



DIALOGUE SESSIONS
Dalhousie-January 27th, 2009
Lions Club
410 Adelaide St.
6:30-9:30pm

Summary of Session Notes

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

Basic Needs:

- Unregulated prices of gas/oil/essentials
- Cost of nutritious foods
- Poverty is when you get your basic needs met
- Basic utility costs is a cause of poverty
- Lack of ability to prioritize between basic needs and extra
- Lack of money for health care, heating, and food.
- Poor people are deprived of necessities.

Childcare:

- Loss of child care/daycare
- Daycare services are too expensive and too few in number.

Communication:

- Poor people have no voice.
- People aren't that familiar with the resources available.
- MLAs/Ministers don't listen to the requests and needs in their region. They are not aware of the real situation.
- The lack of information and lack of communication cause poverty.



Community:

- People who can't participate in community
- Inability to contribute to community
- Lack of funding for community organizations.

Education/Skills:

- Lack of access to education
- Education on life skills
- Reorganizing skills
- Not enough educators in trades
- Not enough emphasis on trade education & English
- Need education financial management
- Education needs to be focused on breaking poverty cycle
- Not enough early education on entrepreneurship
- Lack of education to inmates
- Lack of education
- Too much money on study
- Parents lack of education
- Education is a big cause of poverty
- Literacy-the fact that people can't read and write is a very big problem
- When you have home with literacy problems it will be a problem for the kids and will recreate poverty



- Lack of basics life skills
- Lack of education makes people feel inferior.
- Lack of social skills – people are excluded from society.
- Literacy = greater risk of vulnerability, of being abused.
- Lack of skills.
- Learning problems.
- Dropping out of school.

Family Unit:

- Support single parent in particular women
- Poor families = less education for the children.
- Family circle.
- Family situation.
- Family values are changing.

Government:

- Government cause the problem of poverty
- The various levels of government don't talk to one another – Policies are centralized, illogical, etc.
- The government's rules don't respond to people's needs.
- Language used by the government.
- Financial management by the government.

Health:



- Sickness-insurance cost
- Physical/Mental Health
- Mental health issue is a big cause on part of poverty
- Addiction create poverty-it's a cycle
- Mental challenge and people with mental health issues are often living in poverty
- Persons with special needs (70% of disabled persons live below the poverty line [Stats Canada]).
- People were released from institutions (RHC) with few services and find themselves unable to adapt to society (1/3 of poor people living alone have mental health problems).
- Health problems.
- Health = resources are not available.
- Addiction: drugs...alcohol...lottery/gambling.

Housing:

- Lack of subsidized housing
- Very poor quality of public or private housing for people with mental health problems.
- Low-income earners have to make do with housing that's too old.

Money:

- Minimum wages too low
- Student loan interest
- Tuition fees too high
- Wait times for EI funding
- Pension not indexed to cost of living



- Seniors income too low
- When you don't have enough to live on
- Financial poverty
- You could have money and be poor
- We appreciate poverty when there is big difference in income from different employers
- When parents have to separate to government a earning & each a problem for family
- Income assistance rate is not enough for disabled and handicap people
- The minimum wage is not enough
- Senior with fix income have often living in poverty
- Not having enough money to live decently.
- It's not always a question of money. It can be caused by isolation.
- Non-profit organizations have financial difficulties.
- Minimum wage is too low.
- People who work for the minimum wage get less help than those who receive income assistance. They can't live decently.
- Lack of money for housing, work, education.
- High cost of living.
- Debt.
- Not knowing how to manage a budget.
- Minimum wage too low.
- Benefits for seniors don't keep pace with the cost of living.
- Too easy to borrow (easy credit).
- Access to money.



- Financial assistance for heating is too low.
- Good food is too expensive.

Other:

- Profit-rich contributes to poverty/rentals
- Poverty has become another level of loss society
- Circle of poverty how to break
- Lack of access to front line workers
- Too proud to access assistance by some
- Lack of access to assistance for schools to provide breakfast for children in need
- What/where is poverty line?
- Need to facilitate way out of poverty
- Barriers to getting out of poverty
- Social work has to contribute to removing barriers to getting out of poverty
- Not enough front line workers social workers
- Need more avenues to access assistance
- Need to motivate people out of cycle
- Other opportunities non-traditional should be pursued
- Caused by government-requires political will to bring people out of poverty
- High living standards
- Poverty creates poverty
- Welfare too easy to get
- Better system



