

Chautauqua 2004
Winnipeg Speaking Engagements for Dr Wendy Sarkissian

1. Workshops (approximately 3 hours each, with hands-on training for the participants)

1. *Creative Community Engagement* (for neighbourhood renewal organizations)

This colourful, illustrated presentation and subsequent discussion will focus on ways of using creativity in community engagement processes. The cornerstone of the presentation will be a public health and park-renewal project in a low-income community in the Gold Coast of Queensland, where community cultural development (CCD) approaches were used to encourage local people to come to grips with the essence of a prevailing “stigma” that seemed to be destroying opportunities for community pride and development.

Other approaches to innovative team development and community capacity building, using methods developed from environmental philosophy and Deep Ecology will also be discussed.

The use of archetypal role plays to highlight community safety and traffic management issues in stakeholder workshops and conferences will also be discussed.

2. *CPTED on a Difficult Site: Muggings for the Latte Set?* (for police, UWinnipeg and Downtown BIZ)

This illustrated lecture and the subsequent discussion will present principles of Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) and especially second-generation CPTED. One case study will illustrate CPTED and campus planning issues in a high-crime site in Sydney, Australia. The university, seen by some as a “an island of privilege in a sea of disadvantage,” has many plans to expand its operations which have CPTED implications. The frustrations of a CPTED practitioner who had also worked on the campus and lived in the immediate neighbourhood are explored.

3. *Not White Fellas’ Business: Dealing with Pain and the Expectation of Betrayal in Participatory Planning in One Aboriginal Community in Sydney* (first for grad students in City Planning and second for general admittance).

Probably the best-known Aboriginal community in Australia, Redfern in Sydney has had a chequered past and a painful present. In 1998, two white social planning consultants, Wendy Sarkissian and Sophia van Ruth, began community consultation processes on behalf of the local municipality to determine the future uses of a site close to derelict properties owned and managed by the Aboriginal Housing Company. Our work did not involve Aboriginal residents directly, as Indigenous consultants were engaged to undertake that work. Nevertheless, issues of race and poverty imbued all of our work. Six years later, the Redfern Community Centre opened to generally positive responses. This illustrated presentation by Wendy Sarkissian is a confused response to the contradictions and challenges of working in such a setting and raises questions about the role of community engagement and empowerment approaches in severely disadvantaged communities.

4. *Cultural Development and Capacity Building* (for provincial staff doing both rural and urban development)

Wendy Sarkissian explores several crucial issues facing planners today. Many of the projects that land use planners work on these days address highly complex ecological and technical issues. “Brownfield” development sites may have had toxic uses that require extensive remediation. There is often disagreement between “experts” and community members about whether sites are safe or how they should be re-used. Often communities do not trust the scientists or “experts”. Further, impacts of global climate change mean that the “received wisdom” of longstanding community experience may be challenged by new scientific findings. In this complex and highly charged atmosphere, it is often difficult to build and maintain trust and collaborative working relationships. And yet land use planners

need to persevere and make sure that the outcomes of their planning processes do not create unexpected problems, especially for local people. To complicate matters further, community needs must be balanced with wider ecological considerations that may not have been taken into consideration in earlier planning processes. At the core of these professional dilemmas is the need to build literacy and capacity, both for community members and proponents, government, developers and others. This workshop, exploring community engagement theory and practice, draws on thirty years of experience in practical planning projects in Australia. It will also address issues related to organizational and resident capacity building.

5. *A little bit of theory and an awful lot of listening: Using Patsy Healey's model of inclusionary argumentation in a difficult planning project in Western Australia* (for Manitoba Provincial Planners Institute)

This illustrated presentation and subsequent discussion will examine principles of some contemporary planning theory, *inclusionary argumentation*, and apply them to a difficult waterfront project in Western Australia near Perth, where a major local developer sought in 2003 to revive a failed project from the 1990s that had sent overseas investors bankrupt to the tune of twenty million dollars. Wendy will discuss the dominant approach to community engagement in Western Australia (*Decide, Announce, Defend*) and show how her client came to accept that including dissident voices and building trust were the two necessary criteria to allow this project to be re-launched. The project has just been re-launched to generally positive community responses.

6. *Listening to the Softest Voices: Children and Community Participation* (for faculty of architecture students, architecture, interior design, landscape architecture and city planning students)

Why do we always ignore the voices of children and why should we include them in community engagement processes? This illustrated presentation and the subsequent discussion will focus on the theoretical and ethical arguments for involving children in participatory planning and then provide some examples of how those processes can work –and yield real results. Among the models presented for children and young people (all based on real projects) are: *A Week with a Camera*, *Barefoot Mapping*, and the *Edible Model*. Specific advice will be provided by an experienced practitioner on the nuts and bolts of undertaking these processes and the importance of making sure that the outcomes and findings of processes with children are fully translated into the reporting process.

Lectures (approximately 1 hour to 1.5 hours each)

1. *Why Planners Hate Nature and What We Can do About It*

In 1992, Canadian-born Wendy Sarkissian closed her successful social planning consulting business in Australia and went to live alone for a year in harsh conditions in the tropical bush near Darwin. Why would she do such a thing? The result of that year in solitude and subsequent forays into environmental ethics led to a changed perspective about why planners in Australia (in those days and even today) acted as if they did respect the rights of Nature. The problem, Wendy argues, is not that planners do not have enough information. It's that they don't care. This illustrated presentation, based on her award-winning PhD dissertation, summarises the results of several years' research in Australia, building on a 1993 study into the teaching of environmental ethics in schools of planning in Canada and the United States. A radical curriculum for the teaching of planning in Australia is presented.

2. *A Woman's Initiatory Journey at Midlife: The Role of Nature* (a year in the Australian bush at 50)

This midlife thing. What's it about? You feel you don't belong any longer. You feel an outsider. Your old *persona* does not fit well. You are impatient and out-of-sorts with your friends and family. Your job is not as challenging as it used to be. Your relationship ...hmmm? And yet something strong and feisty is growing inside you – in the midst of all this confusion and uncertainty. Is it time for retreat? For

separation? For initiation? Are you on the threshold of something greater than your self? Is your Self calling to you in ways that you can only dimly hear?

Tracing her own journey of initiation which began with a dramatic year spent in solitude in rough conditions in the tropical Australian bush in 1992, Wendy Sarkissian identifies and explains the predictable stages of a woman's initiatory journey at midlife and the healing power of Nature. She asks, What is the role of Nature? Of solitude? Of voluntary simplicity?

This dramatic story is illustrated by photographs and video from a year spent in challenging circumstances and includes fragments of writings, as well as suggestions and practical tips for women who may feel that their own initiation is imminent.