

Partnering to End Poverty

Forum Report

12/16/2014

Partnering to End Poverty Forum: October 16, 2014

Hosted by: Northeast Regional Intersectoral Committee (RIC)
& Northeast Poverty Reduction Taskforce

Partnering to End Poverty Forum Highlights

The Northeast Regional Intersectoral Committee and the Northeast Poverty Reduction Taskforce hosted the Partnering to End Poverty forum in Tisdale on October 16, 2014, utilizing a community grant from the Community Initiatives Fund.

Partnering to End Poverty Forum goals

- Raise awareness of how poverty affects all in the Northeast
- Sustain momentum of the successful Northeast Poverty Reduction Taskforce
- Consult community and first voices to identify emerging issues and opportunities
- Highlight successful community programs and initiatives addressing poverty
- Enhance partnerships with business, municipal Government, faith communities, First Nations aboriginal and Metis organizations

Overview of the Day

- 63 people in attendance
- Presenters included:
 - Helene Johnson, Area Director for Eastern Region II Metis Nation
 - Dr. Julie Kryzanowski, Medical Health Officer, Saskatoon Health Region and Co-chair of the Saskatoon Poverty Reduction Partnership
 - Joanne Havelock and Lisa Workman, Regina, Poverty Free Saskatchewan
 - Sheri Fengstad, Myrna Soonias, Kathleen Copeland – Northeast Poverty Reduction Taskforce
 - Elder Emma Pelly – Cumberland House
 - Mike Rybinski – Master of Ceremonies and musical performance
 - Father Tuyen Vu – Lunch blessing and sharing of his personal experience/Vietnamese experience
- Panel presentations highlighted successful partnerships:
 - Delphine Grandguillot assisted as moderator of the panel
 - Joy Hanson, Alysha Pelly – Nipawin Oasis RRAC program and Try a Tool
 - Cumberland College counsellors – Tara Nelson, Brandy Wicks, Jackie Masich, Lori Constant; with students – Dominique Berger, Rubyann Dorian, Brittney Markowski
 - Tisdale Middle and Secondary School partnership with Kinistin Saulteaux Nation/TMSS partnership to improve high school graduation rates – Rob McKay, Randy Kerr, Mary McCartney
 - Parkland Coop and Northeast Supported Employment Program – Corey Leichert – Coop manager; Kay Lacroix – NESEP job coach; Jim Jensen – Porcupine Plain Opportunities Program
- Poverty Photo voice slide presentation featuring the words and photos collected from people in the region – prepared by Cindy Neilsen and Kelsey Tkachuk.
- Forum presentations and reports are posted on the Northeast RIC website.
- Station Talks have been synthesized into a forum report that will be used to build community capacity to address poverty.

Executive Summary

Poverty affects us all. The Partnering to End Poverty forum was held in Tisdale on October 16, to build our community's capacity to address poverty. The Northeast Regional Intersectoral Committee and the Northeast Poverty Reduction Taskforce hosted the forum, utilizing a community grant from the Community Initiatives Fund. Goals of the forum were to raise awareness of how poverty affects all in the northeast, to sustain momentum of the successful Northeast Poverty Reduction Taskforce, to consult community and first voices to identify emerging issues and opportunities, to highlight successful community programs and initiatives addressing poverty, and to enhance partnerships with business, municipal government, faith communities, and First Nations and Metis organizations.

The northeast is a community of communities. The communities in our region and province have seen a variety of programs, services, and innovations to address poverty. Many of these were discussed by guest speakers, and examined through power-points and panel presentations. There was also some excellent first voice input through panel contributions, sharing of personal stories, participant letters, and a photo-voice slide presentation on poverty. Station Talk questions allowed forum participants to provide feedback regarding areas of vulnerability, emerging issues and opportunities, and hopes and desires of people within our community.

Nine Station Talks invited input on selected poverty related topics: transportation, adequate income, early childhood, community inclusion, literacy, housing, training and skills development, after school activities, and food. Participants identified the most vulnerable populations affected by poverty: single parents, low income families, large families, seniors, children and youth, First Nations, newcomers, people with language barriers or literacy issues, people with physical and/or intellectual disabilities, people with addictions and/or mental health issues, students, people who are unemployed, and those that had negative past experiences.

