

PANIC ON LOVE STREET:

Citizens and Local Government Respond to Vancouver's Hippie Problem, 1967-68

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Vancouver knows exactly how to define a hippie. He's somebody whose hair blocks his neck from view, who is a dope fiend and lives somewhere in the neighbourhood of West 4th Avenue.

— *Maclean's Magazine*, August 1967

We would warn parents and others concerned with the welfare of today's youth, that unless a more vital and active interest is taken in these young people, other, "Worse," movements could flare up at any time.

— Report of the Special Committee of Council on the Hippie Situation, October 1967

LOCATED ON THE SOUTH SHORE of English Bay, just across the bridge from the downtown core, Kitsilano is today one of the most desirable residential areas in Vancouver. Part of the area's laid-back charm stems from its embrace of its recent past: today locals celebrate the fact that their neighbourhood was once home to a counter-cultural scene that rivalled Toronto's Yorkville in the Canadian imagination. From the mid-1960s onwards, Kitsilano was a mecca for artists, students, and young non-conformists, boasting low rents, beach access, and proximity to downtown and the University of British Columbia. Head shops, clothing stores, cafés, and music venues dotted West 4th Avenue, the neighbourhood's main commercial drag. The five blocks in which these businesses were concentrated came to be known as "Love Street," reflecting the kind of community new arrivals hoped to build more than its actual physical characteristics. Young people, including

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hundreds of seasonal visitors from elsewhere in Canada and the United States, came to the area to browse the shops, hear music, experiment, and be part of the scene. Tourists and curious Vancouverites came to watch as these people went about their day-to-day displays of resistance to materialism, conformity, and straight authority.

Despite today's nostalgia for the period, many Vancouverites viewed what was happening in Kitsilano in the 1960s with apprehension. This article explores how citizens and Vancouver's municipal government responded to Love Street and its youthful counterculture in 1967 and 1968. During those two years the idea that Kitsilano had a "hippie problem" became a common theme in the media and political discourse. It would soon give way to other interpretations of youth culture, but not before it had inspired more than its fair share of panic, concern, politics, and policy-making. For this reason, despite its brief life, Vancouver's hippie problem illuminates some fascinating aspects of the functioning of the local state in urban Canada.

Kitsilano property owners were the first to give shape to the hippie problem. In many ways, the campaign against the hippies was the last gasp of the formerly strong neighbourhood associations that had represented Kitsilano since the early 1900s. Concerned about the future of the neighbourhood and their place in it, local elites used their privileged voice at City Hall to label the young people congregating on 4th Avenue as a criminal element requiring state intervention. This meant applying the category of "hippie" – personified by the long-haired male drug-user – to a diverse population of residents and visitors, students, workers, dropouts, men and women, bikers, artists, transients, the curious and the convinced. The people thronging Love Street did not consider themselves part of an organized movement, and very few referred to themselves as hippies.¹ Recent scholarship demonstrates that this process of homogenization was not unique to Vancouver: across North America, the image of the hippie masked a complex social reality by serving as a catch-all category for bohemian or rebellious youth.²

This anti-hippie agitation and the wide coverage given to Love Street in the media prompted a flurry of state activity. Beginning in early 1967, the police led an enforcement crackdown on Love Street

¹ The term "hippie" almost never appears in countercultural publications without quotation marks or a qualifying statement. See, for example, *Georgia Straight*, 7 July 1967, 9.

² See Stuart Henderson, *Making the Scene: Yorkville and Hip Toronto in the 1960s* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), esp. 10–13; and Marcel Martel, "They Smell Bad, Have Diseases, and Are Lazy": RCMP Officers Reporting on Hippies in the Late Sixties," *Canadian Historical Review* 90, 2 (2009): 223–24.

with the intention of driving out, or at least containing, the hippies. That approach was applauded by some local residents and city officials – including the city’s flamboyant mayor, Tom Campbell – although it had limited success. Meanwhile, expert advice from Vancouver’s social welfare agencies contributed to a redefinition of the situation in Kitsilano as part of the larger problem of alienated youth. Acting on this interpretation, and encouraged by the work of grassroots organizers within Kitsilano, city council advocated a second, more conciliatory strategy for the neighbourhood, based on dialogue and outreach services. Over the next few years that approach, put into action by local volunteers working with federal funding, would play a substantial role in the further transformation of Kitsilano.

Vancouver’s uproar about the 1960s youth counterculture was not unique, and indeed it fed off events occurring in Toronto, San Francisco, and elsewhere. In general, literature on those episodes has been weighted towards the perspectives of the most vocal members of the baby boom generation: political activists, student leaders, and countercultural icons.³ Rather than looking primarily at the people or the experiments in alternative living that made up the Kitsilano scene in the 1960s, this article focuses on how actors wielding social and political power interpreted and reacted to it.⁴ In this respect, I build on the work of Marcel Martel on RCMP undercover drugs surveillance and by Stuart Henderson on Toronto’s Yorkville neighbourhood.⁵ Both scholars call attention to the ways in which state and non-state actors depicted hippies as a threat to society, whether because of their perceived drug use, sexual immorality, or laziness. Here I examine similar processes in 1960s Kitsilano, with a particular focus on the ways in which concern about hippies and anti-hippie lobbying affected local policy-making. More generally, I also draw parallels with the work of scholars interested

³ For a recent discussion of this trend, see Lara Campbell and Dominique Clément, “Introduction: Time, Age, Myth – Towards a History of the Sixties,” in *Debating Dissent: Canada and the Sixties*, ed. L. Campbell, D. Clément, and G. Kealey, 3–28 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012).

⁴ That fascinating story has been told by others. See Tina Loo, “Flower Children in Lotusland,” *Beaver*, 7, 1 (1998): 36–42; Lawrence Aronsen, *City of Love and Revolution: Vancouver in the Sixties* (Vancouver: New Star Books, 2010); Michael Kluckner, *Vancouver Remembered* (North Vancouver: Whitecap Books, 2006), 177–84; and Myrna Kostash, *Long Way from Home: The Story of the Sixties Generation in Canada* (Toronto: Lorimer, 1980).

⁵ Martel, “They Smell Bad”; and Henderson, *Making the Scene*. On the related topic of the Gastown Riot there is Michael Boudreau, “The Struggle for a Different World: The 1971 Gastown Riot in Vancouver,” in Campbell, Clément, and Kealey, eds., 117–34.

in the regulation of other perceived problem groups in the postwar city, including prostitutes and Vancouver's Chinese community.⁶

The concept of "moral panic" provides a useful analytical framework for this study. Developed in the 1970s, this theory holds that, in an episode of moral panic, public concern about a perceived social problem becomes disproportionate through the intervention of "moral entrepreneurs," such as interest groups and the media, often resulting in a repressive response from the state.⁷ This helps to explain both the sensationalist way residents and the media depicted Love Street and its denizens, and the ability of anti-hippie campaigners to influence state action. It also accurately predicts the first strategy employed by the municipal authorities in their attempt to deal with the problem: regulation through the discretionary powers of police and city inspectors. Yet the city's overall response to the hippie problem was more complex than simple moral outrage and repression. Influential actors from Vancouver's social service agencies and the local community refused to accept that the hippie problem was a result of any moral failing in the younger generation, instead locating its causes in systemic issues such as a lack of social services for youth. In other words, the moral panic about hippies in 1960s Vancouver was a call to action, but it was neither the only nor the most persistent factor shaping policy responses.

BACKGROUND: POPULATION CHANGE AND COMMUNITY IN KITSILANO

Like other suburbs constructed in the early 1900s across Canada, Kitsilano's neighbourhood identity and institutions were built around the ideal of the single-family home.⁸ In time, strong local associations

⁶ On Chinatown, see Kay Anderson, *Vancouver's Chinatown: Racial Discourse in Canada, 1875-1980* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995); on sex trade workers and the strip club scene, see Becki Ross, "The Men behind the Marquee: Greasing the Wheels of Vansterdam's Professional Striptease Scene, 1950-75," in *Creating Postwar Canada, 1945-75*, ed. Magda Fahrni and Robert Rutherford, 217-40 (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008); Daniel Francis, *Red Light Neon: A History of Vancouver's Sex Trade* (Vancouver: Subway, 2006); and Danielle Lacasse, *La prostitution féminine à Montréal, 1945-70* (Montreal: Boréal, 1994).

⁷ The concept was first explored in detail in Stanley Cohen, *Folk Devils and Moral Panics* (London: MacGibbon and Kee, 1971). For more recent examples of its application to Canadian history, see Catherine Carstairs, *Jailed for Possession: Illegal Drug Use, Regulation, and Power in Canada, 1920-1961* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), chap. 1; and Marcel Martel, "Setting Boundaries: LSD Use and Glue-Sniffing in Ontario in the 1960s," in *The Real Dope: Social, Legal, and Historical Perspectives on the Regulation of Drugs in Canada*, ed. Ed Montigny (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), 197-218.

