



**DIALOGUE SESSIONS**  
**Bathurst-January 27<sup>th</sup>, 2009**  
**Knights of Columbus**  
**355 Douglas Ave.**  
**1-4p.m.**

**Summary of Session Notes**

**1. What does poverty mean to you and what do you think causes poverty?**

**Basic Needs:**

- Enough money pay essentials-what is essential
- Hungry
- Heated
- Not getting what they need at home-basic needs
- Cost of heat-people fall too far behind in winter-6 months of winter faced with feed kids or pay hydro

**Childcare:**

- Lack of public daycare system
- Lack of child support

**Communication:**

- Awareness
- Victim of advertising (TV, media, newspapers, etc.) where the consumerism model prevails and encourages buying that leads to poverty.
- Lack of information
- Lack of engagement:  
=> school dropouts



=> cultural poverty

=> cultural heritage

### **Community:**

- Take people out of rural to city

### **Economic:**

- Economy in the region
- Cost of living is going up more than wages.
- The economic crisis complicates matters.

### **Education/Skills:**

- Lack of means & education
- Lack of education
- Cycle of lack of education perpetuates poverty
- Lack of life skills teaching
- Too much emphasis university alone
- No proper place to study
- Lack of education
- Lack of vocational programs or lack of access to program
- Criteria to qualify for program training too short (entrance)
- Cost of post-secondary education makes it out of reach
- Changes in education programs i.e. nurse was 3 years now 5 still a nurse



- Budget/Home economist cooking/making choices-Parents don't know how to budget
- More education leads to higher income; less education leads to lower income.
- Lack of education
- Lack of originality in the education system
- Low level of education

#### **Family Unit:**

- Lack of support to single parents in particular women
- Eligibility for student aid is based on parents gross income-Does not take into consideration family size dynamics
- Separation and divorce give rise to poverty.
- Less stable households
- Family breakdown

#### **Government:**

- Lack of political will
- The government's policies are not adapted.
- The government has cut programs too much.

#### **Health:**

- Cause-Mental Illness-Lack of recognition of
- Medical assistance should be offered to working poor-minimum wage
- Mental illness/poverty cycle
- Addictions



- Disabilities in general (what % of people living in poverty have disabilities)
- Lack of proper supports for people with disabilities
- People/society does not understand disability “that guy cannot work!”
- Illness can lead to poverty.
- Mental health problems
- Drug and alcohol abuse/dependency
- Mental health

### **Housing:**

- Living conditions-slumlord housing
- Safe housing/affordable housing
- Living conditions at home-Rules easier than at home/youth couch surfing/16-18 lack of funding
- Grouping low-income housing together-doesn't work-mixed communities learn from each other
- Kids see other opportunities i.e. mixed income housing in Saint John successful
- Housing-Apt owners cannot afford taxes and up keep (double tax)
- Basic need => housing.
- Low-cost housing
- Housing leads to labelling:
  - => “ghetto”
  - => community influence
  - => poverty is normalized.

### **Money:**

- Minimum wage too little to pay essentials



- No minimum wages compared to assistance work a barrier
- Minimum wage should be restructured to include benefits-Would reduce barriers-living wage above poverty line
- Lack of adequate guaranteed income
- Pay equity for work of equal value
- Lack of money
- How the money is spent
- Government system of taxing
- Some have enough to survive but not enough if they pay taxes
- Minimum wage is not enough
- Students start off high debt & expense
- Have to be sick to get a higher cheque
- NBCC-qualify for EI-University does not
- Student debt load is higher than possible entry level employment
- Poverty causes higher costs in jails, hospitals
- Programs are reactive vs. proactive-Costs government more down the road by services
- Taxed on earnings, home, improvement to themselves/property
- Poverty-Are the statistics appropriate/reasonable-re: low income cut-off costs of living
- Low wages – few or no medical benefits
- Way in which people manage money
- Credit society
- Financial support system that needs to be revised
- The cost of living is going up.



