

# Vancouver Public Space Network

By Anna Redman

Skytrain Parties, Park(ing) Day and Stick-it-to-the-Streets are some of the outside-of-the-box thinking that come from this not-for-profit advocacy organisation's presentation at BCLC 2014.

Representing Vancouver Public Space Network were Karen Quinn Fung, Jaspal Marwah and Jonathan Bleackley.

## Who is winning and who is losing when discussing public space?

The purpose of this publication is to communicate to The Vancouver Public Space Network (VPSN) is a non-partisan and entirely volunteer-run not-for-profit organisation. It formed from the discussions and questions people had around the corporate use of public space, such as advertising; who benefits from this?

A brief history of the emergence of public spaces from the 1920s lead to how the VPSN brings public spaces into the public conscious. The VPSN balances their work through policy creation, advocacy and letters to agencies, with public engagement and conversations.

Some of the more alternative ways to bring their messages to the public have been via Skytrain parties with an after party in a public space: [www.hellovancity.com](http://www.hellovancity.com).

These draw attention to the VPSN and broadens perceptions of what engagement can be. They look at quick events, those that are a little outside the rules, that disrupts expectations and challenges how people think about public spaces.

'We want our city to be a free space for everyone to discover, create and share ideas'.

Karen, Jaspal and Jonathon were able to open up the possibilities to libraries. They recognised that libraries are often situated in the public square and the heart of the city.

The digital world is also forefront in their projects with mobile as the new context, such as a Facebook wall for every bus stop. These ideas create spaces for connection and cross space barriers.

We were left with questions that sparked discussion and also made one enthusiastic to the possibilities of libraries engaging the community in its role as a public space.

How could the library further engage the community to support its mission? What's the role of the library in promoting urban literacy and participation in public space-making? What's already happening, what could happen next?

This presentation opened up how I view public spaces and in turn started the thought processes to how we view public libraries as public spaces.



Park(ing) Day 2013 - September 20, 2013. Photo by Eric Scott. [\[VPSN Flickr website\]](#)

Karen Quinn Fung represents the VPSN as a stakeholder in the City of Vancouver's Transportation 2040 plan update.

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There are some great upcoming projects linking public art, literacy and neighbourhoods. More information can be found on the Vancouver Public Space Network blog [www.vpsn.ca](http://www.vpsn.ca) and website:

[www.vancouverpublicspace.ca](http://www.vancouverpublicspace.ca)

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