⁸ On Vancouver, see Deryck Holdsworth, "Cottages and Castles for Vancouver Home-Seekers," *BC Studies* 69/70 (1986), 11-32. And, on Canada more broadly, see Richard Harris, *Creeping*

fostered a sense of community among district property owners and provided a key link between them and the municipal state. In Vancouver, the largest and most influential of these groups was the Kitsilano Ratepayers' Association (KRA), founded in 1906. Over the years, the KRA focused on two goals: (1) improving the area's services and infrastructure and (2) protecting it from encroachments on the part of industry and high-density development. For the first fifty years of its existence the group was successful in both areas. By the 1950s, however, changes in Kitsilano's built environment and population were challenging the community identity promoted by the KRA.⁹

In the plan prepared for Vancouver by American planner Harland Bartholomew in 1928, several neighbourhoods surrounding the downtown were marked for future densification, and most of east and north Kitsilano was zoned for apartments and multi-family dwellings.¹⁰ Despite periodic resistance from the KRA, over the next few decades those parts of the area were built up with low-rise apartment buildings, and many houses were subdivided. Census data show that, by 1951, half of Kitsilano dwellings were occupied by tenants.¹¹ By 1966, that number had grown to 68 percent, compared to the city average of 48 percent. The shift was overwhelmingly concentrated in the eastern half of the neighbourhood, where proximity to downtown and the availability of land – from relocated industry, removal of run-down houses, and the surrender of the Kitsilano Indian Reserve – provided the most potential for development.

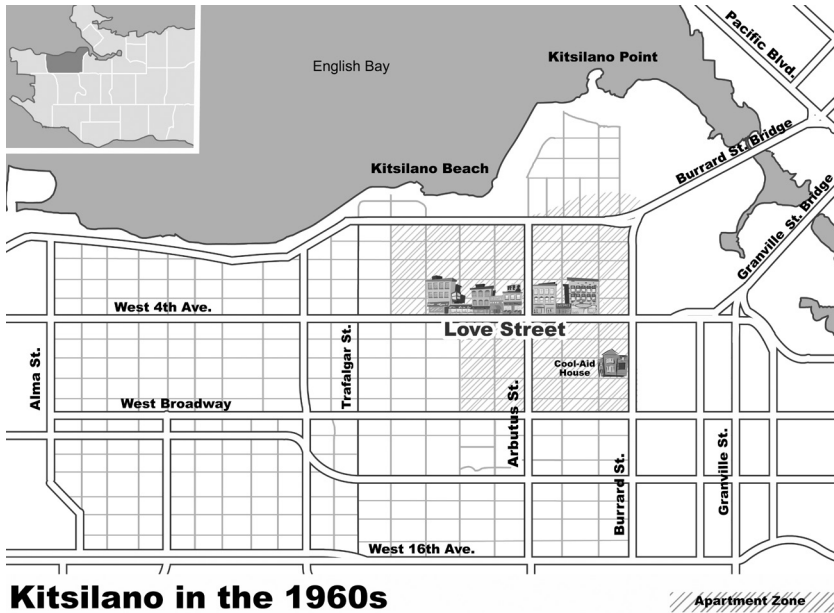
These changes in the built landscape occurred in conjunction with a demographic shift away from the nuclear family and towards a popu-

Conformity: How Canada Became Suburban, 1900-1960 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004).

⁹ Research conducted by David Ley and Adriane Carr was invaluable to understanding the shifting community dynamics of 1950s-1970s Kitsilano. See Adriane J. Carr, "The Development of Neighbourhood in Kitsilano: Ideas, Actors, and the Landscape" (MA thesis, University of British Columbia, 1980) on the period up to 1961; and Shlomo Hasson and David Ley, *Neighbourhood Organizations and the Welfare State* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 242-43 on the 1960s and 1970s.

¹⁰ Vancouver Town Planning Commission and Harland Bartholomew and Associates, *A Plan for the City of Vancouver* (Vancouver: City of Vancouver, 1928), 212.

¹¹ My discussion here draws on Dominion Bureau of Statistics, *1951 Census of Canada: Population and Housing Characteristics by Census Tracts, Vancouver* (Ottawa: Ministry of Trade and Commerce, 1953); Dominion Bureau of Statistics, *1961 Census of Canada: Population and Housing Characteristics by Census Tracts, Vancouver* (Ottawa: Ministry of Trade and Commerce, 1963); Dominion Bureau of Statistics, *1966 Census of Canada: Population and Housing Characteristics by Census Tracts, Vancouver* (Ottawa: Ministry of Trade and Commerce, 1968); and Statistics Canada, *1971 Census of Canada: Population and Housing Characteristics by Census Tracts, Vancouver* (Ottawa: Ministry of Industry, Trade and Commerce, 1973).



Kitsilano in the 1960s

Figure 1. This map highlights how Kitsilano's countercultural scene was centred on the area's more run-down east end. Love Street runs through the centre of a shaded area denoting the blocks with the highest concentration of apartments. Map by Steve Ashley.

lation of transient adults. While the area's population remained stable at around thirty-five thousand between 1941 and 1961, the number of children declined to well below the city average, and the number of single adults and seniors increased. Meanwhile, the number of residents who had lived in their dwelling for more than a decade decreased by 40 percent.¹² A more sudden change came in the following decade as the baby boomers moved in. During the 1960s the number of Kitsilano residents aged twenty to thirty-four jumped by half, such that in 1971 36 percent of the area's population was in that age group (compared to 23 percent for the city). This meant that, at the end of the decade, there were three thousand more twenty- to twenty-four-year-olds and two thousand more twenty-five- to thirty-four-year-olds in Kitsilano than there had been in 1961. At the same time, numbers in nearly every other age category fell by 20 percent or more. Three-quarters of this change took place during the second half of the decade, during Love Street's boom years. The new arrivals were concentrated in the apartment-zoned blocks east of Trafalgar Street, which by then contained 80 percent of Kitsilano's rental units and 60 percent of its population (see Figure 1).

¹² Carr, "Development of Neighbourhood," 60.

By the late 1960s, the neighbourhood had acquired a new identity, based on a youthful and sometimes hedonistic exploration of alternatives to middle-class values and consumer capitalism.

While they brought new life to the area, these changes had a negative impact on older community institutions. School enrolment declined, as did church attendance, despite attempts by local congregations to attract young people by including psychedelic music and even dancing in their services.¹³ Established associations like the KRA, the Lower Kitsilano Ratepayers' Association, and the Kitsilano Chamber of Commerce struggled to maintain their memberships and relevance in the 1960s. Kitsilano's changing population seems to have made it more difficult for the formerly influential KRA to balance the interests of its members – middle-aged or retired property owners who resided disproportionately in the wealthier western part of Kitsilano – with those of the neighbourhood at large. As a result, their campaign against the hippies reflected not just societal concerns about youth rebellion but also the anxiety of neighbourhood elites questioning their future in the community.

THE RESIDENTS' CAMPAIGN: DEFINING THE HIPPIE PROBLEM

Although locals and the KRA had alerted city officials to the presence of “undesirables” on Kitsilano Beach in 1966, complaints about Love Street did not become frequent until the next year. In February 1967 several members of the KRA executive wrote to the mayor and council to express concern about the “lunatic fringe” active on and around Love Street.¹⁴ Their voices were soon joined by others, and by the summer the city was receiving five to ten complaints on the subject per week from Kitsilano businesspeople, landlords, and residents. Many came from merchants on 4th Avenue, who claimed that hippies were congregating day and night on the strip, blocking sidewalks and traffic, and harassing passersby for money. They reported excessive noise from music venues like the Village Bistro, broken beer bottles on the street, and vandalism and graffiti on their storefronts. In residential areas, complainants worried about late-night noise and groups of hippies bedding down (and having sex) in parks during the warm months. One local living a block south of Love Street complained of “human excreta” on her front lawn, going

¹³ “Hippies Conduct Service,” *Province*, 19 August 1967.

¹⁴ York St. Residents to Mayor and Council, 25 January 1966, Vancouver City Archives (hereafter vCA), 569-A-3, file 2; Keir to Mayor and Council, 22 February 1967, vCA, 79-B-5, file 11.

on to say that public urination and defecation were a frequent problem on her street.¹⁵ Overall, complainants expressed concern and outrage that their community spaces were being invaded and occupied by this new element.