The Station Talk exercise clearly revealed how one area of vulnerability leads into another. For example, a lack of reliable and affordable transportation can affect individuals and families ability to participate in community activities, maintain employment, access health care and shop for nutritious affordable food. This is one example of the symbiotic nature of aspects of poverty. Each area of poverty is impacted by *at least* one other area.

The Station Talk #10 topic asked participants to describe a vision for growing a prosperous community. The "magic wand" question invited participants to imagine a world where there is an end to poverty and people are prosperous. This is a useful vision in that idealism should be

used to construct our reality. The majority of responses to this topic fit under the central themes of respect, inclusion, and acceptance – *for all*.

The day's final activity involved participants writing something that they will personally do to reduce poverty on leaf shaped paper. The paper leaves were then attached to the branches of a large poster shaped as a tree. This activity encouraged the conversion of abstract concepts into concrete actions. It also helped complete the journey from realistic barriers, to idealistic visions, back to realistic plans and steps.

Participant responses from the Station Talk exercise agreed with and reinforced the results of Poverty Free Saskatchewan's *Communities Respond* report (2012: www.povertyfreesask.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/PFS-Communities-Respond-Summary-Report-Oct-15-2012-final.pdf): "Poverty affects a very wide range of people. Poverty excludes many Saskatchewan residents from full participation in our province. We must engage communities in creating innovative solutions and involve people living in poverty at decision-making tables. Poverty is a complex issue and we need all sectors of society to be involved in achieving its eradication. We need to define ourselves as a community of communities and work together to create a more empowering and inclusive society." The Station Talks provided supporting data that will be useful as we all continue to work in the direction of empowering people and communities to eradicate poverty.

Postscript: The development of a Saskatchewan Poverty Reduction Strategy within the Child and Family Agenda was announced at the October 22, 2014, Throne Speech.

Station Talks

#1: Transportation and Poverty

How do people living in poverty access reliable and safe transportation in your community?

- **Informal networks:** family and friends, pay someone else, small community – friend or family, hitch-hiking, or pay a friend or relative, ask friends (with or without gas money).
- **Programs that provide transportation to the participants:** KidsFirst Nipawin; Nipawin Oasis cab is free to and from Oasis, First Nations communities provide medical taxis; some First Nations transport students or community members for events; outreach workers; School Division taxis kids to Kids' Kitchen, Handiworks vehicle.
- **For profit transportation networks:** taxis in Nipawin, Melfort, and Tisdale.
- **Subsidized access:** Senior Bus; \$15, September/ October, cities; free bus pass, Handivan/ bus; Volunteer drivers to medical appointments in Saskatoon or Prince Albert – pay for fuel
- **Other:** walking or biking (winter?).
- **Issues:** hitch-hiking; issue in safety (self, child), issues with temperature, concerns about safety, driving without a license; discouraging, expense of gas, taxi, car maintenance

What can individuals/ families, communities or organizations do to reduce transportation barriers?

- **Awareness of issue:** communities need education that this is an issue; service clubs
- **Partnerships:** partnerships between educational institutions; to support student transportation, organizations subsidize cost, car pooling.
- **Enhance volunteer networks:** service clubs and faith organizations or other organizations needed to fill gaps; volunteer drivers network, e.g. medical appointments to grocery store
- **Support for driver education:** programs for adults to get driver's licenses, SGI training offered on reserve schools, access to vehicle to take driver's test.
- **Advocacy for government policy programs:** agencies and service providers should go to families making "house calls", taking services to individuals; lobby senior government, municipal governments to address transportation issues; subsidization, public transportation.
- **Business:** grocery stores providing transport or delivery; phone in order.
- **Transportation provided to program participants:** provide transportation to programming, building transportation into funding proposals as eligible cost.
- **Built environment:** municipal governments; should consider a 'built environment' community, where services are within walking distance, using bicycles – bike friendly
- **Issues:** Rideshares - safety and liability issues, HandiVan– amend who can use bus, to all people with needs, government vehicles use for clients, KTHR transportation survey to be redone (Tisdale); issue as of June 2014, redone in January 2015
- **Ideas and innovation:** transport coupons, advertise Rideshares on radio, Borrow a Car – 'Car Cooperative' in Saskatoon; funded by Credit Union, 'Transportation Network' – school buses, private buses, organizations' buses, work together – family unit, 'Grocery Crawls' (service clubs); like a pub crawl, or a DD on New Year's Eve, shuttle.

