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Smoke-Free: How One City Successfully Banned Smoking in all Indoor Public Places

By Barbara McLintock

Granville Island Publishing, 212 pages, \$20

Reviewed by Mark Lubosch

THIS is an excellent behind-the-headlines account of legislative public health change in Victoria, B.C., the first Canadian city and capital region to successfully ban all smoking in restaurants and bars.

Author Barbara McLintock offers soap-opera-like melodrama and a cliff-hanging conclusion in her detailed story of how the determination of former Winnipegger Dr. Richard Stanwick led the Victoria Capital Region Health District (CRD) in beating the big tobacco companies in 1999.

McLintock's journalistic style accurately and dramatically summarizes the events, personalities and challenges that led up to Victoria's ground-breaking legislation, which Winnipeg and Manitoba have imitated.

This book will appeal especially to those who are interested in public health and politics.

Smoke-Free takes an in-depth look at the matrix of complex issues and challenges that may confront the development and legislation of new, non-smoking ordinances.

McLintock's carefully researched story often reads like a reality TV show. She effectively develops her lead characters to the extent that one might recognize them in person perhaps in a crowded, smoky Esquimalt bar.

Her book portrays the frustration of Victoria District's senior public health officials, physicians, politicians and other health stakeholders.

Stanwick had been Winnipeg's chief medical officer when he was lured to Victoria in 1996. McLintock, who grew up in Winnipeg, is a veteran Victoria-based reporter with the Vancouver Sun. She previously wrote a well-regarded book, *Anorexia's Fallen Angel*, on Peggy Claude-Pierre and her controversial Montreux Clinic in B.C.

In this latest book, she exposes the intimidating experiences Victoria's bylaw enforcement officers and the RCMP encountered while enforcing the new smoking ordinance in some of the rowdier bars.

To the delight of the local media, some bar owners and patrons showed just how far they would go for a Camel. Readers may recall these colourful outbursts of civil disobedience when they were broadcast across Canada in 1999.

In Chapter 8, Media Mania, McLintock describes how relentlessly the media pursued Stanwick and his colleagues. She lays much blame for the creation of sensational, disproportionately negative, often exaggerated controversy, at the media's doorstep.

She castigates the National Post for writing an editorial fully embracing freedom of choice "and not mentioning staff or workers' health at all."

Moreover, she openly criticizes the media for focusing on the few business that refused to comply.

"Reporters never seemed to turn up," she writes, "when the teams were visiting the restaurants or bars where compliance was high or where officials were treated with respect, even if the bylaw wasn't being fully implemented."

She explains the importance of setting realistic goals and expectations and how to develop political and social strategies for creating change. She even tells how to use the media effectively.

McLintock reinforces the importance of eliminating smoking from schools and surrounding outdoor areas. The final chapter, Lessons Learned, is a must-read for any organization or individuals attempting to ban the butt. It is full of extremely useful information and suggestions for creating political and legislative changes.

Smoke-Free, in fact, should be required reading for all politicians, health workers and educators who need to be inspired and informed to make legislative changes for public health, in jurisdictions where smoking is still allowed.

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