While some took action individually to discourage the influx of undesirables – a few local restaurants refused to serve hippies and at least one Love Street business was vandalized – an organized response developed quickly.¹⁶ By late May an Action Committee composed of a dozen concerned Kitsilano citizens had been formed to address what they called “the hippie problem.” The group operated under the auspices of the KRA, with the support of the Lower Kitsilano Ratepayers’ Association and the Chamber of Commerce. On the hippie issue Kitsilano’s three main community associations were linked not only by common goals but also by shared memberships and histories. For example, KRA president Harold Kidd was a former head of the Chamber of Commerce, and his successor as leader of the KRA, George Moul, was the Lower Kitsilano Ratepayers’ Association’s president in 1967–68.

Over the next few months, Kidd emerged as the principal spokesperson for Kitsilano residents opposed to the hippies. He and other Action Committee members used contacts and tactics developed during years of lobbying on behalf of Kitsilano to advance their aims. Early on they received pro bono advice from a sympathetic public relations consultant, and they retained legal counsel – paid for through a fundraising drive – to help direct their campaign.¹⁷ They canvassed locals and compiled block-by-block lists of people likely to support their campaign. While Kits local associations were involved in other projects during the 1967–68 period – including the redevelopment of Kits Point and the Chamber of Commerce’s annual Showboat spectacle – the hippie file clearly occupied a substantial amount of their time.

Experienced in local lobbying and conscious that municipal government was susceptible to their influence and likely to act on the issue, Love Street’s opponents focused their attention on City Hall. Unlike most large municipalities in Canada, since 1936 Vancouver has elected its city council at-large, without a ward system. Thus, Kidd and the Action Committee communicated with the ten-person city council as a whole, with the mayor and with individual services like the

¹⁵ Complaints received since 14 August 1967, VCA, 79-B-5, file 13.

¹⁶ “Café Intimidates Straights,” *Georgia Straight*, 19 May 1967; “Who’s Kidding Who?,” *Georgia Straight*, 19 May 1967.

¹⁷ Roberts to Kidd, 26 June 1967, VCA, 569-A-2, file 4; Melvin to Kidd, 10 July 1967, VCA, 569-A-2, file 4.

Vancouver Police Department. During 1967 and 1968 they bombarded the city with communications on the hippie problem, including dozens of phone calls, more than thirty letters, and several deputations to council. Meanwhile, Kidd's statements on the issue appeared regularly in the local press, further legitimating his claims to speak on behalf of Kitsilano's established residents.

The principal concern of the Action Committee was the perceived deterioration of the neighbourhood and the impact that this would have on the interests of local property owners. This was unsurprising given the preponderance of business owners and landlords in the KRA and other local associations. Their letters communicate a sense that all of the work done over the years to maintain Kits's quiet prosperity was being undone by the hippies, who seemed determined to turn the neighbourhood into a "psychedelic slum."¹⁸ Speaking on behalf of area merchants – he owned a grocery store – Harold Kidd claimed that the Love Street scene had led to a drop of as much as 50 percent for traditional businesses. There was growing concern, he said, that the success of the new shops would see "old-time merchants squeezed out" of the area.¹⁹ San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury district was held up as an example of this kind of neighbourhood takeover. Meanwhile, landlords feared a drop in the value of their holdings and in the rents they could charge: it was becoming "very difficult to rent to suitable people."²⁰

Looming behind this unease were worries that, if east Kitsilano continued to deteriorate, the cautious, locally led urban renewal endorsed by the KRA would no longer be possible. The late 1960s were an important moment for Vancouver planning, and 1967–68 saw several ambitious infrastructure and development projects become subjects of public debate and citizen opposition.²¹ While the agenda of slum clearance being fought in the eastside neighbourhood of Strathcona was not in the cards for Kits, other fates were possible. Local decline would weaken resistance to development pressures, opening the door to the large-scale apartment construction that was completely reshaping the

¹⁸ "Hippy Haven Soon Psychedelic Slum?," *Vancouver Sun*, 12 May 1967.

¹⁹ Kidd to Mayor and Council, 15 April 1967, vca, 79-B-5, file II; "Points on Hippie Problem," late May 1967, vca, 569-B-1, file 9.

²⁰ Kidd to BC Government Employees' Association, 11 September 1967, vca, 79-B-5, file 13.

²¹ On modernist planning in postwar Vancouver and its discontents, see William Langford, "Is Sutton Brown God?: Planning Expertise and the Local State in Vancouver, 1952–1973," *BC Studies* 173 (2012): 11–39; Karen B. Murray, "Making Space in Vancouver's East End: From Leonard Marsh to the Vancouver Agreement," *BC Studies* 169 (2011): 7–49; and Donald Gutstein, *Vancouver Ltd.* (Toronto: J. Lorimer, 1975), 98–102, 152–66.



Figure 2. Young people on Kitsilano Beach in spring 1967. In the background are the newly built towers of the West End, a reminder for Kitsilano residents of one possible future. Horst Ehricht Fonds, Library and Archives Canada, PA189361.

West End across the bridge, or to renewed attempts to create a major north-south traffic corridor in east Kitsilano.

Drawing on prevalent attitudes about hippies disseminated through the media, Kidd and the Action Committee consistently linked these local concerns to larger narratives of moral decline and criminality. One area of particular anxiety was drug use and trafficking. In the mid-1960s, drug abuse among young people emerged as a major topic of debate in Canada.²² In Vancouver the yearly number of marijuana-related arrests climbed more than tenfold, from thirty to 442, between 1965 and 1968. Those being arrested for drugs offences were no longer concentrated in Chinatown or the eastside's "Skid Road"; instead, dozens of young white Vancouverites from middle-class homes were being caught using marijuana or LSD. Anxiety about the spread of drug use among suburban youth led a group of parents in North Vancouver to form a neighbourhood drugs patrol to drive out marijuana dealers.²³ In this context, some Kits residents were certain that the hippies – who sporadically promoted drug use and decried harsh drug laws – were

²² One important work on this period is Marcel Martel's *Not This Time: Canadians, Public Policy and the Marijuana Issue, 1965-1975* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006).

²³ "Vigilantes Track Marijuana Pushers," *Vancouver Sun*, 5 July 1968.

inveterate drug users and dealers. Action Committee members called the hippies a “drug cult,” and in early 1968 the Chamber of Commerce suspected that drug trafficking was the “main objective of those responsible for organizing the [hippie] movement in Kitsilano.”²⁴

Closely linked was the idea that the hippies were intent on corrupting Vancouver youth. The hippies were accused of welcoming “any & all children to their group,” and of “peddling and administering” drugs like marijuana, LSD, and even heroin to anyone who wanted them.²⁵ Concerned locals argued that this allowed sexually predatory hippies to take advantage of vulnerable underage women. One 1968 letter claimed that, as a result of the 1967 Summer of Love, “several hundred teen-age girls, many from Kitsilano, are reported to have become pregnant.”²⁶ Hippies – here again constructed exclusively as male drug users – seemed to personify widespread anxiety about the liberal sexual mores of the boomer generation. This was very much a subject of public interest in the late 1960s as pundits like Vancouver journalist and writer Simma Holt lamented the breakdown of traditional sexual morality among the young, citing the hippies as the worst of a bad lot.²⁷

Much was also made in the local media of the villagers’ long hair, strange style, and apparently poor hygiene. In the summer of 1967 the *Vancouver Sun* reprinted comments by a conservative California health officer who worried hippie hairstyles marked “a return to 18th century health conditions – complete with lice and plague.” One downtown barber offered free haircuts to hippies, while other Vancouverites took the matter into their own hands, forcibly shaving a young Kitsilano resident’s head.²⁸ Amid this generalized concern, the Action Committee argued that the lifestyle of the hippies was a threat to public health. According to their communications, the hippies were “living more like animals than humans,” occupying storefronts without sanitary facilities and over-filling small, cramped apartments.²⁹ This degraded housing stock, created fire hazards, and made the area an incubator for epidemics: “There has been little said of infectious diseases that infest this group, such as Venereal Disease, Infectious Hepatitis, Lice, etc. Our doctors

²⁴ Baylow to Mayor and Council, 17 February 1968, vCA, 79-B-5, file 11.

²⁵ “Points on Hippie Problem”; “Hippie House Row Reaches New Heights,” *Province*, 7 August 1968.

²⁶ Baylow to Mayor and Council, 17 February 1968, vCA, 79-B-5, file 11.

²⁷ Simma Holt, *Sex and the Teenage Revolution* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1967).

²⁸ “Man, That’s Just Lousy,” *Vancouver Sun*, 2 June 1967; “Hippie Has No Hate,” *Vancouver Sun*, 16 August 1967.