#2: Adequate Income and Poverty

How do people living on an inadequate income make ends meet?

- **They don't:** stress, anxiety, and depression increases, no healthy social or recreational activities, declare bankruptcy.
- **They do without/ make sacrifices:** make hard decisions and juggle their bills/ prioritize bills, ration food.
- **They get creative/ find alternative resources and supports:** be part of a grocery club, buy and sell things using social media/ pawn shops, hunt, fish, garden, barter and trade goods or services; e.g. babysitting for transportation.
- **They rely on available services:** government subsidies, food banks and soup lines, KidSport, Ministry of Social Services.
- **Rely on family and friends:** help each other out, borrow from them, live with them; leads to overcrowding, find support in people with similar situations.
- **Take part in high risk activities/ underground activities:** sex trade, criminal activity, drug dealing, gambling – chasing the money.
- **Take what jobs they can find:** work for cash, take multiple jobs – low wages, casual, part time, miss work/ opportunities due to shortfalls.

What can individuals/ families, communities or organizations do to ensure an adequate income for all?

- **Acknowledgement and education:** acknowledge that poverty exists/ educate people about poverty.
- **Advocate with organizations and government/ MPs:** for increased subsidies, higher cut-offs, more affordable housing, lower mortgage rates, give credit to the working poor, higher minimum wage, guaranteed annual incomes/ living wages, job creation/ skills training, free or low-cost daycare with flexible hours and back-up for sick kids.
- **Share resources and time:** sit on committees, volunteer to provide positive activities for low-income families, be a good neighbour, fundraise, dress for success, share excess food and other items with others, offer support, ownership – partnerships, funding.

#3: Early Childhood and Poverty

What are the issues of child poverty in your community?

- Poor nutrition, attendance, low marks, not ready, bullying, lack of role models, shame.
- Access to service or lack of service (dental, childcare, vision, vaccination), transportation.
- Transience, street smarts, substance abuse, one parent families, criminal lifestyle, addiction, intergenerational cycles, developmental delays, and drop-outs.

What are our strengths in ensuring young children are not living in poverty?

- KidSport, Jumpstart, provincial healthcare, food bank, community kitchens, outreach workers, KidsFirst, breakfast/ lunch programs, dental varnish program, mentorship, child tax benefit, partnerships with CBOs and government, home visits, car lottery.
- Encouragement to parents, exchanges, sharing, donations, family scholarships.
- Identifying needs and responding, involve all children, good partnerships, bridging with community, early intervention.

What are some creative suggestions that you or other could do to ‘bust poverty’ for young children and families?

- Charitable fund set up, churches to hold socials, charitable giving to schools, invite families to a meal, universal food programs in school.
- Community open-door centre, universal programming for 0-3, free daycare, living wage, full coverage for dental and glasses, affordable housing, money and time limitations by school.
- Car pool to activities, mentorship and role models, and involve all kids.

#4: Community Inclusion and Poverty

In your community, how is community inclusion and participation addressed?

- **Programs and services:** free events, story hour, access to gym, free skate, the library, Oasis, where kids are at; e.g. transportation to Cadets, ESL, cooking classes, ethnic food store, free access to phones and IT, distribution of free events pamphlet, public skating with community businesses, public swimming, KidSport, Jumpstart.
- **Community events:** National Aboriginal Days, Oasis cultural days; lunch and learn, Family Day activities in February, businesses; special events, KidsFirst community events, events are ‘not’ just the students, but for the whole community, cultural events, food and fun, Welcome Wagon, social media, Gateways, word of mouth, personal invitations.
- **Bridge building:** community events to build bridges between groups, focusing on strengths and building, community partnerships, leaders open to more ideas, willingness to work together, the demographics are changing; multiculturalism, newcomers, let’s be friendly, communicate, Interagency Committee, posters, flyers (in bars), advertise on Facebook (social media).