- Definition of poverty impact on who you are
- Poverty could be circumstantial
- Where you live could make a difference between being rich or being poor
- Lack of determination
- Child are left with family that don't have the ability to raise children
- Seniors are poor, left alone
- Isolation is a cause of poverty
- If they get off welfare they lose all the benefits- they prefer to stay on welfare
- In some cases the welfare rate is low. Ex: handicap person that can work ill people
- Give income assistance to easily too youth. They should work not being on income assistance
- Social indifference. People don't believe it exists. Coping with prejudice and discrimination.
- Assistance programs are often short term. They create hope, but there is no continuity.
- The process of accessing assistance takes too long...
- Home services: persons not responsible or not interested in the work: lack of supervision / little confidence in the system, programs changed according to politics, no consistency....
- Poverty is taboo. It's an embarrassing topic.
- Poor people get snubbed and shunted around from one service to another, which forces them to play with the system to improve their lot.
- Family quarrels, social tensions. Poor people learn to keep quiet.
- Informal/family caregivers are not paid for looking after members of their family => sacrifice without any incentive/support.
- Lack of development opportunities.



- Lack of self-esteem.
- Have to live in indifference.
- Lack of mutual aid.
- Lack of access to resources.
- Overconsumption causes poverty.
- Lack of self-confidence.
- Poor people are labelled.
- Societal requirements.
- System of social benefits isn't adequate => benefit (lack).
- Insecurity.
- Stress.
- Lack of food program.
- Lack of programs for basic needs... clothing.
- Services not welcoming.

Transportation :

- Transportation in rural area-it's a problem
- Rural areas have no public transit.
- Distance between services.

Volunteer:

- Food bank not very welcoming.



Well-Being:

- Isolation
- Cultural poverty
- For some they lose their pride and dignity where they are on income assistance for too long
- Recreation, sports, and culture are too expensive for low-income earners, especially young people.

Work:

- Lack of jobs.
- Unstable jobs. Part-time jobs.
- The rigidity of the rules encourages work on the side (social assistance recipients cannot earn more than \$250 a month).
- Lack of value placed on manual work.



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

Basic Needs:

- Remove HST on heating
- If government gives money it should use it for basic need-e.g. Stamps for food or heat
- Access to funding for heating and electricity without red tape.
- Everyone should have access to adequate housing and food.
- Have access to resources to keep warm.
- Make sure that all pregnant women and newborns have access to essential needs throughout his/her life.
- Offer meals at school for children who have nothing to eat.
- Offer clothing to young schoolchildren who don't have any.
- Share strengths and knowledge relating to basic needs (e.g., free sessions on basic principles).
- Increase basic services (health) in rural areas.

Childcare:

- Heal the daycare

Communication:

- Individuals/volunteerism-should include: Gvt, Poverty Groups-more inclusive to people in poverty
- Better dialogue between training designers and employers; supply and demand.



- Raise awareness among elected officials and senior officials => visits to community services / living on the street for 24 hours between January and March.
- Public awareness of poverty situation in the regions.
- Regional summit on existing community services (networking/information).
- 1-800 help line (Restigouche, e.g.) to direct people to services in the region.
- Promote services for most disadvantaged in hospital waiting rooms, health centres, etc.
- Encourage engagement of everyone.
- Increase promotion of services and programs (e.g., education, proper nutrition, budget management... basic factors).
- Make parents more aware of better quality of life.
- Promote mutual aid... spirit of cooperation between the various parties.
- Create information exchange programs.

Community:

- Cooperation among people
- Involve cultural organization in literacy. Teaching the culture with the community
- Lack of mutual aid in the community.
- Make public premises available to community organizations at reasonable costs.
- Establish collective kitchens and community gardens.

Education/Skills:

- Early education-formal academic/trades/life skills
- Educate government
- Provide additional funding targeted at promoting education to get out of poverty cycle



- Education on money management/life skills
- Basic skills training: Budgeting/Cooking/Life Skills
- Literacy
- Alphabetization
- Education: => pregnancy
=> prenatal (equal throughout prov.)
- Increase access to education. High cost (reduce cost).
- Everyone should receive education and training, at no cost or at the lowest cost possible.
(Access to employment insurance)
- Education programs for adults to help them make a better life for themselves, including a system of follow-ups to make sure the goals have been achieved (work).
- Bring trades programs back to the schools.
- Education.
- Provide education/training.
- Increase and promote continuing education.
- Bring technical training back to high schools to reduce and prevent dropping out and motivate young people to achieve objectives.
- Help develop independence by developing aptitudes.