²⁹ “Hippie House Row Reaches New Heights”; Baylow to Mayor and Council, 10 May 1967, vCA, 569-B-1, file 9.

tell us that they have been more prevalent in this colony than any other part of Vancouver.”³⁰

Finally, Kidd’s group accused the hippies of being a drain on society. They were certain that their lifestyle was supported by abuse of the welfare state, and they suggested in their communications that many, or most, hippies were receiving social assistance. They also disputed the hippies’ right to use public facilities paid for by Vancouver citizens. In a letter to the Vancouver Parks Board, Kidd stated: “We, of the Kitsilano Ratepayers’ Association, don’t like to think that our tax money is used to provide parks for this type of people.”³¹ Distinguishing the hippies from hardworking, taxpaying citizens with a right to government services helped to justify the interests and authority of the KRA and its allies. It drew on a long history of disapproval of slackers in North America.³² It also tapped into public anxiety in Social Credit-era British Columbia over exploitation of social assistance by transients – not for the first time in a province long dominated by the resource-extraction industries. During the summer of 1967, young people were on the move across North America, and an unprecedented number came to British Columbia from other provinces and the United States. That fall the provincial government issued the first in a series of warnings to out-of-province transients – and “hippie societies” in particular – that they were “not welcome in BC.”³³ In a similar vein, Action Committee communications often refer to the hippies as draft-dodgers, “immigrants,” or otherwise as a foreign population unwelcome in Kitsilano.³⁴

Moral panics centred on the figure of the hippie occurred elsewhere in North America. Stuart Henderson describes how the press and critics of Yorkville portrayed the hippie as a sexual predator and manufactured a hepatitis scare from a small outbreak among intravenous drug users. Concerns about Toronto’s hippies had a national scope, and in their communications with the city Kitsilano residents worried that their neighbourhood would become “a second Yorkville.”³⁵ There are also parallels to earlier campaigns against urban ethnic minorities like Vancouver’s Chinese community. In the early twentieth century Chinatown was constructed as a racialized space, and its residents were associated

³⁰ Baylow to Mayor and Council, 17 February 1968.

³¹ Kidd to Parks Board, 14 July 1967, VCA, 569-B-1, file 9.

³² See Tom Lutz, *Doing Nothing: A History of Loafers, Loungers, Slackers, and Bums in America* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2006).

³³ “Door Shut on Hippies,” *Province*, 19 September 1967.

³⁴ See, for example, Kidd to Mayor, 5 May 1967, VCA, 569-B-1, file 9.

³⁵ Henderson, *Making the Scene*, 242-70; Cacchioni to Mayor and Council, 22 February 1967, VCA, 79-B-5, file 4.



Figure 3. The afternoon scene in a vacant lot on the Love Street section of 4th Avenue, opposite the Afterthought (Kitsilano Theatre) in spring of 1967. Horst Ehrich Fonds, Library and Archives Canada, PA189360.



Figure 4. The scene at night outside the Village Bistro on 4th Avenue in July 1967. The Bistro was a major source of local residents' complaints. Ralph Bower/*Vancouver Sun*.

with drug abuse, sexual depravity, unsanitary living conditions, and disease.³⁶ Attempts by the Chinese community to disperse to other districts were met with vigorous opposition from neighbourhood groups – including the KRA, which worried that an Asian influx would lower property values.³⁷ Some of that same rhetoric was applied to Vancouver’s hippies. Love Street was constructed as a foreign space, and its population as outsiders to Vancouver society – both figuratively, in that their appearance and behaviour were strange and nonconformist, and literally, in that they were often described as American or as from other provinces. However, it is important to note that, unlike the Chinese, the hippies were not depicted as an unalterable, racialized “Other.” Late 1960s press coverage celebrated the possibility of (white) hippies cutting their hair, getting jobs, and going straight, and Action Committee communications listed this as a desirable outcome.³⁸

But Kidd and his supporters were not prepared to wait for the hippies to fade back into straight society. Positioning themselves as taxpayers, property owners, and parents, they felt it was their right to appeal for the city to intervene against a group that they considered harmful to their community. Once or twice they suggested giving the hippies “a one-way ticket back to wherever they came from” or finding land for them in the BC Interior. But the tactic most often proposed was repression. Letters called upon the mayor, council, and police to enforce “vagrancy, unlawful assembly, traffic obstruction, and intimidation regulations”; on city inspectors to force compliance with bylaws; and on the Social Service Department to refuse assistance to the hippies.³⁹ The effectiveness of that strategy would hinge on whether the people attracted by Love Street were really, as their opponents argued, in flagrant violation of the law.

SPRING-SUMMER 1967:

THE LIMITS OF ENFORCEMENT

The city’s initial response to complaints about Love Street was coordinated by Chief Constable Ralph Booth of the Vancouver Police Department. Booth was a natural ally for Kidd and the Action Committee, given his conservative views on youth and support for strict enforcement in the expanding war against drugs. His officers were

³⁶ See Anderson, *Vancouver’s Chinatown*; and also Carstairs, *Jailed for Possession*, esp. chap. 1.

³⁷ Carr, “Development of Neighbourhood,” 157–58.

³⁸ For example “Hippie Girl Goes Straight for a Day,” *Vancouver Sun*, 24 October 1968.

³⁹ Moul to Mayor, 7 July 1967, vca, 594-G-2, file 8.

already investigating marijuana use and trafficking on 4th Avenue when complaints about the hippies began to pour in early in 1967. Raids conducted by the RCMP and the police drug squad had led to a handful of arrests in the area in late 1966; meanwhile, members of the youth squad had identified several 4th Avenue businesses as hangouts for both juveniles and users of marijuana and LSD.⁴⁰ As a result, Booth was already alert to the seriousness of the problem in Kitsilano when he was asked to investigate in February 1967.

In his report, Booth emphasized the validity of residents' concerns. He warned that hip Love Street businesses were engaged in illegal activities – ranging from selling obscene books to drug trafficking – and that large numbers of school-age children were being recruited into the “beatnik” lifestyle. He singled out a poster and paraphernalia store called the Psychedelic Shop and two music venues, the Phase 4 Coffee House and the Afterthought, as the worst offenders. He recommended that council take “every step possible to reduce, if not eradicate, this growing problem,” starting by directing other city staff to assist the police in their efforts.⁴¹ These recommendations were accepted, at least in the short term. Five weeks after the report was presented the chief constable chaired a meeting at which a half-dozen city departments attempted to coordinate their responses with the ongoing police effort in Kitsilano.

That May meeting revealed the possibilities – and limits – of cooperation between city staff and police. Attendees included an impressive array of city authorities: the commanders of the police's youth squad and patrol division; the chief fire, license, and building inspectors; and the head of the city's Social Service Department. All present agreed that the concerns of local property owners about the hippies were valid since “the manner in which they live[d], dress[ed], and conduct[ed] themselves” was “very objectionable” to the general public. But they did not share the optimistic view expressed in Booth's earlier communications that the Love Street problem could be solved by an enforcement crackdown; instead, the general consensus was that, apart from the drug issue, the hippies were mostly “non-violent and law-abiding” and, hence, something the city would have to learn to live with. In summing up, Booth set the tone for police and city activity in Kits over the next two

⁴⁰ “Marijuana Case Sent for Trial,” *Vancouver Sun*, 1 December 1966; Booth to Mayor and Council, 28 March 1967, VCA, 79-B-5, file II.

⁴¹ Booth to Mayor and Council, 28 March 1967, VCA, 79-B-5, file II.

years, stating: “The best we can hope for is to frustrate the activities of these young people through strict law enforcement.”⁴²

For the police, strict law enforcement meant regular sweeps of young people congregating on 4th Avenue and in Love Street cafés and music venues. Few were charged with any actual crime. With the exception of drug arrests – which rose from seventeen in 1966 to twenty-nine in the first half of 1967 – crime in Kitsilano did not increase with the growth of the hip scene. However, this did not stop the police from regulating the area using some of the same pressure tactics applied to other problem areas in Vancouver, including the sections of the eastside where strip clubs and the sex trade were concentrated.⁴³ Patrol cars seemed to be constantly rolling down 4th Avenue, and it appeared to one observer that, on weekend nights, there were “more cops than hippies” on the strip.⁴⁴

The chief weapons of the crackdown were the vagrancy charge (used elsewhere to control street prostitution) for adults and suspicion of delinquency for juveniles.⁴⁵ These allowed the police to stop and question nearly anyone frequenting Love Street, detaining those they chose, with the exception of adults who could prove means of support. By late August 1967, the police had laid thirty-eight vagrancy charges in the area (compared to nine the previous year) and taken approximately two hundred minors into protective custody. Many juveniles were visiting or staying in the Kitsilano area in defiance of parental controls, sparking fears that the hippies were hiding runaways from their parents.⁴⁶ In order to avoid a vagrancy charge, some of those who were of age but without means falsely claimed to be receiving social assistance. This led the police, mayor, and others in the municipal government to suspect that they were abusing the system, although reports from the Social Service Department consistently stated that very few of the “Hippie Type” had actually applied for assistance.⁴⁷

Meanwhile, hip businesses and rental accommodations were targeted for fire, health, and building inspections, and licence applications for new businesses on 4th Avenue were given extra scrutiny. By the end of

⁴² Booth to Ryan, 15 May 1967, vca, 106-D-5, file 2.

