Summary of Session Notes

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

Basic Needs

- Poverty means you are lacking something, such as basic resources for playing your role as a citizen and participating in community development.
- Poverty can be caused by poor life choices; a lifestyle reflecting a lack of knowledge that keeps people in poverty.
- Not being able to afford appropriate work clothes; without such clothes, people cannot work.
- Lacking the necessities: food, housing.
- Difficulty prioritizing needs.
- Lacking money to pay for the necessities (e.g., lack of education about how to spend the money they do have [example, cell phone])
- Not being able to meet your basic needs: food, housing, heat, clothing, etc.
- Not being able to live with dignity. Being marginalized.
- When you can't meet your basic needs or participate in social/cultural activities.

Childcare

- Cost of childcare – lack of spaces in childcare centres.
- Lack of public childcare services.

Communication

- Image of society.
- You have to seek out the opinion of people living in poverty – show that they are accepted.
- Lack of power/knowledge.
- People who are victims of poverty don't always know their rights.
- Work with existing enterprises, work requirements – encourage – risk of hiring on the basis of skills/experience instead of minimum education!

Community

- Lack of community and family environment.
- Lack of community involvement.

Economy

- No regulating of the economic market.
- Budget administration/management.
- Increase in cost of living.
- Increase in cost of living – food, heat, etc.

Education/Skills

- Lack of education.
- Illiteracy keeps people in poverty.
- Lack of knowledge of how to use their resources, manage what they have.
- Lack of education, experience, and confidence.
- Lack of education program for children with special needs.
- Lack of intellectual enrichment.
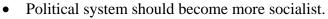- People should have equivalencies instead of education

Family Unit

- Single-parent families increase the risk of poverty.
- Lack of parenting skills, society is too materialistic.
- Family violence.
- Separation/divorce.
- Starts in the family – tradition.
- Young girls who have children and the grandparents pay/help – that puts the grandparents in poverty.
- Absence of family policies.

Government

- Government does not listen.

- Political system should become more socialist.
- Government bullying.
- Lack of political will, regardless of the party in power.
- Too many studies, such as the round tables here this evening, and not enough results because of the way things are organized in government (e.g., illness/separation, bereavement/death).
- Lack of compassionate social policies (i.e., oil = Salvation Army)

Health

- Health problems.
- People with disabilities often live in poverty and not by choice
- Illness.
- Elderly people are often poor because of health care costs, need for assistance with personal care. Living alone. Their past economic situation means that they have a small income.
- All sorts of addictions.
- Illness => lack of food causes illness.
- Lack of medications because people don't have health/dental insurance.
- High drug of costs.
- People with special needs.
- Drug addiction – wages go to drugs.

Housing

- Subsidized housing is often located in "bad" neighbourhoods => lack of pride in this housing.
- Lack of housing for low-income people who are not seniors.

Money

- Too low incomes can be the cause of poverty.
- The minimum wage is too low.
- Lacking money to get out of poverty.
- Depression leads to a lack of money and a lack of money leads to depression (vicious circle).
- Minimum wage –not enough to live on comfortably.
- Welfare cheque = minimum wage almost the same.
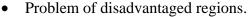- System should subsidize minimum wages.

- Low wages benefit the top employees of companies – easier to manage a bunch of poor people than a bunch of rich people.
- Poverty affects seniors on a fixed income.
- You can't live on $560/month.
- Poor people are those who earn less than $18,544 (poverty threshold/year in N.B. = $16,000 (40 hr./week, $7.75/hr.)).
- Need for an adequate income assistance system.
- The income assistance system (e.g., wage exemption) does not encourage people to work.
- Example: household income (2 single mothers with children who want to live together and share an apartment).

