**

Dr. Trevor Hancock, UVic – July 6, 2014 at Capital Unitarian Universalist Congregation

Just as it takes a whole village to raise a child, so too does it take a whole community to raise healthy people. So what is a healthy community, and how do we get one? I will discuss these issues and three key challenges facing communities: Equity, sustainability and governance.

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So what is a healthy community - your experience?

* Health does not come from the health care system
* Health is created in the settings where we lead our lives - homes, schools, workplaces, neighbourhoods, hospitals, prisons, malls, etc.
* For example, in working to create a healthier university, we look at the natural, built, social and organisational environment of the university.

What do I mean by health?

* Wellbeing, human development, human potential
  + Our 1986 definition of a HC

Some key aspects of a healthy community

* Everyone's basic needs are met - peace, clean water and air, food, shelter, education, income
  + All/everyone implies equity/social justice
* We are social animals, we need social connections
  + Also variety, diversity, stimulation
* We need a sense of empowerment, we need to be engaged
* We are 80% urbanised and we spend 90% of our time indoors
  + So the built environment is our 'natural' environment in the 21st century
* But we still live 100% of the time within natural ecosystems
  + They must be sustainable over the long term
  + Also, as we evolved in nature, it seems we need nature in our lives
  + How do we bring nature into everybody's everyday life?

How do we get one?

* Place health at the centre of urban governance
  + What is government meant to be doing?
    - Focusing on human development, achieving full human potential
    - It’s the people, stupid, it’s not the economy, stupid!
  + Engage and partner with all sectors - public, private, NGO, community, academic, faith etc.
    - Develop a shared vision and strategy
    - Practice true participatory democracy
  + Develop what we call 'healthy public policy'
    - What is a housing policy that maximises health/ wellbeing/human development - and does so equitably and sustainably.
    - Ditto for transportation, waste management, parks, education etc.

Three key challenges facing healthy cities in the 21st century:

* Equity
  + How to maximise health and human development for all
* Sustainability
  + How to create communities that arte indefinitely ecologically sustainable
* Governance
  + How to manage the affairs of the city (and the nation) so as to meaningfully involve everyone in achieving these goals

How do I work in this world, what are my values?

* As a physician, I am anthropocentric, a humanist
  + I see social justice as a natural consequence of being anthropocentric and being a physician
  + You can't be concerned only with some humans, but with everyone, equally
    - Physicians are taught to see the person, and to treat all equally, regardless of race, ethnicity, SES, etc
* As a naturalist/ecologist, I am eco-centric
  + But I am an anthropocentric ecologist - I see that we need nature for us to be healthy (but nature does not need us!)
  + So we need to understand, respect, cherish and protect nature for our own good as well as for the good of nature
  + For that, it would help to see nature as sacred, to see the spirit in nature

Why and how do I keep my spirits up?

* My values and vision are a guide
* What is the alternative - to just give up?
* I see it as a sailing trip