- Families' budget management
- Minimum wage – the face of poverty is changing
- Poverty = not enough money to meet the needs
  - => lack of network (family support + \$, etc.)
  - => poverty in other forms
- Wage gap ... poverty among women
- Income assistance is too low.
- Total household income = should not be taken into consideration

**Other:**

- Different to all people-Expect certain standards/Poverty vs. choice means poor/working or not
- Poverty is manmade, created by mankind
- Child poverty=poverty lack of income/family
- Help the poor-they call you a saint and ask why they are poor-they call you a communist Bishop from Bioz
- Poverty is ongoing-getting worse
- Population that leaves typically workforce leave poor behind
- Long process
- Poor will always be there
- Poverty is a structural problem & political problem
- Perception & definition is not understood
- More flexibility in assistance is required to remove barrier
- Time should be limited on social assistance by adding services to transition off assistance
- Lack of resources in social services



- No other choice
- Several cause, complex
- Cycle of poverty-children who grow up in poverty live in poverty
- People living in poverty are so far out of the mainstream they may not show up in the statistics
- Mentality, cycle that has to be broken
- Least effort principle, e.g., cultural
- Ignorance and vulnerability
- Some try to help one another but are cut off by the system.
- Taboos
- Society is more egoistic, individualistic.
- People are less responsible than in the past.
- Superficial, materialistic world
- Too many gaps in the redistribution of wealth
- Different sorts of poverty (e.g., physical, psychological, financial, intellectual)
- Suffering => different levels
- Certain people escape from it, others cultivate it.
- People survive day to day.
- Poverty affects everyone, especially the middle class.
- Too much injustice in relation to poverty (social justice), e.g., resources.
- There will always be poor people.
- There are fewer services than in the past.
- Programs without participants
- Socio-economic conditions – urban vs. rural regions



- Generational cycle
- Feeling that you are owed something
- Intellectual, social, psychological, and other limitations
- Lack of flexibility (asking for qualifications that are sometimes too high)
- Loss of certain benefits (family allowance, health card, etc...)
- Rigidity of structures (for example = education)
- Decisions often poorly adapted
- Awareness raising re traditional female roles vs. work
- That the recipients of government money (social assistance) give back to the community in the form of time.

**Transportation:**

- Can't afford to get to work
- Lack of public transportation
- Lack of transportation barriers

**Well-Being:**

- Social inclusion
- Stigmatized-people believe it themselves

**Work:**

- Lack of employment opportunities in some regions i.e. rural
- Not enough opportunities for people who have skills but no formal education/licensing
- Work-is available for everyone



- Lack of work and/or experience
- Many people unemployed, job losses



## 2. What do you think can be done to reduce poverty?

### Basic Needs:

- Heating other essential needs
- Put structure in place that would ensure basic needs are met
- Ensure basic needs are met so people can help to get out of poverty
- Have a tax credit for basic needs: electricity/heating, water and sewage, garbage, gas.

### Communication:

- Ensure poverty reduction process is inclusive to capture all points of view-How do we get those points of view
- Focus groups/self-help groups
- Have a specific dialogue with major business “what are you prepared to do”-lead by example
- How do we create a culture where people recognize they have a social responsibility to the world around them to others, to help
- Awareness raising with regard to the realities of poverty => at all levels.
- Better consultation! Studies about shortages and other social causes => better co-operation (government, university, etc.)
- Awareness raising about the realities of poverty
- Have poor people participate more in the decision-making process.
- Raise people’s awareness with regard to poverty.
- Public education campaign



### **Community:**

- More public awareness-involve community
- Make youth more aware of how today's actions can lead to future
- Educate greater public how to recognize signs/symptoms and what to do with it
- Increase the visibility of community organizations.
- Community sector plays a major role in taking charge of this problem.

### **Economic:**

- Promote buying locally.

### **Education/Skills:**

- Large companies who receive capital investment from government should be responsible to educate/trades employees-guarantee education in trades & employment
- Education-general not only school
- Education on life skills
- Easier & more affordable access to education (university)
- EI while in university base on achievement (pass mark)
- Free education university/college
- Bring back basic skills program in education-Home economics, shop, technical & trades, work preparation, budget, life skills, civics, citizenship & responsibilities
- Bring basic skills in whatever opportunity is there-Resource Centres, Community Centres-make them accessible to more people-mentorship programs for those not in school
- Education programs within business
- More training – diversification



- Modify the school system to include more technical instruction.
- That public schools be more flexible and give certain individuals the option to go directly to college (manual work training – 4 years =>2 years decide =>2 years specialize) beginning in Grade 9. Other format: 3 days public school, 2 days college.
- Public schools should be more flexible, with 3 streams: trades, technical, university.
- Flexibility in training => Rethink post-secondary education, especially when it comes to trades.
- Reassert the value of technical training in high schools:
  - => values conveyed
  - => closer ties between theory and practice
  - => Responsibility centre: Education
- Educate young people about values => standardize information through school.
- Reassert the value of technical training.
- Education, awareness raising

### **Health:**

- Engage mental health organization in community services where there are high levels of poverty-coordinated efforts
- De-stigmatizing mental illness
- Reduce cost of medication to the consumer
- That low-income earners (less than \$15/hour) have a health card.