⁴³ Ross, “Men behind the Marquee,” 217-40, esp. 75-87.

⁴⁴ Jack Batten, “How the Town’s Fighting the Dread Hippie Menace,” *Maclean’s*, August 1967, 50.

⁴⁵ Lacasse, *La prostitution féminine à Montréal*, 117-33 discusses the use of vagrancy charges to regulate prostitution during this period.

⁴⁶ Dixon to Booth, 29 August 1967, vca, 79-B-5, file 13; “Teen-Age Runaways Hide in Hippie Community,” *Vancouver Sun*, 17 October 1967.

⁴⁷ Social Services to Board of Administration, 22 March 1968, vca, 106-D-5, file 2.

August 1967 inspectors had carried out at least sixty calls in east Kits, with a particular focus on the businesses singled out as problems by the police and residents. The Psychedelic Shop received fourteen visits from the district fire warden between February and August, and the Phase 4 Coffee House, Village Bistro, and Afterthought were each inspected at least four times for health violations. Extra street-cleaning hours were authorized, and the fire warden reported keeping “a constant patrol of the Hippy area.”⁴⁸

This crackdown had mixed results. It certainly made things difficult for some villagers. The Phase 4 was shut down over a violation of health regulations; the Afterthought went out of business after its owner was convicted of a drug charge; several squats and communes in the area were vacated and boarded up after repeated visits from police and inspectors.⁴⁹ Overall, however, the enforcement strategy seemed to have less effect on the ebb and flow of the Love Street scene than the seasons. Summer brought record crowds to Love Street, and despite city efforts they did not disappear until the weather turned colder. Some members of the police were exasperated by the special attention given to the neighbourhood. In late August the commander of the patrol division reported to the chief constable that he had serious doubts about enforcement as a solution in Kitsilano: “The police organization holds no power or tactic that has not already been brought to bear ... [W]e have extended ourselves to the legal limit.” He went on to argue that the area’s low level of real crime did not justify a special police presence, and he warned against providing grounds for the accusations of police brutality that plagued Toronto police active in Yorkville.⁵⁰

Tensions between young people and the police did increase noticeably, although they would not reach the same riotous peaks as they did in Yorkville’s Summer of Love. Police sweeps on 4th Avenue sometimes turned into confrontations between officers and youth who felt they were being harassed. Faced with complaints to the police board about the behaviour of his officers in Kitsilano, Ralph Booth denied any wrongdoing on their part, pointing out that he was doing his best to “appease” local merchants and residents who opposed the hippies.⁵¹ But this argument did not prevent coverage of the crackdown on Love

⁴⁸ Hill to Bryson, 23 August 1967, VCA, 79-B-5, file 13; Steele to Bryson, 23 August 1967, VCA, 79-B-5, file 13.

⁴⁹ Bryson to Sweeney, 6 September 1967, VCA, 79-B-5, file 13; Akerly to Bryson, 24 August 1967, VCA, 79-B-5, file 13.

⁵⁰ Dixon to Booth, 29 August 1967, VCA, 79-B-5, file 13.

⁵¹ “Hippies Not on Welfare, Says Mayor,” *Province*, 23 June 1967.

Street from growing. From early on, the Love Street community and its sympathizers spoke out sporadically in the press about what they saw as a campaign of persecution. The owner of a Love Street clothing shop referred to Kidd's complaints as "rabble-rousing by people who should know better," and during the summer *Maclean's* presented a sympathetic portrait of hip business owners for a national audience.⁵² In an attempt to counter local hostility, representatives of a newly formed community group called the Kitsilano Area Resources Council – set up to coordinate area services and improve community dialogue – organized a "peace conference" between straight merchants and hippies. They also surveyed local shoppers to see whether, as Harold Kidd claimed, they were being driven off 4th Avenue by the hippie presence (most said that they were not bothered by the new arrivals).⁵³

In May 1967 an alternative newspaper, the *Georgia Straight*, was launched, and it quickly became the loudest voice speaking out on behalf of Love Street. Its first issue featured a front-page article protesting a mass arrest for vagrancy that occurred in front of the Phase 4. In the same issue, a columnist argued that persecution of a local coffee shop was "only part of a co-ordinated attack on the Kitsilano neighbourhood as a whole. Several other shops and places of entertainment have been harassed. The fire department has started enforcing laws which have been ignored for years—though there has not been one serious fire in Kitsilano."⁵⁴ For all its provocative style and satirical tone, the *Straight* dedicated many of its pages to the serious task of opposing what it saw as a campaign of repression in Kitsilano. It argued that hippies, whether in San Francisco or Vancouver, were just the latest in a series of groups oppressed by the establishment. Subsequent issues documented arrests for vagrancy and drugs and cases of alleged police brutality, and they provided advice on what to do when stopped by the police (answer: know your rights and don't volunteer information). These articles were reaching a growing audience: by September 1967 the editors claimed that circulation of the paper was up to sixty thousand copies.⁵⁵ The aggressive stance taken by the *Straight* on the issue of civil liberties made it a thorn in the side of the Vancouver Police until well into the 1970s. As a few members of the press seized hold of the idea that the young business owners and patrons of Love Street were being persecuted –

⁵² "Hippies Dig at Critic," *Vancouver Sun*, 6 April 1967; Batten, "How the Town's Fighting the Dread Hippie Menace."

⁵³ "Hippies, Kitsilano Residents Will Hold Peace Conference," *Vancouver Sun*, 15 May 1967.

⁵⁴ "Milton Acorn," *Georgia Straight*, 18 May 1967.

⁵⁵ *Georgia Straight*, 22 September 1967.



Figure 5. A rare photo of police interacting with a young person answering the hippie description. During stops like this young people were asked for ID and to prove means of support. Not having an address or sufficient income could lead to a vagrancy charge. Horst Ehrich Fonds, Library and Archives Canada, PA189357.

and with few results – several city councillors weighed in on the hippie issue. In 1967-68, Vancouver’s council was dominated, as it had been for the previous three decades, by the Non-Partisan Association, a centre-right electoral organization with links to the Social Credit government in Victoria. However, within that bloc opinions on the issue differed, although council was generally sceptical as to whether law enforcement could solve Kitsilano’s hippie problem. Long-serving conservative Halford Wilson expressed support for residents’ complaints, arguing that Kitsilano was no place for the hippies. He suggested that Love Street activities be forcibly relocated to a more contained enclave in downtown Vancouver, where tourists could come and watch the hippies in their natural habitat without disrupting the surrounding residents.⁵⁶ This plan contained echoes of council’s attempt – spearheaded by a younger Wilson – to pass a bylaw in the 1940s forbidding the city’s Chinese population from dispersing beyond their own designated neighbourhood.⁵⁷

Others saw the village in a more positive light. Invited to speak on the issue at a May meeting of the KRA, Alderman Ed Sweeney explained

⁵⁶ “Hippy Village Latest Proposal,” *Vancouver Sun*, 31 May 1967.

⁵⁷ Anderson, *Vancouver’s Chinatown*, 168-69.

that, based on his visits to hippie hangouts, many of the complaints made about Love Street were “exaggerated.” He urged the membership – including an irate Harold Kidd – to remain calm, implying that, if redevelopment plans went ahead, rising rents would eventually drive the villagers out.⁵⁸ The only sustained defence of Love Street came from Harry Rankin, a prominent socialist and advocate for legal aid and an opponent of the Non-Partisan Association consensus. Rankin expressed dismay at the villagers’ apparent political passivity, as he viewed opposition to the excesses of capitalism as something that should take place in the public, rather than in the personal, realm. However, he sympathized with their countercultural critique and defended their right to express it. During discussion of residents’ complaints, he accused the police and fire department of being “very partisan” in their treatment of the village, adding that Kitsilano was being held to a higher standard than other neighbourhoods. A few months later he would reiterate that view in the pages of the *Georgia Straight*, warning that the hippie philosophy could not be “suppressed by force.”⁵⁹

FALL-WINTER 1967-68: THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON THE HIPPIE SITUATION AND CAMPBELL'S CRUSADE

By this point the city’s voluminous correspondence with Harold Kidd and the Action Committee, augmented by staff reports and letters from the public, formed a mountain of paperwork on Kitsilano’s hippie problem. In mid-August council struck a committee – the Special Committee on the Hippie Situation – to come to grips with this sizable file. It was composed of Harry Rankin, Ed Sweeney, and Marianne Linnell, a councillor with a special interest in young people. Parallel to her work on the hippie issue Linnell was the organizer of Century 21, a council that represented the interests of youth at City Hall.⁶⁰

The Special Committee’s October 1967 report sought above all to understand the so-called hippie phenomenon.⁶¹ It rested upon consultations with the KRA and city departments active in Kitsilano as well as on submissions from the Kitsilano Area Resources Council, the Narcotics Addiction Foundation, and the Children’s Aid Society. Like others studying the hippie question in Canada and the United States,

⁵⁸ “Peace Unto Hippies Urged,” *Province*, 30 May 1967.