What can individuals/ families, communities or organizations do to support inclusion and reduce barriers?

- **Individuals and families:** “Hello, my name is”; interpersonal, need to know your neighbours, learn more about what is out there; e.g. what are the ‘Care Bears’?, travel – take the extra kids with you, practice inclusion (be a role model), build relationships and share information verbally.
- **Communities:** welcoming, welcome wagon, ‘hug people’, caring neighbours, or fun nights; be friendly, assumptions; lack of knowledge of what the community needs, education about

what it is like to live in poverty, including the barriers; to help people to “get it”, hosting events for all, ask and include First Voice people in creating programs.

- **Organizations:** using schools and churches to host events; invite people in for coffee, talk to your neighbours, community school model, after school programming, childcare, support and include families, including students as opposed to turning out early, language barrier – provide for children; e.g. after school tutoring, ESL, buddy system, provide transportation to events; e.g. van from the church, ministerial; working together, ask and include First Voice people in creating programs.

#5: Literacy and Poverty

In your community, what are some issues that are related to low literacy?

- Language barriers.
- Nutrition – children going to school hungry.
- Low literacy affects daily living activities; this transfers to court systems, health care, school, employment
- Limits engagement.

What can individuals/ families, communities or organizations do to address literacy?

- Promote reading and use of community resources; e.g. libraries.
- Promote literacy programming.
- Support for parents to help children with literacy; e.g. make books available to young children through government initiatives.
- Provide services for people needing help with forms; e.g. income tax, medical forms, etc.

#6: Housing

How do people living in poverty access safe, affordable housing?

- Live with family/ friends, shared accommodations, live with group, couch surfing.
- Subsidized housing, Sask Housing, Good Food Box, Habitat for Humanity, employment/ rental supplement, have an advocate.
- Budget, SAP, landlords keeping up the property.

What can individuals/ families, communities or organizations do to improve housing?

- Habitat for Humanity, Restore/ donations, support housing initiatives, access rentals man, P3 partnerships.

- Lobby government, more rental housing, grants, granny suites, rent control, and subsidy programs.
- Educate on basic upkeep of a home, change stereotypes, workshops on tenant rights and responsibilities, upkeep by landlords, and donate used furnishings to neighbours.

#7: Training and Skills Development

In your community, how are training and skills development addressed?

- Funding being put in place for training.
- Organizations within the community that offer additional training.
- Linkages created between training and employment in the community.

What can individuals/ families, communities or organizations do to support training and skill building for employment?

- Employer education about creating an inclusive workforce.
- Creating/ reinforcing links between training and employment; e.g. Co-op programs, dual-credit programs.
- Relevant and accessible training and support offered for employers, workers, and students in their community.

#8: After School Activities

In your community, what exists for free and low cost after school activities?

- Chums (Tisdale Mentorship program – elementary school children are paired with High School students).
- KidSport, Jumpstart – can fund minor sports programming, gymnastics, figure skating, softball, swimming lessons, etc.
- School sports/ after school programming – teachers stay to volunteer or run programs.
- Library programs.
- Creative Kids.
- Daycare at churches – run programs and activities, assist with scholarships.

In addition to cost, what are other barriers for participating in after school activities?

- Transportation.
- Lack of volunteers/ coaches.
- Lack of time; parents are unable to organize their schedules to bring kids.

- Lack of funding options for supplies.
- Programs only available for certain age groups.
- Lack of family support with working parents; parents not being able to find care for their other children.

What can individuals/ families, communities or organizations do to enhance after school activities for children and youth?

- Volunteer.
- Raise money – fundraise, donate, ask businesses to sponsor or provide scholarships.
- Partnership between schools and groups to provide space and transportation or have program include transportation.
- Carpool, offer to bring your neighbours’ kids, etc.
- Provide childcare.
- Ensure there are a variety of activities and lots of options for different ages, making sure the programs are culturally appropriate.
- Make the process easy to participate, with not too many forms to fill out, and raise awareness for the program.