Other

- Poverty is really complex - many causes.
- It's more than a lack of money, it's also social isolation and poor self-esteem.
- Giving money is not the only solution.
- Poverty is everything that prevents people from developing their potential, what keeps people in poverty.
- The regions are more disadvantaged socio-economically.
- Exploitation of vulnerable people by systems in general.
- That maintains the social classes.
- Casinos and gambling machines are one of the causes of poverty.
- Personal attitudes.
- Each person's perception.
- Poverty can be a vicious circle that is difficult to get out of.
- Poverty is often generational.
- Inability to engage in self-administration, self-management; draw up a budget.
- Poverty means being uncomfortable expressing yourself, having low self-esteem.
- Young people who can't afford to buy clothes and participate in activities, sports have less of a voice.
- Poor people are labeled.
- Elderly people deprived of medication, food/financial abuse by their children.
- Discrepancy between the rich and the poor.
- Poverty leads to violence.
- Victim of domestic violence.
- It's often beyond our control (e.g., job loss, age, coupled with lack of education – more employable).
- Others are comfortable being poor, don't want to change.
- Difficult to accept help. People are mistrustful – have to build ties. The system creates fear. We don't like the system to going poking around in our lives.
- Society accepts poverty.

- Problem of disadvantaged regions.
- Disadvantaged people often live together in the same neighbourhood (e.g., Renaud Street, section - not included in the community).
- Difference between charity and justice.
- Helping until retirement – must avoid repeating the same mistakes for the next generations.
- Help must be provided in two stages – help those who need it today => educate the next generation.
- The phone system for making a request is complicated/intimidating for people.
- People who abuse the system are harming others.
- Evaluate the criteria to quality for special needs – different than for the Canada Pension.
- It's the result of structural injustice.
- It marks a person for life (it hits you in the guts); the person feel bad/always has to fight inner poverty.
- The way the system is organized promotes poverty.
  => Example: minimum wage too low, wage inequity, lack of affordable housing, income assistance policies (e.g., people who want to work), disability allowance policy, social policies - have to be pigeon-holed to have access to them.
- Institutionalization/discrimination/segregation.
- Neglect of rural regions.

Transportation

- Hard to find a job, and if you do find one, you can't get to work because there's no transportation.
- Lack of transportation in the rural regions.
- Lack of jobs in the rural areas (lack of transportation).

Volunteer

Well-being

- Persons who are physically and emotionally abused.
- Loss of benefits when you try to get out.
- Social exclusion; not good for child development (e.g., books, computer).

Work

- Lack of work.

- Wage scale discrimination for the same type of work.
- Lack of jobs.
- Companies – workers are threatened with losing their jobs if they complain.

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

Basic Needs

- Certain essential items (clothing, water, education, food, heat, housing) should be not market products. Should be protected by the government so that everyone has enough to ensure quality of life.
- Basic needs programs should not be handed off to other organizations (Salvation Army), government responsibilities.

Childcare

- Importance of having quality public childcare services.

- Expanded childcare program.

Communication

- It's by working together that solutions can be found.
- Have a global vision of the problem so that good solutions can be found.
- The solutions must be social ones. Everyone must assume some responsibility. Everyone must be actively involved in the solutions.
- Better overall distribution of resources.
- Put pressure on governments.
- Listen to employees.
- Speak for the poor, apply pressure, petitions.
- Share talents with the community/people in need.
- Include more than one department in the work to find a solution.
- Departments (Health, Education, Soc. Dev., etc.) are at opposite poles. Community – supports, government – resources, are all inter-related.
- Department employees should be aware of this dialogue (e.g., certain employees are resistant to change).

Community

- To help find solutions, we all have to work together.

- Collective effort, the entire community.
- Community must lend a hand to help out.
- Do communities how how much poverty there is in their region (municipality)?
- People must be educated about poverty.
- Greater involvement by public employees.

Economy

- Better regulation of economic markets to address the major causes of poverty.
- We're on the road to becoming a province of retirees – they won't contribute much to the economy.