⁵⁹ “Hippy Village Latest Proposal,” *Vancouver Sun*, 31 May 1967; “What Makes a Hippie?,” *Georgia Straight*, 8 September 1967.

⁶⁰ “Young People’s Council,” *Province*, 20 September 1967.

⁶¹ Special Committee Report to Council, 10 October 1967, VCA, 45-B-5, file 10.

committee members distinguished between “hard core” hippies (older and dedicated to living outside straight society) and “pretenders,” often students, transients, or teenagers, who adopted the lifestyle seasonally or on weekends.⁶² They estimated that the latter group made up 80 percent of Vancouver’s two-thousand-strong hippie population. Overall, they downplayed the problems described by Harold Kidd, arguing that most hippies were not serious drug users and that the Love Street community posed no significant public health problems. Taking the view that there was little law enforcement could do to improve the situation in Kitsilano, the committee recommended that the city not give special treatment to local complaints.

Instead, it made three proposals: (1) that the hippies be invited to discuss their situation in council; (2) that social workers be sent to work on Love Street and with area youth; and (3) that urban renewal projects in east Kits be accelerated. In its closing paragraph, the report warned: “Unless a more vital and active interest is taken in these young people, other, “Worse,” movements could flare up at any time.” In other words, responsibility for the problem lay not just with the hippies themselves but with a society that was not doing enough to reach out to young people. In a personal statement, Harry Rankin argued this point further, condemning those who wanted to jail or drive out the villagers as “bigoted, narrow-minded, and intolerant,” and urging serious efforts to understand why they were rebelling.⁶³

City council adopted the Special Committee’s recommendations but took no action in 1967. In the short term, the report was overshadowed by Mayor Tom “Terrific” Campbell’s personal crusade against the hippies and the *Georgia Straight*. After receiving complaints about the paper’s obscene content, the mayor met with City Hall staff and the *Straight*’s licence was revoked in September. Police seized copies of the newspaper, which Campbell referred to as “filthy,” and threatened vendors with arrest. A formal appeal against these actions by staff of the *Straight* initiated a protracted legal battle between Campbell and the paper.⁶⁴

The mayor’s unprecedented use of his office to censor the press injected new life into public debate over the hippies. Letters and calls in support of the mayor poured into City Hall from citizens and organizations such as the KRA, the Vancouver Council of Churches, and the Vancouver

⁶² See, for example, Lewis Yablonsky, *The Hippie Trip* (New York: Pegasus, 1968).

⁶³ Rankin to Special Committee, October 1967, VCA, 79-B-5, file 13.

⁶⁴ “Hippies Prepare for Battle over Suspension of Paper,” *Vancouver Sun*, 29 September 1967. For more on the *Georgia Straight*’s legal saga, see Ron Verzuh, *Underground Times: Canada’s Flower-Child Revolutionaries* (Toronto: Deneau, 1989), 49–69.

Council of Women. At a council meeting called to discuss the mayor's action – just a week before the Special Committee reported – Campbell boasted that he had received over nine hundred communications in favour of his decision. Meanwhile, his opponents also made themselves heard: faculty at UBC and the BC Civil Liberties Association condemned the mayor's decision, and, during a call-in segment, a local radio station was swamped by more than three hundred calls against the suspension.⁶⁵ Campbell's attack on the *Straight* marked the beginning of his support for the hard-line, law-and-order approach to the hippie issue advocated by Harold Kidd.

The reasons behind the mayor's very public opposition to Love Street were both political and personal. Campbell was elected in 1966 as the candidate of development and fiscal conservatism. Despite his brash style and tendency to offend, he prided himself on his responsiveness to public opinion, and opposing the hippies pleased a sizable constituency. Support from organizations such as the KRA was particularly important come election time. And making his anti-hippie stance part of a new law-and-order platform undoubtedly helped Campbell secure re-election in 1968 and 1970.⁶⁶

As a successful developer, the mayor also had strong personal connections to Kitsilano. In the late 1950s he had received the support of its residents' associations – normally opposed to new apartment buildings – for the zoning variance needed to build the neighbourhood's first high-rise: Parkview Towers. And, in winter 1967, he accepted the title of honorary president of the Kitsilano Chamber of Commerce, after being nominated for the post by Harold Kidd.⁶⁷ In addition to Parkview Towers, Campbell owned six properties within the immediate vicinity of the Love Street strip.⁶⁸ For this reason, Campbell had a direct financial interest in seeing that the doom-and-gloom scenarios Harold Kidd imagined for the neighbourhood did not come to pass.

In the longer term, action on the Special Committee's report was postponed by the observation that Kitsilano's hippie problem seemed to be dying down on its own. With the beginning of the school year and cooler weather, complaints about the hippies diminished, and the press observed that many were returning to school. By late January 1968 even

⁶⁵ City Clerk to D.H. Little, 3 October 1967, vca, 79-B-5, file 4; CKLG to Mayor, October 1967, vca, 45-B-5, file 10.

⁶⁶ "Tom Terrific Exploits the Hippie Issue," *Vancouver Sun*, 16 July 1970.

⁶⁷ Mason to Technical Planning Board, 17 July 1960, vca, 594-G-2, file 28; Campbell to Kidd, 1 February 1967, vca, 583-F-8, file 5.

⁶⁸ List of 4th Ave. Lot Owners, 1967-68, vca, 569-A-3, file 5.

Harold Kidd declared the problem solved. In his annual report to the KRA membership he praised the efforts of the Action Committee and the police in “cleaning up the disgraceful invasion of an element not fit for our society,” while criticizing council for its lack of support.⁶⁹

SPRING-SUMMER 1968:

THE SECOND HIPPIE COMMITTEE AND COOL-AID

For all that, spring revitalized Love Street and spawned a new round of complaints about the hippies’ unruly appearances and behaviour. This time, the flames were fanned by the mayor’s provocative statements and by several high-profile incidents in Kitsilano and the downtown core. After a series of drug arrests around 4th Avenue in February, it was revealed that two RCMP officers had been living undercover in Kitsilano and “masquerade[ing] as hippies.” Their successful drug buys formed part of a larger RCMP and Vancouver police operation – the first of several over the next few years – that netted nearly fifty arrests for possession and trafficking.⁷⁰ A month later, police used the Public Works Act to arrest seventeen young people – including UBC student activist and defender of hippie rights Stan Persky – for loitering at the provincial courthouse (now the Vancouver Art Gallery). They described the action, endorsed by the provincial government, as “a warning to hippies not to congregate in Vancouver this summer.” Meanwhile, the nearby Hudson’s Bay store banned long-hairs from its restaurant and instituted a policy of around-the-clock window washing – by hose – to deter young long-hairs from hanging around.⁷¹

As the public speculated whether the hippie problem had spread beyond Kitsilano, Mayor Tom Campbell earned the approval of the Kitsilano Action Committee by advocating a further crackdown on the village. Hippie bashing soon became a stock part of his public appearances. During a March interview with the CBC – conducted outside the Vancouver courthouse during the loitering trial – Campbell went on the attack in front of a national audience, calling hippies “a scum community” composed of foreign draft dodgers. And, while escorting skiing Olympian Nancy Greene around town, he compared the hippies

⁶⁹ 1967-8 KRA President’s Report, 22 January 1968, vca, 569-A-3, file 5.

⁷⁰ “Mounties Tell of ‘Hippie’ Role,” *Vancouver Sun*, 13 March 1968.

