

## Happy Holidays!

Happy Holidays from everyone at the Vancouver Community Network! Thank you to all those who contributed during our [#GivingTuesday](#) campaign – we raised \$900! This will go towards supporting free Internet free services to assist individuals, community groups and non-profit organizations in accessing and utilizing the Internet to its fullest ability. We believe the information, resources and opportunities on the Internet should be accessible to all.

We also encourage anyone who isn't already to become a VCN member or [donate today](#). Your money goes towards supporting a social enterprise that seeks digital inclusion and social justice.

### SMS Shelter Update

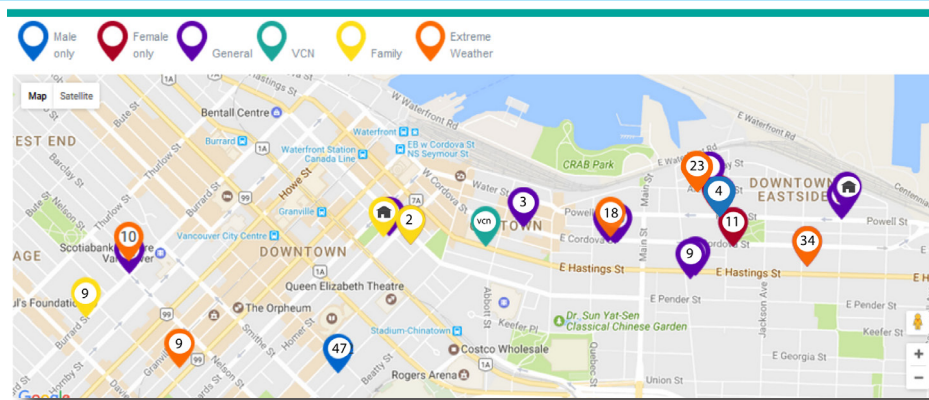
This time of year is especially hard for many who live on the streets. VCN has made it our mission to centralize information about shelter beds availability on an online platform. The purpose of getting this information and other contact/organizational information on the map is to have a hub of knowledge that can be accessed by all shelter workers, EMTs, police, and others who can direct those looking for beds to the nearest available ones to them. This frees up time for shelter



workers and others to do what they do best – take care of those at their shelters.

This map can be updated by shelter workers in real time using text messaging: they text a number to 778-402-1642, and that number shows up on their shelter's icon on the [SMS Shelter Map](#). All that's needed is for each shelter to register their phone number with VCN. With this mission in mind, we're currently reaching out to register shelters and raise the awareness of our online Shelter Map platform. Help us get the word out about this FREE and essential service. Let's get people into beds and make sure everyone has a warm and safe holiday.

For more info on the SMS Shelter Map or the Street Messaging System, please contact us at 778-724-0232 or [coordinator@vcn.bc.ca](mailto:coordinator@vcn.bc.ca).





## Introducing Bitcoin at VCN

As the digital age progresses, closer attention is being paid to digital currencies. Of these, Bitcoin looms largest. Introduced to the world in 2009, Bitcoin is a digital currency that is decentralized and potentially democratizing. It exists entirely online, with its entire history completely transparent, and a growing base of users. More importantly, Bitcoin is a form of currency available to those who cannot or do not have bank accounts. It is just like any other currency – it can be used to purchase things online, and increasingly, in shops in large urban areas like Vancouver (as many vendors accept Bitcoin). It can also be traded for real currency, so if an organization accepts Bitcoin payments, it can then transfer those Bitcoins for Canadian Dollars online.

With the growth of Bitcoin and number of people who use it, VCN is entering a pilot phase of accepting Bitcoins, either in the form of a donation to VCN's Bitcoin account, or in exchange for services offered by the VCN web|team and tech|team. We are hoping that this will open VCN's reach to more individuals, and offer us new avenues to accept donations to support our freenet services across Vancouver.

If the initial phase of using Bitcoin is successful in bringing in more donations and helping the web|team and tech|team expand their services to individuals who do not have access to traditional modes of banking, then VCN will have improved on its foundational mission delivery of ensuring digital inclusion for all.

*If you'd like to donate to VCN using Bitcoin, our address is: 3BEJvAdVVygUdrUq1uqhJGVTAZaWtb7mPL*



*Scan the code above to get  
VCN's Bitcoin address!*

## 2016-17 Youth Internship Program Ongoing

The Youth Coordinators have now placed 45 interns with 36 host organizations for the 2016-17 Youth Internship Program. This year represents the biggest cohort of interns with the most number of non-profits we have ever worked with!

The internships will now continue until March 2017. We hope to highlight many of the exciting and transformative projects our interns are working on in upcoming newsletters. Many are from technical backgrounds, while many have technical skills despite having studied Fine Arts or the Humanities, among other things. The diversity of their passions have led them to organizations involved in radically different types of work, and we're hoping that these experiences will launch their careers in whichever field they've chosen to pursue.

The interns had their first collective workshop on December 7 at the UBC Learning Exchange. The topic of the day was Communication and Social Media Strategies. The facilitator was Dionne Pelan, the Computer and Drop-In Assistant at the Exchange. She led the interns in various communications exercises before sharing some tips from her own experiences working with people from Vancouver's Downtown Eastside.

The interns came away knowing a lot more, and also had a chance to connect with each other and share their experiences with their organizations and the clients they meet on a daily basis. They will hopefully use what they learned, and will continue to work together through online forums set up by VCN to negotiate difficulties in their own placements with the help of other interns doing similar work.





Vancouver  
**community  
network**

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*The 2016-17 VCN interns' first workshop was on communication & optimizing social media*



And finally, check out our latest blog post on digital inequality in Canada:

*"In order to function in the new digital economy, people need access, not just to basic technology, but smart technology that is slowly becoming the bedrock of modern life. A multitude of resources, such as online education tools, job opportunities, essential services, and communication require regular access to the internet. Not to mention that the vast majority of information and entertainment media is now online, thus further disenfranchising to those without access to smart technology.*

*Something that is often not discussed is the role of our society in providing access to the World Wide Web. Increasing access to smart technology will help towards narrowing the opportunity and information gap we see today among different socioeconomic classes and help towards building a more inclusive society. To enable this discussion, we propose three things to consider when talking about bridging the digital divide."*

[Click here to read more...](#)