#9: Food

Healthy Food Access theme:

- Transportation to food stores; e.g. provide carpooling or shuttle bus.
- People without transportation are impacted by food insecurity.
- Grocery Club; pay \$20 – get \$50 of food.
- Teaching adults to hunt and trap and prepare game.
- “Dads make a difference” (KidsFirst Nipawin), to empower dads; e.g. taking children on the trap line or hunting, teaching them traditional ways.
- Container gardening for tomato plants.
- Seeds available at Food Bank.
- Empty lots could be turned into garden spots.
- Food Banks, Good Food Box, Collective Kitchens, donations from gardens shared with others.
- Good food available to people on a fixed income.
- Plant fruit trees on city property.
- Sharing what we have with others; skills, food, etc.
- Do we explore community gardens as we could? Do we promote them?
- Gardens where lawns used to be.
- Explore gardening partnerships with Sask. Housing Authority, including gardening spaces.
- Oasis Centre had a community garden the last two years.

Food Literacy and Skills theme:

- Ability to read food labels.
- Grocery store tours for families.

- Budget and Shopping Skills (use of flyers and coupons, produce availability).
- Using leftovers (menu planning).
- Garden mentoring program.
- Educate family and kids (farm trips), so they see how/ where food comes from.
- Provide simple recipes for people on how to prepare produce.
- Recipe book for Food Banks; B.C. developed one.
- Teaching people food preservation skills.
- Kids Kitchens.
- School age programs on subjects related to gardening.
- People might not have the skills to prepare foods from a garden.

#10: Vision for Growing a Prosperous Community

What would an end to poverty and a prosperous community look like?

Central theme: Respect, Inclusion, and Acceptance – For All

- People wouldn't be afraid to be themselves.
- Growing in size, growing in caring – communities.
- We would give a bit of ourselves for all.
- Closer families.
- Hopeful, less crime.
- Children will feel secure and safe, and ready to learn.
- Healthy relationships within families and community.
- Looking at new ways of dealing with people.
- No more bullying. No racism.
- Healthier community.
- Happier; everybody caring about everybody else equally.
- Equality.
- People will have higher self-esteem and confidence.
- More respect and inclusion.
- More Cree culture and language, visible and understood – you would never know that First Nations/ Aboriginal communities exist here.
- More of all cultures recognized.
- People in prison would also represent the diversity of the community.
- All groups would be proud – no discrimination.
- Personal pride, personal dignity.
- People feeling accepted and included.
- Treating all people with dignity.
- We would trust more.

Final Thoughts

In her brilliant book, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, Maya Angelou wrote, “Words mean more than what is set down on paper. It takes the human voice to infuse them with the shades of deeper meaning.” This is one of the reasons why we are grateful and honoured when people share their stories. As Helene Johnson told us at the forum, “Poverty is a very difficult subject to speak on.” The following quotes from the forum vividly illustrate the value and importance of community members sharing their experiences and their human voice.

At the morning presentation Helene Johnson said: “Being labelled poor and looked at as poor robs a person of their pride and dignity.” Another comment came from Dr. Julie Kryzanowski: “Poverty takes away choice on every level.” When taken together these comments reflect the dual manner in which poverty affects people; both the intangible and the tangible aspects of our lives and our personhood. One of the most powerful personal stories and testimonials came during the panel presentations, when Alisha Pelly shared her experience in the Nipawin Oasis’ Residential Renovation and Construction program: “Before this program I had no goals or cares about the future.” This reminds us that successful partnerships and programs infuse hope for individuals. Another insightful summary occurred during the Parkland Coop and Northeast Supported Employment Program panel presentation, when a participant said, “Under no circumstances are we looking for any favours, just for giving us a chance.” We are challenged as individuals and communities to ensure all have opportunities to participate and contribute. There is deep meaning in the personal stories heard at the forum. We learned that there are a multiplicity of benefits to ending poverty for individuals and communities.

The Northeast Regional Intersectoral Committee and the Poverty Reduction Task Force would to thank everyone who participated in the Partnering to End Poverty forum, and made it such a success. Thank you to the organizers of the event, the eloquent speakers and panel presenters. Thank you to the forum participants for your enlightening Station Talk responses. We hope this report captures the spirit of the valuable information you have shared.