⁷¹ “Gov’t Protest Touched Off Hippie Move,” *Province*, 12 March 1968; “Windows Washed, Hippies Too,” *Province*, 1 March 1968.

unfavourably with her “public service, cleanliness [and] virtue.”⁷² Amid this renewed attention to the issue, Kitsilano residents expressed concerns that the summer of 1968 would be even worse than the last. Their anxiety was fuelled not only by what they observed on 4th Avenue but also by the press, who reported rumours of “a mass influx of hippies” to British Columbia and speculated that hippie drug use was going to be worse than ever before.⁷³ Similar pronouncements were occurring in cities across Canada, including Montreal, where both Mayor Jean Drapeau and the police chief “declare[d] war” on the hippies ahead of their predicted summer invasion.⁷⁴ That same week, citing citizens’ concerns about the coming summer, Harry Rankin asked that council’s Special Committee be reconvened to offer new solutions to the problems posed by the hippie population.

In 1967, Vancouver’s limited resources for dealing with transient youth (particularly juveniles) had been stretched to their limit, just as they had been in communities across the country.⁷⁵ For lack of a dedicated facility, the unprecedented numbers of juveniles detained by police on 4th Avenue were referred to the city’s crowded Juvenile Detention Home. There was also a shortfall in capacity to deal with the young transients’ needs for temporary shelter, food, and medical services. This mirrored what was happening in other urban countercultural enclaves across North America, as thousands of young people concentrated in communities ill-equipped to receive them.

Mindful of the interest in outreach services expressed in the first Special Committee report, in late 1967 the Kitsilano Area Resources Council helped to organize a series of meetings with social service agencies, including the Children’s Aid Society, Narcotics Addiction Foundation, local churches, and Kits’s YMCA, to develop strategies for reaching the hippie community. All of these organizations were inclined to regard the hippies as a vulnerable population rather than as a criminal group. Their collective report, drafted in the winter of 1967–68, described the problem succinctly: “Here is an increasing transient population of young people living on a borderline existence level. Minimum shelter, food and clothing are commonplace ... They are fleeing from what are to them intolerable life situations. They arrive without means of

⁷² “City Politicians Averse to Hippies,” 18 March 1968, *CBC Digital Archives*, available at archives.cbc.ca/society/youth/clips/3202; “Youngsters Show They’re for Nancy,” *Vancouver Sun*, 8 March 1968.

⁷³ “Hippie Drug Increase Predicted for This Summer,” *Province*, 27 February 1968; “Roundup Seen as a Deterrent,” *Vancouver Sun*, 12 March 1968.

⁷⁴ “La police de Montréal: Nous ferons la guerre aux hippies cet été!,” *La Patrie*, 26 May 1968.

⁷⁵ Report of Juvenile Detention Home to Council, 15 August 1967, vCA, 79-B-5, file 13.

support.”⁷⁶ This was the “damaged” youth culture referred to by critics of the baby boom generation and by such relatively sympathetic commentators as Toronto journalist and social activist June Callwood.⁷⁷ Agency representatives pointed out that, without proper nutrition, shelter, and medical attention, preventable diseases like pneumonia and hepatitis could ravage the young transients. And by avoiding treatment, those with existing psychological issues would see their mental health worsen. The young people frequenting Love Street, they argued, were vulnerable to vagrancy arrests or entanglement in the criminal justice system, and they were “obvious targets” for drug dealers and gangs. These problems were compounded by the young peoples’ “voluntary avoidance” of conventional social welfare services.

How to reach a transient population suspicious of established adult authority? Stopping short of endorsing the drug use and lack of social responsibility they saw in the hippie philosophy, Vancouver’s social welfare agencies felt nonetheless that it was their duty to provide for the needs of this population.⁷⁸ Yet they realized that their response would have to be tailored to the particular situation in Kitsilano. Direction came from those outreach workers already active in Kits, which, like other countercultural centres, had become a field for social services and even missionary activity.⁷⁹

In the spring and summer of 1967 two university students, volunteers with the United Church’s Vancouver Inner-City Service Project, had worked with youth on 4th Avenue and Kitsilano Beach.⁸⁰ And during the fall and winter, village volunteers Elmore Smalley and Ray Chouinard had been running a non-judgmental drop-in centre and crash pad for troubled youth called “Cool-Aid.” Operating on a shoe-string budget out of temporary facilities, including a stint at a popular concert venue called the Retinal Circus (where medical volunteers used the women’s washroom for consultations), Cool-Aid demonstrated its ability to assist at-risk young people.⁸¹ A new location in a pair of dilapidated houses on 7th Avenue allowed staff to offer more services (including

⁷⁶ Report of Ad Hoc Advisory Committee, December to January 1967-68, VCA, 106-D-5, file 2.

⁷⁷ Henderson, *Making the Scene*, 235.

⁷⁸ Report of Ad Hoc Advisory Committee, December to January 1967-68, VCA, 106-D-5, file 2.

⁷⁹ For more on this phenomenon in Yorkville, see Henderson, *Making the Scene*, esp. 211-41; and Bruce Douville, “The Uncomfortable Pew: Christianity, the New Left and the Hip Counterculture in Toronto,” PhD diss., York University, 2011.

⁸⁰ Vancouver Inner-City Service Project (VISP) Director’s Report, 8 September 1967, United Church British Columbia Conference Archives (hereafter UCBCCA), VISP file 1.

⁸¹ Cool-Aid Report, 17 April 1968, UCBCCA, VISP, file 7; and Student Health Team in Action, Fall 1968, UCBCCA, VISP, file 7.

additional billets), but funding was scarce. The social welfare agencies brought together to discuss the youth problem endorsed expanding the operation into a “day communications centre” with more capacity to provide medical and counselling services.⁸² The new centre would be staffed by volunteers from the Inner-City Service Project and the federally funded Company of Young Canadians.

This was the context in which the 1968 Special Committee called for by Harry Rankin began its work. This committee differed from its predecessor. After KRA complaints that the 1967 Special Committee was “biased,” progressive councillor Marianne Linnell was replaced by the conservative Hugh Bird and former mayor Albert Alsbury.⁸³ The reconstituted committee heard submissions on the transient problem from the agencies supporting Cool-Aid. It also made the city’s first efforts to reach out to spokespeople for Love Street. These included not just the Cool-Aid team but also the editors of the *Georgia Straight* and the youthful “shadow city government” led by Stan Persky. The latter group had been established to improve communication between hip and straight, combat police harassment, and generally lampoon Campbell’s administration.⁸⁴ Both supported Smalley and Chouinard’s work in the village.

In its report to council, the Special Committee recommended that the city provide funding for both Cool-Aid and the Inner-City Service Project. They saw the two programs as the most effective means of “[bridging] the communications gap between the hippies and the older generation” and reintegrating the former into society.⁸⁵ That the villagers needed or desired reintegration was simply assumed. The Inner-City Service Project received two thousand dollars, and Cool-Aid was awarded a thirty-thousand-dollar in-kind grant in the form of a run-down 7th Avenue house. Because the house purchase involved extensive renovations, the Special Committee argued that the grant would also serve the purposes of urban renewal.

Predictably, Harold Kidd and his allies were fiercely opposed to council’s perceived support for the hippies. For the first time in an eighteen-month campaign, the anti-hippie campaigners’ opponents were able to lobby council with a single, winnable demand instead of a broader call to change policy. This injected new life into the Action

⁸² Report of Ad Hoc Advisory Committee, December to January 1967-68, vca, 106-D-5, file 2.

⁸³ Kidd to Mayor, 15 March 1968, vca, 569-A-3, file 2.

⁸⁴ “Fool Picked for Mayor in Hippies’ Comic Gov’t,” *Vancouver Sun*, 30 March 1968.

⁸⁵ Special Committee Report to Council, 15 July 1968, vca, 79-B-5, file 13; “Council Cool Aid Voted for Hippies,” *Province*, 17 July 1968.



Figure 6. The Cool-Aid house at 1822 West 7th Avenue in Kitsilano in August 1968. Note the poor condition of the property that caused so much controversy at City Hall. Brian Kent/*Vancouver Sun*.

Committee. In strongly worded letters and a delegation to council, members argued that Cool-Aid was “a disgrace to the community” and a misuse of state funds. Door-to-door canvassing in the area around the Cool-Aid house allowed the KRA to collect more than two hundred signatures from residents opposed to the centre and the negative effects it would have on community safety and property values.⁸⁶

⁸⁶ Kidd to Mayor and Council, 6 August 1968, vCA, 79-B-5, file 13; Cool-Aid Petition, 22 August 1968, vCA, 79-B-5, file 13.