### **Housing:**

- Ensure housing adequate help homeless
- More affordable/safe housing with a mixed income environment



- Revisit formula for rent subsidy (i.e. approximately 30% of income) base on net instead of gross
- Tax breaks for apartment owners (they cannot compete against others) but ensure this translates to improvements for tenants
- CAP assessment & rent regulation
- Create more affordable housing (non-elderly/single)
- For seniors keep assets out of formula for housing
- Are private owned facilities regulated
- More affordable housing within the general community.

### **Money:**

- Immediate needs are wage changes example EI/Social Assistance-responsibility government
- Increase social assistance previous commitments by government
- Guaranteed annual income to meet poverty line standards
- Social security & CPP should increase
- Ensure pay equity for work of equal value
- Increase minimum wage & put process in place to ensure (timeline) wage keep up to demand--responsible society & government
- Put processes in place to bring social services/wages to parity with country-NB is lowest wages in country
- Government all levels put funds in place-Non-profit would participate but can't assume government responsibility
- Distribution of wealth in society (governments all levels)
- Take into account the real expenses in the household



- Business should have some government initiative to take actions-Complement to minimum wage (top up)
- Tax breaks for specific poverty reduction initiatives
- Government grants for private enterprise to increase the lowest wages
- Raise the minimum wage.
- Establish a guaranteed annual income – so that everyone earns something.
- Pay equity. Example: women
- Raise the minimum wage

**Other:**

- Address immediate needs poverty plan (this process) between now & end of process
- Lack of political will to address society cause of poverty
- Eliminate systemic/structural barriers that keep people in poverty
- Reduce barriers to social services-put process in place to remove barriers/limits
- Review success of other jurisdictions
- Establish a vision
- Increase homeless shelters across the province
- Increase services offered at shelters
- Increase “tool kit” for front line workers to allow better delivery of services
- Ensure assistance is reflective of times
- Flexibility in services
- Access to assistance for homeless (no address-no assistance/no income-no address)
- Assist youth to access services-systemic problems that eliminate access to assistance



- Non-profit must play important role however, government cannot transfer all responsibility to non-profit
- Poverty is created by political decisions & will-can be resolved by political decisions & will
- Wage subsidies for non-profit @ higher wages & for longer periods/match the labour market/These are services for the community
- Keep cigarettes & alcohol out of the hands of children-better enforcement of laws-
- Make laws more comprehensive
- Reduce burdens
- This initiative is a good place to start-could lead to positive action. Hope it doesn't sit on a shelf-Continue to engage people living in poverty
- Addictions/Disability/Mental Health/Tax Policy/Housing-safe & affordable conditions/Education/services/programs/out of reach costs & access
- Be more aware and offer customized services to people living in poverty.
- Awareness raising ... traditional female roles versus work
- Flexibility
  - => benefits
  - => education/programs
  - => Rethink post-secondary education so that it is better adapted.
- Revise the social programs / social policies.
- Don't fall back solely on private enterprises.
- More sincerity from the government with regard to poverty.
- That the government implement all of the reports received.
  - => Example: Common Front, Comité des 12
- No setting of quotas, e.g., desire for education, career choice.
- Make poverty part of the provincial government's self-sufficiency plans.
- Reduce the number of hours required to be eligible for EI.



- Change the face of the homeless...
- Modify/revise fixed rates = more flexibility to receive benefits (e.g., family allowance, health card...)
- Raise the criteria for receiving income assistance.

**Work:**

- Retention strategy i.e. forgive student loan for those who stay in province but jobs must be available
- Incentives-signing bonus/bursaries
- Find solutions whereby people earn their EI by creating more jobs and projects.
- Have a system for recognizing people's abilities and aptitudes in order to redirect them to employment.
- Improve employment standards
- Encourage job creation.