Health:

- Ensure access to medical care for all, no matter where the service is, without exception.
- Low-income earners (\$25,000 and under) should be entitled to health card (drug insurance program).
- Social support – follow-up of those leaving the RHC, detention centres, detox.
- Lack of medical follow-up for pregnant women, which causes learning and other problems.



- Prenatal services are not available to all.
- Offer health card ... benefits for those who earn minimum wage.

Housing:

- Increase funding social housing
- Community Non-profit-housing
- Affordable housing should be integrated throughout and not grouped in one area

Money:

- Funds-How to implement
- Government need to be more involved and provide more funding
- Common-law partners/couples funding not flexible enough to accommodate
- Government help/finance start up business cost
- Business-need to donate
- Modify social assistance to allow clients to work & earn additional funds
- No one should get money without earning it
- Give a fair wage to everybody
- Pay equity.
- Right for income assistance recipients to earn from \$250 to \$800.
- Apply same standards for wages, bonuses, increases + indexing to low income earners as those applied to MLAs.
- Annual funding for centres to assist the disadvantaged in rural areas.
- Raise and index the minimum wage (up to at least the poverty level).



- Inadequate funding. Income assistance/EI.
- Reduce costs for services (e.g., child care, transportation, sports, recreation).
- Offer access to pension plan contributions (for all workers).
- Better management and distribution of money.
- Stabilization of programs and services from the financial standpoint.
- Give tax credits for recreational activities.

Other:

- Rules need to be more flexible adjusted to allow better access to support
- Target different age groups-school kids/seniors homes/business-corporate citizen
- Business-expose youth all possibilities
- Celebrate community groups that initiate poverty reduction. Initiatives provide exposure
- Promote empowerment
- Initiatives have to keep going after government change
- Show respect and dignity to each other
- We have to find ways to bring them forward
- We have to bring people in. We have to reach the poor where they are
- We have to determine what the poverty level is
- 3 points-Work on self-esteem/find a way to reach the people/education could come in many forms
- Make employment insurance available to students.
- Better follow-up of people after they receive services.
- Loosen the regulations for services in general.



- Value people for what they do.
- Prevention at all levels.
- Bring out the potential of young people and expose them to positive models. Be able to put it into practice.
- Have lottery proceeds go to non-profit organizations and the communities.
- See that everyone participates toward a common goal. No more fighting over one's own territory.
- Immediate elimination of rules prohibiting financial assistance for disabled persons living at home or income assistance recipients.
- Stop studying the situation and do something.
- Disadvantaged persons should not be placed in a humiliating/embarrassing position.
- The province should adopt the federal model of tax credits for low incomes.
- In taxation => wages of both spouses on an individual basis for low-income earners.
- Confidence shaken in the system (general fatigue with consultation, time for action).
- Regulations. Access to resources.
- Lack of follow-up.
- Indifference.
- People wallow in poverty.
- Resentment towards people who have succeeded in life.
- Make maximum use of existing infrastructures.
- Increase the human resources available for low-income earners.
- Review systems for evaluating programs for low-income earners (e.g., electricity, welfare).

Transportation:



- Have access to means of transportation for different services.
- Access to a bus to transport seniors and young families to specialized hospitals; a transportation system subsidized by the government and the private sector.
- Lack of means of transportation to access regional services or out-of-region services.

Volunteer:

- Food banks should be open 7 days a week.
- Rebuild an emergency shelter in the Restigouche region.
- Coordination of fundraising.

Well-Being:

- Work one on one with people with knowing self-esteem
- Have more mutual aid when it comes to culture and sports. Encourage people to sponsor activities for young people in need.
- Lack of safety
- Fund recreation, sport, and other programs for disadvantaged persons.

Work:

- Role for business help give opportunities to under privileged
- Business-co-op work placement programs
- They has to be an incentive for people to want to work



- If you are on income assistance and able to work you should be doing some work to get your cheque
- Give incentives to low income workers to keep on the labour force
- Training and job creation initiatives.
- Encourage people to work by means of incentives; promote work at all levels (society).
- Adapt jobs to the needs of the regions, with their values.
- Rapid job creation.
- Lack of work and inadequate wages.
- Seasonal work.
- People make their own work owing to lack of resources for hiring.