Education/Skills

- The school community is an important factor in helping to solve poverty: example - Soleil levant community school in Richibucto.
- An adult literacy program with adequate resources might be effective and produce results.
- Make sure young people are trained in a trade. Address the needs and skills of young people.
- Teach basic skills so that young people are ready to work.
- Use empty government buildings to develop learning centres.
- Education/literacy is life learning process. Bring education to adults in the regions.
- More accessible programs aimed at the less educated population.
- Education – don't know how to prepare a budget/prioritize needs.
- Education => help people to acquire knowledge/skills.
- Enterprises should be able to hire people without Grade 12 but with skills.
- Education => Equivalence, community, school, fundamental basis!
- Long-term literacy policy.
- Be careful not to label children at school or in the community.

Family Unit

- Motivate families to have more children – increase the population – family policy.
- Implement a family policy.
- Develop/strengthen parenting skills.

Health

Housing

- Have affordable housing.

Money

- Implement guaranteed minimum family income.
- Seek out money to help the less fortunate participate in activities.
- Have fair wages.
- Make sure funding is shared with those who will help the poor.
- Minimum wage must be above the poverty threshold/equal to the cost of living.
- The tax system does not help the poor.
- The minimum wage should be increased.
- Wage equity.

Other

- More adequate distribution of the country's wealth.
- Make the Pay Equity Act mandatory.
- Establish a fair, equitable tax system so that everyone contributes.
- The different levels of government should decentralize services in order to spread jobs around.
- The government should develop a supervision system to prevent fraud and abuse in order to protect citizens. Adequate regulation of financial and insurance institutions.
- Reduce the discrepancy between poor and rich.
- Fewer studies, more action.
- Seek out the people in our community who are in need.
- Hire income assistance recipients to develop their skills.
- Makes changes in social policy to help motivate people about poverty.
- Regulations are often different from one region to the next. Not clear in all the regions - not the same interpretation of policies/stricter criteria.
- Government cannot pay for everything, but it should review priorities.
- People have to stay in the province to pay for services. That's reality. If not, accept people who want to immigrate.
- Stop targeting their weaknesses – target their strengths.
- Provide help without making them feel underprivileged!
- Our natural resources belong to everyone.
- People need to feel valued – seek them out – without insulting them – don't hold their hands.

New Nouveau Brunswick CANADA

Developing a Poverty Reduction Plan — Bringing the pieces together — Assemblons les pièces ensemble — Élaboration d'un plan de réduction de la pauvreté

- Make sure the recommendations in reports are implemented and enforced.
- There has to be political will to make the necessary changes.
- Aim for long-term structural changes rather than temporary, band-aid solutions.
- Rethink the system, and establish new policies/strategies.
- Do a comprehensive review of the system for the long term => make it more human.
- Support the suggestions of the Common Front.

Transportation

- Transportation is a problem in the rural regions. No car = no work.
- Entrepreneurs could help with transportation (car pooling).

Volunteer

- Need for more volunteers. Volunteering has to be encouraged.
- Encourage poor people to join these organizations; that would empower them.
- Non-profit organizations have trouble surviving.
- The government relies too much on the community (food banks, etc.).
- Volunteers are needed in the community to help the vulnerable –include them instead of judging them. Treat them as equals.
- Non-profit organizations should be better remunerated.

Well-being

- Promote people's development in order to help them learn. Social skill.
- Help those who are on social assistance for life, and separate them from those who could work. Make sure they have enough to live on comfortably.

Work

- Work on improving self-esteem.
- Work with school dropouts, enterprises, municipalities, the government, and education (Richibucto initiative) in order obtain and retain jobs.
- Cap remuneration and bonuses to prevent abuse and thus ensure a better distribution of income and better benefits and working conditions for everyone.
- Force all enterprises to share some of their profits with their employees.

- Better wages is one way for employers to show respect for their employees.
- Offer better working conditions.
- Employers: Offer childcare services, mini-bus – schedule that allows for car pooling (U de M, for example)
- Coffee break – for employees – one way to show employees that they are appreciated.