Meanwhile, letters from area landlords and Chester Securities, a development company planning a thirty-eight-suite apartment building a block away, stressed that funding Cool-Aid would slow urban renewal.⁸⁷ Chief Constable Ralph Booth spoke out in the press about the idea, equating both transients and Cool-Aid workers with criminals and warning that funding the centre would only encourage more of them to come to Vancouver. In his words, it was “unthinkable that the taxpayers of our city should be asked to contribute financially to this way of life.”⁸⁸ Both Mayor Campbell and conservative Special Committee member Hugh Bird voted against the grant, arguing that funding welfare services overstepped city jurisdiction and citing suspicions that Cool-Aid was “hiding children from their parents.”⁸⁹ Nineteen sixty-eight was an election year, and in the wake of this public outcry and a negative report from the Town Planning Commission, the idea of the house purchase was shelved.

Despite all the bad press, Cool-Aid succeeded in reaching its target population. Over the summer of 1968 its staff found work for nearly two hundred job-seekers, served 12,500 free meals at weekly “feed-ins,” and saw more than one hundred medical patients per month regarding complaints ranging from depression to pregnancy to respiratory illness.⁹⁰ The most contentious aspect of Cool-Aid’s operation was the provision of shelter to transients: on any given night that summer fifty people (many of them teenagers) were sleeping at the Cool-Aid houses. The law required staff to report all juveniles to the police, but they did not always do so. As a result, the police visited or raided the centre dozens of times during the year. Police reports from these visits attest to the game of cat-and-mouse played between officers searching for drugs and runaways, and staff attempting to protect young people from the Juvenile Detention Home or possible charges.⁹¹

FROM A PROBLEM POPULATION TO NEIGHBOURHOOD LEADERS

Kitsilano’s anti-hippie Action Committee lost its already flagging momentum in the months following the Cool-Aid grant controversy. In his 1968 presidential report to the KRA, Harold Kidd applauded the victory

⁸⁷ Frederickson to Gray, 17 July 1968, VCA, 79-B-5, file 13.

⁸⁸ “Hippie Agencies a Threat,” *Vancouver Sun*, 24 August 1968.

⁸⁹ “Hippie Home Due for Major Revamp,” *Vancouver Sun*, 7 August 1968.

⁹⁰ VISP Cool-Aid Report, September 1968, UCBCCA, VISP, file 7.

⁹¹ Patrol Report, 12 September 1968, VCA, 45-C-6, file 48.

and stated that the 4th Avenue situation had “quieted down to some extent.” Gone, however, was the optimism of the previous year’s report, which had prematurely declared the hippie problem solved. Closing his letter, Kidd warned that, in the future, “the KRA *must* continue to assume a position of responsibility in this community’s leadership.”⁹² The association’s strength was seriously weakened, however, by population change and its unrelenting resistance to integrating the neighbourhood’s new arrivals. Kidd’s time as head of the KRA would end ignominiously a few years later in a series of legal battles over the organization’s exclusion of unsuitable (read “long-haired”) members, funded by the dwindling Action Committee bank account.⁹³ The Lower Kitsilano Ratepayers’ Association disbanded in late 1968, and the KRA entered a period of decline before dissolving in 1976. The Kitsilano Chamber of Commerce continued to function but played a less influential role in the community.⁹⁴

Excluded from and suspicious of existing organizations, new arrivals in Kitsilano formed groups to champion their own causes and to challenge the KRA for the right to represent the area. In the 1970s, the West Broadway Citizens Committee and the Kitsilano Area Resources Association (successor to the Area Resources Council) fought for tenants’ rights and successfully opposed plans to redevelop the area with high-rises and large-scale commercial projects. Somewhat ironically, in opposing further proliferation of rental units and the transformation of Kits into what they saw as another characterless West End, this new generation of activists continued work begun by the KRA decades earlier.⁹⁵ This time, however, they were cast not as harbingers of the neighbourhood’s disintegration but as its saviours. Despite the concerns of the KRA, in retrospect Kitsilano’s youthful new arrivals were what geographer David Ley calls “location leaders” for gentrification, a process that, in the early 1970s, followed artists and countercultural youth into central city neighbourhoods across North America.⁹⁶ In their wake came

⁹² 1968 KRA President’s Report, 27 January 1969, VCA, 569-A-4, file 2.

⁹³ “Some Hippies, Tears: Then Lights Out,” *Vancouver Sun*, 25 February 1969; Action Committee Minutes, 13 May 1969, VCA, 569-A-2, file 4.

⁹⁴ Carr, “Development of Neighbourhood,” 66 and 82.

⁹⁵ Even more ironically, they were opposed in this by the few remaining members of the KRA, who had changed to supporters of redevelopment and densification by 1973. Shlomo Hasson and David Ley discuss this and Kitsilano activism in the 1970s in their *Neighbourhood Organizations and the Welfare State* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 239–70.

⁹⁶ David Ley, *The New Middle Class and the Remaking of the Central City* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), esp. 175–221.

not just a new wave of neighbourhood empowerment but also a rise in property values and a new identity for the neighbourhood.

Without the lobbying of the Action Committee, Kitsilano and its hippie problem no longer received the special attention from municipal government characteristic of 1967-68. Residents' nuisance complaints about Love Street persisted into 1971, but they were infrequent. To many, Kitsilano's troubles were just one aspect of a city-wide (and, indeed, national) problem with transient and alienated youth. Solutions could not come exclusively from the local level but, rather, would have to include extensive federal involvement.

The divisions in Vancouver government that arose around the hippie problem persisted into the early 1970s. Councillors Harry Rankin and Ed Sweeney advocated support for Cool-Aid and other outreach projects, resulting in a few small grants from city funds. Social welfare agencies expanded services targeted at youth, and their advocacy played a large role in securing federal funding to open a three-hundred-bed youth hostel in Vancouver in 1971. On the other hand, strict enforcement of drug laws and harassment for loitering continued to define the relationship between youth and the police. Mayor Campbell's bombastic rhetoric about draft dodgers, hippies, and drug pushers continued – in 1970 he pondered using powers under the War Measures Act to have them arrested en masse – and was matched in tone by the anti-establishment rhetoric of the Yippies, student leaders, and defenders of Vancouver's hippies. It would take several violent clashes between youth and riot police, at Jericho Beach in 1970 and in Gastown the year after, before the law-and-order agenda championed by the mayor was subject to public questioning.⁹⁷ In the wake of these events and the citizen mobilization against Campbell's unpopular freeway project, the Non-Partisan Association was defeated by the more progressive coalition known as The Electors' Action Movement (TEAM) in 1972.

CONCLUSION

This study of Vancouver's so-called hippie problem tackles, at a very local level, an important gap in our knowledge about Canada's 1960s: How did institutions and people in positions of power interpret and respond to the youth counterculture? It highlights the insufficiency of explanations that focus solely on repression or moral outrage, while

⁹⁷ "Mayor Sees Use of War Act in City," *Vancouver Sun*, 17 October 1970. For more on the Gastown Riot, see Boudreau, "Struggle for a Different World."

acknowledging their importance. Moral panic theory contributes to explaining how Vancouver coped with its hippie problem, but it is not enough. Certainly, in 1967 and 1968 the KRA and its allies proved the efficacy of their mode of citizen activism in forcing the local government into action. Their voice was privileged not only because they were a well-organized pressure group but also because they were “moral entrepreneurs” who successfully labelled Love Street a moral and criminal problem. This resulted in an application of repressive force in Kitsilano, with mixed results.

Yet the influence of the anti-hippie campaigners was limited by the intervention of other actors and interpretations. Social welfare experts who reframed the neighbourhood’s problem in terms of psychology, generational conflict, and alienation influenced local institutions and some elected officials. The idea that the situation in Kitsilano reflected a larger societal failure to accommodate or incorporate youth influenced policy in a lasting way, and not just in Vancouver. Across Canada local authorities were coming to the same conclusion and calling on the federal government to enact large-scale measures to reintegrate youth. This contributed, by the 1970s, to federal government studies, funding for emergency hostels, and massive job creation programs like Opportunities for Youth and the Local Initiatives Program.

Whether framed in terms of morality or social responsibility, local responses to Love Street were also guided by other factors. It is important to remember that there was a personal and material aspect to the KRA’s struggle against the hippies. As businesspeople and neighbourhood notables, they saw their livelihoods and community ideals under threat from the new arrivals. Their response to Love Street must be understood in the context of east Kitsilano’s transition from family suburb to gentrifying inner-city neighbourhood. Meanwhile, Mayor Tom Campbell’s support for a law-and-order agenda in Kitsilano was influenced not just by his own beliefs but also by his need for the votes that the neighbourhood’s well-organized associations could bring him in his campaign for re-election – and, perhaps, his property portfolio on 4th Avenue. Rather than the monolithic establishment imagined by some 1960s narratives, Vancouver’s youthful counterculture encountered social actors with differing interests and understandings of their scene, and a local state limited in the scope of its actions.